

YOU SPOKE AND WE HEARD

BVP RETAIL SURVEY SUMMARY

GROWING DEMAND FOR LOCAL FOOD FROM LOCAL FARMS

The PCEDC's brochure "Incredible Delectables! Pacific County Products" maps out Pacific County's local agricultural producers and lists the products offered at each. It even shows where tours can be found for those 'agriculturally curious' among us. The brochures are distributed within and outside the County to inform locals and visitors about our successful agriculture businesses and where they can buy fresh, local produce. Bill Thorness of Seattle Business Magazine reports that "people who eat food grown within roughly 100 miles of their homes are now called

'locavores.' But from the farmer's perspective 'local' means a new market, and one that's value-added. A Washington State University survey showed that more than 25% of consumers bought products directly from a farmer at least twice a month, and another 43% did so at least once a month. **Farm-direct marketing has room for growth: 80% of consumers surveyed expressed a wish to purchase more products from local farmers.** The number of farmers markets has increased in Washington State from 76 in 2001 with sales of \$18 million to 95 in 2005 with sales of \$30 million. Booming farmers markets (the Port of Ilwaco's Saturday Market and Raymond's Market on the Willapa for example) sell directly to consumers at premium prices. Restaurants are building their reputations by supporting local agriculture, and grocery stores are labeling their produce by farm name. The 'organic' label has only whetted the public's hunger for more products, resulting in a boom in nationwide sales. Organic purchases rose from \$3.6 billion in 1997 to \$13.8 billion in

Business Vitality Program Survey

The EDC has identified surveys as a great tool in pinpointing needs, trends, etc. from Pacific County businesses. *Please take the time to respond to surveys, they are of great importance.* The goals of this process are to identify the economic climate of Pacific County as a place to do business, to learn of areas in need of improvement, and to answer your questions.

Manufacturers' Sales/Use Tax Exemption

Have you bought equipment recently, or are you planning to buy equipment or machinery for manufacturing, processing, or research and development of a commodity for sale? Did you know that you don't have to pay sales or use tax on that purchase? We recently talked with two new businesses that this was useful for, saving them each a couple of hundred to over a thousand dollars in sales tax. You just need to take a form with you from the Department of Revenue when you make your purchase. If you have already bought your equipment, you can take the form back to the seller for a refund of the sales tax amount, or you can get your refund from the Washington Department of Revenue. For the form and online packet about this incentive, visit: www.dor.wa.gov and click on "Tax Incentive Programs" on the left side of the page, or call the EDC office for more information.

2005, according to the Organic Trade Association." ShoreBank Pacific's EcoNotes reported that "a recent study looked at locally grown organic food, compared with conventionally grown food with an average shipping distance of 1,400 miles. Not only is locally grown more efficient to produce but researchers have reported that locally grown foods contain more vitamins, secondary compounds, and minerals, when consumed soon after harvest, than do foods that are picked, stored, shipped, stored again, and finally sold hundreds to thousands of miles from their

growing area. Local agricultural producers now need to be able to achieve true 'product differentiation': whether a product has superior quality because of the region in which its grown, or the unique way it was processed that story must clearly be told." PCEDC's brochure is available to help market Pacific County's agricultural land and tell the story of our unique businesses. It can be viewed on the EDC website: www.pacifiedc.org/brochures.htm. Please contact Karen Tully at the PCEDC office for additional copies, or to list your local farm.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - HIRING PRACTICES

WORKFORCE

2006 Pacific County Population:

21,735

2007 Labor Force:

July: 9,430 / December: 9,750

2007 Employment:

July: 8,850 / December: 8,740

2007 Unemployment:

July: 580 / December: 1,010

Source: Census Bureau & WA Employment Security

Businesses Asked: How can I be more successful in hiring quality employees?

Answer: When hiring during your busy season, you are likely to say "I'll take anyone! I'm willing to

train!" However, businesses we talked with have found that a warm body is not much more than that, and may not even be trainable. **The key is taking the time to implement good hiring practices**, even if it's mid-July and you are in a rush to hire. **(1) The job description.** The Business-to-Business program (875-9470) can assist you in writing a good job description for your needs, posting and filling your opening. Also try the online Job Description Writer at America's Career InfoNet: www.acinet.org/acinet/JobWriter/default.aspx. **(2) Check References.** Joyce Prior from Pacific County WorkSource points

out that it doesn't take much time to call references, but employers often skip that important step. Calling references will give you a good idea about your candidate, who is willing to speak in their favor, and who isn't. If recent employers are missing from the references list, ask why. **(3) Interview questions.** "Asking the right questions—a technique known as 'behavioral interviewing' - can help improve your chances considerably. The foundation of behavioral interviewing is that past behavior is one of the best predictors of future behavior." Asking people about how they handled specific situa-

tions in the past is more predictive than if you said to them, 'Tell me how you would handle this in the future'. Instead of 'Tell me about your greatest strengths and weaknesses', try "Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills" or "Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem." More sample questions can be found at http://www.quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html
Source: Manny Frishberg, Seattle Business Magazine.