

# Solutions

Spring/Summer 2016 Vol. 13, No. 2

The Texas Employment Commission has several programs available for people who Agency offers myriad of services

jobs after they have graduated. It also who go out



By CATHY GILLENLINE  
Assistant Managing Editor

The Texas Employment Commission has several programs available for people who need to find work, training, retraining basic skills of job viewing.

Some of the services seekers are:

- **The Dislocation Assistance Program** — Dorothy Elliott, who lives at 1621 Pine Drive (Bank) in Dickinson, best kept secrets

## New workforce commission to be merged to help small biz in 1996

### Job service to help small biz in 1996

New state law incorporates TEC into local commission

By AMY DORSETT  
Staff writer

McKINNEY — New state legislation will soon have sweeping ramifications for the unemployed and businesses interested in hiring them.

The Texas Employment Commission, which has the link between

the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

"This will push companies to the best levels," Davis said.

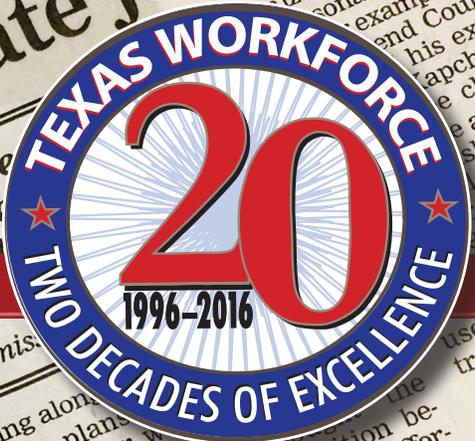
## Reorganize state job training

### Director

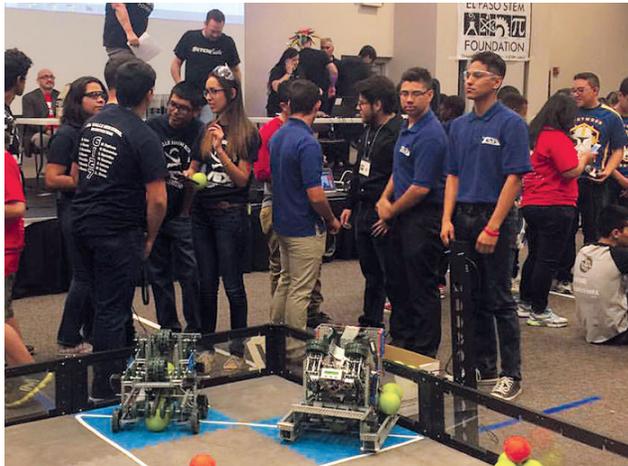
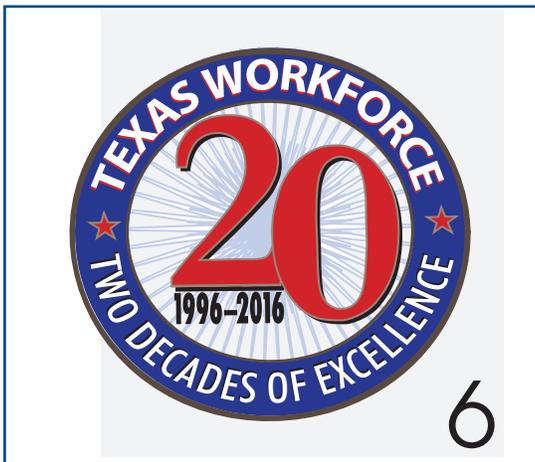
We're going to talk about process. force a different

## Agencies consolidate into Workforce

Workforce boards have been established in each region of the state, according to Raymond Fore, area manager for the Texas Employment Commission. He said 51 percent of the local workforce board members come from the private sector, and private industry will play an important role in training and employment.



**20 YEARS OF PROVIDING WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS FOR TEXAS**



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**On the Cover:**

*Clockwise:* AT&T rises high in Dallas, Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board Chair and Austin Mayor honor Individual Achievement of Austin youth, Workforce Solutions 20-year logo, El Paso STEM+Art Fiesta.

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- Andres Alcantar**  
*Chairman, Commissioner Representing the Public*
- Ruth R. Hughes**  
*Commissioner Representing Employers*
- Julian Alvarez**  
*Commissioner Representing Labor*

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## Newly appointed commissioner eager to embrace new challenges



I appreciate the opportunity to express how honored I am that Governor Abbott appointed me as Labor Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), representing the 1.3 million workers of Texas.

I am thrilled to serve alongside TWC's Chairman Andres Alcantar and Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth Hughs.

My experience as president and CEO of the Rio Grande Valley Partnership, Texas regional director for the U.S. Senate, director of college information at Texas State Technical College and as a Texas State Trooper has given me valuable insight that will help me in this new role.

Many people don't know that I am also a referee for college football. I know how to watch a play and call a penalty even if its unpopular with the crowd. Since I'm used to working under pressure, I am suited to being a strong advocate and will fight for sound workforce policies that will continue to position Texas as the best state to live, work and do business.

Since my appointment in late February, I have learned a great deal and have traveled the state hearing from many of you about the needs of a skilled Texas workforce. My experience

at Texas State Technical College taught me the value of technical education and I have seen how TWC programs are working to support Texas. I have toured local apprenticeship training facilities, shipping ports and met with building trades groups and seen firsthand the value of successful partnerships between training providers, workers and employers.

I have had the honor of presenting Skills Development Fund grant awards and seen how this training program supports workers with skills that will serve them well in their careers. Recently, my fellow commissioners and I participated in the Governor's Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative where we visited locations around the state and heard from economic development and education leaders in order to assess regional needs and establish a framework for closer collaboration between public education, higher education and workforce development entities.

I have also participated in other regional planning meetings where we heard from veterans, rural community leaders, economic development representatives and our local Workforce Solutions partners about their challenges.

As we take on these policy decisions, I will remain focused on the needs of my constituency—the workers of Texas.

Workers like Mario Castor, who you will learn about in this issue. Mario had the desire to work and to support his family, but needed some assistance to get the credentials and skills that would prepare him for an occupation. Our partners at Workforce Solutions Capital Area pointed him to the right resources and today, Mario has the skills for a good-paying career—not just a job.

There are countless stories like Mario's that are happening each day, but there are also many who don't know how to get on that solid career path. I look forward to working with our partners to help our fellow Texans gain the skills they need for successful careers.

Finally, I want to thank my staff, the dedicated men and women at TWC and Texas Workforce Solutions and all of the people that I have met on my tour of the state. I am inspired by your dedication to the people you serve and I look forward to working closely with each of you to address the needs of our Texas workforce. Together, let's keep Texas strong! ■

**Julian Alvarez** | Commissioner Representing Labor



The Whitacre Tower in Dallas, also known as One AT&T Plaza.

# HELPING AT&T through Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

By Brenda Brantley

Relocation can be challenging for most companies, but when you are one of the largest telecommunications firms in the world, moving to a new city can present a host of bigger challenges and opportunities.

Fortunately, AT&T was able to partner with Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (WFSDallas) and its various services to meet their recruitment, training and hiring needs. AT&T has a long history of bringing innovation and jobs to Texas, and in 2008, made the decision to relocate its corporate office from San Antonio to Dallas. The move created the opportunity for new partnerships and an investment in the DFW community.

“AT&T’s commitment to the communities we serve, live and work is well known,” said AT&T’s Vice President of Talent Management Julie Bugala. “Our \$350 million education-focused giving through AT&T Aspire is making a difference – and we’ll continue to support local partnerships and programs that show results.”

Within a few short years after relocation, AT&T announced plans for business expansion through Project Velocity IP (VIP) and once again WFSDallas and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) were there to help. With the expansion of services through VIP, came the need for a custom-trained workforce. In 2012, AT&T expressed a need to fill hundreds of newly created jobs and reached out to the Dallas County Community College District’s El Centro College to partner on a Skills Development Fund grant program application through TWC.

Through the Skills Development Fund, businesses are able to partner with local community colleges to apply for state-funded customized job-training for new and incumbent employees.

During this first phase of funding, El Centro was awarded \$1,919,856 to provide instruction to 800 new AT&T employees. Workers hired for the training were able to enter into a Telecommunications Career Pathway, which would

lead to higher wages and career advancement within AT&T and would be transferable to other careers in the telecommunications industry.

In 2016, in response to growing demand in the telecommunications and information technology sector, AT&T initiated another phase of training through an additional \$999,704 Skills Development Fund grant to train 400 more employees.

“The economic growth of the telecommunications and information technology sector has allowed the Dallas area to benefit from a skilled workforce,” said WFSDallas President Laurie Bouillion Larrea. “We are proud to partner with AT&T as it continues to expand products and services worldwide, while bringing career opportunities to local jobseekers.”

AT&T continues to partner with WFSDallas to hire workers and provide technical skills that prepare its workforce for new career opportunities. Through WorkInTexas.com, hiring events and skills grants, AT&T has improved the ease of recruitment and has developed a reputation for providing customized and comprehensive training plans for new workers.

WFSDallas connects employers like AT&T to collaborative opportunities in our communities to help skill up the future workforce,” said Bugala.

With 28 local workforce development boards across the state offering direct consultation and customized workforce services, in FY2015, approximately 88,811 employers received human resource assistance and other outreach services to address their business needs.

Bugala touts AT&T’s ongoing support in the DFW community through programs that will help the telecommunications industry maintain a ready and skilled workforce. “...Like our new initiative with Seagoville High school, where we are the corporate collaborator for the newly forming PTECH (Pathways in Technology) program and our partnership with Eastfield College, where AT&T will provide student mentoring and curriculum consultation.” These partnerships and collaborations provide evidence of a multiplied return on investment into workforce business services. ■

# EDUCATION AND SKILLS blossom into a new career for one Austin-area youth

By Lori Najvar



Mario Castor is now working his way up in a new career.

When Mario Castor learned that he was selected for the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Excellence through Individual Achievement (Youth) award in Austin, he hesitated to even attend the October 2015 awards presentation luncheon. Until he heard his accomplishments read out loud, he had not realized how much he had achieved in the last three years. He walked away from the luncheon with a great sense of achievement.

Mario overcame some tough circumstances. A high school dropout, he was struggling to make a living and support his family through a minimum-wage, fast-food job, when he realized he had to make some changes.

“I was hanging out with the wrong friends and I faced not being able to finish high school. I had little personal motivation and I questioned my existence [in life]. I was a shy person and full of anger, but inside me there was a flower that wanted to bloom.”

Mario’s inner desires began to take root when he found resources that not only guided him with an education plan, but also provided marketable skills that laid a foundation for employment. He registered with the Texas Workforce Commission’s WorkInTexas.com job database through Workforce Solutions Capital Area and began preparing not just for a job, but a career.

Through Capital Area’s Youth Employment Partnership he connected with American YouthWorks (AYW) where young, low-income people (ages 14-21) are exposed to work-ready and life skills through training programs and services that help them achieve their goals. Some of the programs and services include:

GED test preparation or high school graduation guidance, job skills training, job placement, paid work experience, and community service opportunities. AYW provides ongoing community resources and offers project-based enrichment programs to help young people succeed.

With the nutrients from these resources, the flower began to grow. Over three years, Mario participated in 456 hours of training and service at AYW. He learned construction skills that included electrical wiring and air conditioning service and installation. He enrolled at Austin Community College, and within three months earned a welding certification. He continued to excel in various industry skills which led to higher wages.

Mario is now a certified Roofing Torch Applicator and working a full-time job for a commercial construction company and is on an in-demand career path that allows him to support his family.

“Workforce Solutions Capital Area is proud of Mario’s many accomplishments,” said Capital Area’s Deputy Executive Director Tamara Atkinson. “Through his story, we are reminded of how valuable case management and support services are in assisting clients reach their goals.” When asked how he would advise other young people struggling to find their career path, he suggested that services through Capital Area’s youth partnerships can really help someone achieve beyond their expectations.

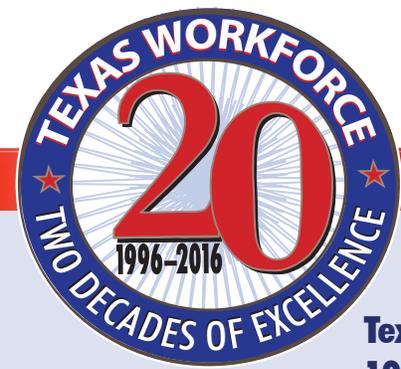
“There are people who can help. Look to Goodwill (Goodwill Career & Technical Academy) and AYW. In my family, I am the first to graduate from high school. I did it at 20 years old, but I did it! AYW became my second family and they continue to support me,” Mario shared. “I can rely on them.”

Mario’s life-shift has inspired others as well. At least a dozen of his friends have been motivated to improve their own life choices and he has laid the foundation for a better future for his six-year old son, who he now helps with his schoolwork.

“Mario’s story inspires me. Keeping young people engaged is a big part of my job, but at the end of the day, it’s their successes that keeps me motivated and hopeful of the future,” said Vanessa Perez, Mario’s case manager from AYW.

In addition to being a helpful dad, Mario recently served on the AYW’s Alumni Circle where he is able to connect with and motivate the new students in the program so that they too can blossom and reach their potential.

For more information about Workforce Solutions services, find your local office at [texasworkforce.org/officelocator](http://texasworkforce.org/officelocator) and contact them today. ■



# The Texas Workforce Commission:

## Texas Workforce Timeline 1996-2016

1996

### TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION FORMS

Ten agencies and 28 employment-related programs consolidate to create the Texas Workforce Commission.

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FUND PROGRAM BEGINS

The state's premier job training program for skills development begins awarding grants.

1998

### TEXAS WORKFORCE REGIONAL NETWORK CERTIFIED

The last of the 28 local workforce development boards is certified, completing the Texas Workforce Network.

### FEDERAL WORKFORCE LEGISLATION INACTED

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Wagner-Peyser Act Amendment become law establishing the guidelines for delivery of workforce and employment services. Many principles from the Texas model are included in this national legislation.

2004

### WORKINTEXAS.COM IS LAUNCHED

TWC launches an award-winning online job-matching resource which today boasts more than 150,000 available job openings and more than 425,000 active résumés.

### CIVIL RIGHTS FUNCTIONS TRANSFER TO TWC

Legislation transfers the Commission on Human Rights to TWC. The Commission was later abolished and the functions are now handled by the TWC Civil Rights Division overseen by the TWC commissioners.

2005

### TWC ASSISTS WITH HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA RECOVERY

2006

### TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS DESIGNATION ADOPTED

The partnership for local service delivery between the state's 28 workforce development boards and TWC is formally given the name Texas Workforce Solutions and each region adopts the name.

2008

### TEXAS VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FORMED

A peer-to-peer resource and referral network to help veterans connect to resources for a successful transition to civilian life becomes the first of many TWC initiatives for veterans' services.

2013

### ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY TRANSFERS TO TWC

Oversight of program to help adults access basic education instruction in English, math, reading and writing is transferred to TWC. Program helps adult learners acquire skills needed to succeed in the workforce including high school equivalency certifications and its providers are now part of the Workforce Solutions network.

2015

### WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) ENACTED

New federal legislation that replaces WIA and Wagner Peyser as guide for workforce services goes into effect and retains much of the Texas model for service delivery.

2016

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND OTHER PROGRAMS TRANSFER TO TWC

Beginning on Sept. 1, 2016, some programs from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) including the Vocational Rehabilitation program will become part of TWC and the Texas Workforce Solutions network.

By Debbie Pitts

The men and women of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) are preparing to enter the agency's third decade of service just as they did when the agency began in 1996, by consolidating agencies and programs, and planning for integration of services that will provide streamlined connections to employment for all Texans.

Twenty years ago, 28 employment-related workforce, training and education programs from 10 agencies consolidated to create the Texas Workforce Commission. Over the years, other programs and agencies have joined the amalgamation, and with the upcoming addition of vocational rehabilitation programs from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) this September, the efforts to connect all Texans with good jobs, and all Texas employers with skilled workers, will again expand through the integration of services and programs.

Also 20 years ago, the integrated model of regional workforce service delivery was born through the creation of the Texas Workforce System network that would later become known as Texas Workforce Solutions. The Texas model for locally controlled, market-driven integrated service delivery was subsequently incorporated into federal legislation that guides workforce programs across the nation including the Wagner-Peyser Act Amendment of 1998, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015.

"The leaders of the Texas market-driven, local control workforce system have used innovation to address the needs of employers, workers and job seekers," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "Over the years, we have continued to advance partnerships, and leveraged resources, in building a skilled workforce that makes Texas the best place in the country to do business."

Today, TWC and 28 independent local workforce development boards along with adult education partners (added through the transfer of the Adult Education and Literacy program to TWC in 2013) comprise Texas Workforce Solutions. The accomplishments that span the history of the TWC and the Workforce Solutions network are numerous.

During this 20-year span, millions of Texans have received employment services. These services include job placement, assistance with job-search resources, résumé and application preparation, job training and referrals, and many more. Most employment services are provided through Workforce Solutions offices, or career centers, located throughout the state and operated by the Workforce Solutions boards.

Texas Workforce Solutions Permian Basin Executive Director Willie Taylor has been the leader of that region's local board since

# 20 YEARS OF INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

the inception of the Texas model and has seen how the system's design has evolved over the years.

"Now that our system has matured, it gives me great pleasure to see how we are more flexible and responsive to industry needs and to job seekers, and are building a solid partnership with education," said Taylor. "Thanks to the leadership and staff at TWC and the collaboration between TWC and the local boards, our Texas model is truly changing the lives of customers in our communities."

Judy McDonald, executive director of Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County has also seen how Texas' position as a national leader in workforce development has served her community and the state over the past 20 years.

"It has been our great luck to be in the state that is leading innovation in workforce development," said McDonald. "The Texas system vision has allowed for local flexibility to collaboratively innovate and design the delivery of services. I believe this respect for local intelligence and creativity has resulted in a much more effective, efficient and responsive system."

The needs of employers are key to the success of this community-focused system. Over the past two decades, the emphasis on employer engagement has tripled the number of employers utilizing workforce system services each year. An estimated 90,000 employers will be served by the Workforce Solutions network this year through employee training programs, applicant screening and referrals, job fairs, analysis of labor market information and many other customized services that help equip Texas businesses with the skilled workforce they need.

"Texas has gained the recognition of being the best state for business, and is committed to serving Texas employers," said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs. "The evolution of services provided by the Texas Workforce Solutions network, has played a huge role in job creation and the economic prosperity of our state and we can take pride in all that this agency has accomplished."

The state's Skills Development Fund job-training program is one example of a successful program that serves employers, workers and communities by providing in-demand skills training. The program has expanded over the years and has helped create or upgrade more than 334,800 jobs since its inception which coincides with the 1996 creation of TWC. Recent expansions of the program have funded specialized training for small businesses and veterans.

One important TWC contribution to the pro-business climate in Texas has come through leveraging resources and applying innovative bond strategies to keep the employer tax burden to

a minimum, even during tumultuous periods that resulted from national economic downturns.

During those downturns and other difficult times, TWC has provided millions of job seekers who found themselves without work, through no fault of their own, with unemployment benefits to help them get by until they were able to return to work. In 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast, more than 134,000 Texans received unemployment assistance after being separated from employment as a result of the storms. In addition, Texas Workforce Solutions kicked into high gear to support thousands of displaced families from along the Gulf Coast who were impacted by the storms.

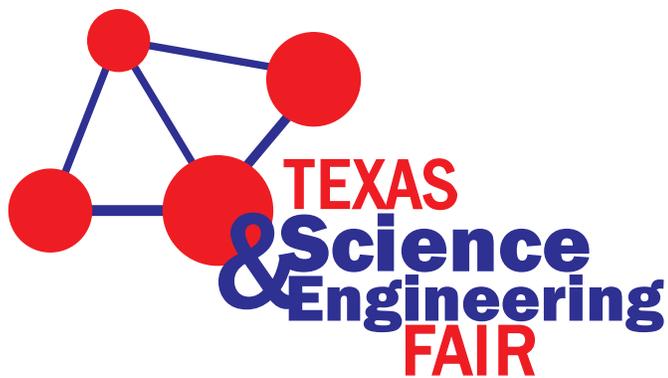
"Helping individuals connect to employment opportunities that will set them on a course for a prosperous career path is vital to our state's success," said TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez. "This agency and its partners will build on the achievements of the past 20 years and continue to support initiatives that will make these connections possible."

One such initiative came in 2004, with the launch of a first-of-its kind statewide job matching website called WorkInTexas.com. Since its launch, more than 2.4 million jobs have been filled through connections made from the site. Over the years, the site has undergone continual refinement and enhancements and today boasts more than 250,000 current job openings and more than 425,000 active résumés.

In 2008, TWC created the Texas Veterans Leadership Program to provide military service members with peer-guided assistance as they transition to civilian life and work. Many other veteran-focused initiatives including the College Credit for Heroes program and the Hiring Red, White and You! statewide hiring events have been added to help our returning heroes quickly transition to civilian careers.

The Workforce Solutions network has provided other support services like child care and transportation assistance to millions of Texans to help them overcome barriers to access training and employment.

The ongoing vision of TWC and its Workforce Solutions partners is to maximize the power of innovation and partnerships to boost superior business outcomes and realize a competitive advantage for all Texans in the global economy. Through consolidation and integration of state programs and services that address that mission and collaborating with other agencies and community partners, TWC can build on its rich history and take on the next 20 years with the spirit of initiative that has served it throughout its history. ■



## Paving the way for Texas' bright future

By Justin Minsker

Nearly 1,150 of the best and brightest young science and engineering minds from across the state displayed their projects at the 30th Annual Texas Science and Engineering Fair on April 2nd. The fair, which was hosted by The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), is co-sponsored by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and ExxonMobil.

"Innovation is what Texas does best, and this year's winners exemplify the innovative spirit that has propelled the Lone Star State to be a national leader in job creation," said Governor Abbott. "Texas is inspiring and encouraging a new generation of entrepreneurs, and I am confident that programs like the State Science Fair and the Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy will help our students excel in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields."

Apollo 16 astronaut and the 10th man to walk on the moon, General Charlie Duke and 2015 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) award winner Karan Jerath served as the keynote speakers at this year's awards ceremony where awards were given to the top three projects in each category for both the junior (middle school) and senior (high school) divisions.

Jerath, a freshman engineering student at The University of Texas at Austin, was last year's Young Scientist Award Winner at the ISEF and was recently named as *Forbes* 30 Under 30 in the Energy Sector for his winning invention of an improved oil well head containment device.

General Duke, a NASA astronaut and the youngest person to walk on the moon in 1972, spoke about the importance of an education in science and seeking a career in STEM fields.

Students competed in 20 life and physical science project categories. The top two projects in the life science and physical science disciplines earned first and second grand prize recognitions, and from among these winners, one individual in each division was selected for the Best-of-Show designations. This year's junior division Best-of-Show winner, Kevin Meng



Left—Keynote speaker Apollo 16 Astronaut Gen. Charlie Duke, 10th man to walk on the moon.

Above right— Physical Science winners, left to right: Second Grand Prize Winner Yingjie Wang and First Grand Prize and Best in Show Winner Syamantak Payra

of Robinson Middle School in Plano, earned the honor for his project on "Smart School Bus Pro for Android - A School Bus Tracking and Monitoring Solution for Students, Parents and Drivers."

The senior division Best-of-Show was awarded to Syamantak Payra of Clear Brook High School in Friendswood who presented a project on "Brace Yourself: A Novel Electronically Aided Leg Orthosis." Last month, Payra attended the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix and was named the ISEF Young Scientist Award winner where he received a \$50,000 prize, making the second-straight year a Texas Science fair participant has earned the honor.

The top two finishers in each category at the Texas Science and Engineering Fair from the senior division were awarded scholarships to attend the Texas Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy, a weeklong residential summer camp, also sponsored by TWC, which was recently held at Texas A&M University.

"The Texas Science and Engineering Fair showcased the wonderful creativity of students across the state as they competed for recognition in 20 different categories," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar who attended the fair and addressed the students at the event's awards ceremony. "I congratulate all of the regional and statewide winners, whose continued work in STEM fields will lead to innovative solutions for real world issues facing Texas."

The Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy and the Texas Science and Engineering Fair are two of TWC's many programs designed to encourage students to learn and participate in STEM activities to acquire the knowledge and skills to equip them for in-demand occupations.

TWC also sponsors high school robotics programs and the Governor's Summer Merit Program, which provides scholarships to enroll disadvantaged middle and high school students in STEM skills-related summer camp programs. ■

# Establishing pathways to align education and employment for adult learners

By Ronnie Burchett

Integrating adult learners into postsecondary education and training programs is one of the many ways that the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) adult education and literacy (AEL) program is improving connections that link adult students with workforce skills that will improve their employment prospects. In less than one college semester, Texas adults can move from lacking basic employment skills to being on track for a target occupation by participating in a career pathway training program.

In FY 2015, TWC found that more than 4,800 adult students, who had been unemployed when they entered an adult education program, began working in the first quarter after completing the program.

Working alongside employers, Texas Workforce Solutions (local workforce development boards), adult education providers, community colleges, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), TWC's AEL program is creating opportunities to further adult education programs and assist more individuals in gaining employment skills through grants supporting the expansion of integrated education and training (IET) programs. IET programs are successful because they concurrently enroll adult students in contextualized basic education courses, such as reading and math at the same time while they learn high demand skills such as welding. The classroom content becomes more relevant and meaningful to students who are applying what they learn in an employment setting, which results in accelerated learning, helping the adult learner to enter the workforce more quickly.

"Supporting the workforce needs of Texas' diverse economy requires collaboration to scale innovative, accelerated models of training that provide



adult learners with the in-demand skills required to go to work," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "We will continue to gather input from regional stakeholders on the most effective strategies to achieve desired outcomes."

In support of the state's Accelerate TEXAS initiative, TWC is providing \$500,000 in grant funding to support an expansion of the career pathway program through a community college mentoring grant. Houston Community College (HCC) will lead the mentoring college consortium consisting of Alamo Colleges, Amarillo College, South Texas College and the Tarrant County College District. These colleges will assist other colleges and providers in establishing career pathway programs, similar to the successful models operated by the consortium colleges for adults. Accelerate TEXAS is the state's initiative to help adult students acquire basic skills and progress on a pathway toward a high-demand occupation.

"Accelerate TEXAS is the best thing that has ever happened to adult education. If you want underprepared students to complete postsecondary credentials and enter employment, integrated education and training is the best way to do it," said HCC Director of Adult Education Dr. David Joost. "Of all the education and training initiatives that have come and gone over the years, Accelerate TEXAS is different, it works and it's here to stay."

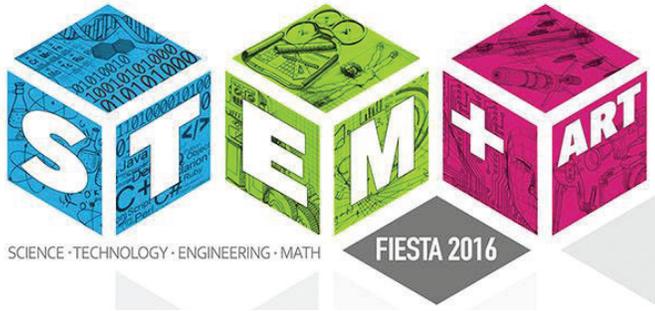
Expanding these efforts, TWC has teamed up with the THECB to enable 620 adults to gain industry-recognized certifications through a \$1.9 million grant to support the expansion of AEL and IET programs at South Texas Col-

lege, Alamo Colleges, Lone Star College and Trinity Valley Community College. Accelerate TEXAS initiatives support the state's ambitious *60x30TX* strategic plan for higher education that has the overarching goal of ensuring at least 60 percent of Texans aged 25 to 34 have a postsecondary degree or recognized certification by the year 2030. One of the *60x30TX* strategies is to provide high-quality education programs for educationally underserved adults.

"This important initiative allows us to partner with educational organizations that will help Texans gain basic skills needed for employment," said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs. "These strong partnerships are also essential in creating the talent pipeline employers need to keep our Texas workforce competitive and growing."

Continuing the effort to reach the goals of the state's *60x30TX* strategic plan, the Region 6 Education Service Center was granted \$515,020 in funds to develop reading and math institutes to enhance classroom strategies that will increase adult learners' success in math and reading. Region 6 will recruit teachers in the various AEL programs across the state to become trainers for that region. AEL teachers will obtain math and reading knowledge needed to promote adult learner success in the programs.

"Career pathway training is an excellent resource to help individuals obtain the skills and credentialing needed to seek out and apply for the high-demand jobs across Texas," said Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez. ■



## Workforce Solutions Borderplex Hosts Annual STEM+Art Fiesta



Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions Borderplex

A student competition showcasing careers in STEAM fields

On Friday, April 8, Workforce Solutions Borderplex held their third annual STEM+ART Fiesta in El Paso. The STEM+Art Fiesta was developed in 2014 to increase student awareness of career opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) disciplines. This year, more than 1,000 middle school students took part in STEAM career workshops and visited with industry and education exhibitors. Over 250 students from 27 high schools throughout the region competed in seven STEAM challenges, which included robotics, math, architectural design, game design, coding and a business pitch challenge. Nearly \$18,000 in cash prizes were given to winning challenge teams. El Paso Electric sponsored the event and awarded \$10,000 in scholarships to 10 high schools students. ■



## A Successful Combination: Parents, Employment, Education and Responsibility (PEER) project

Over the past three years, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (Central Texas) has been assisting non-custodial parents to overcome barriers in finding employment and pay child support via the Non-Custodial Parent Choices PEER project. Teaming up with the Texas Attorney General's Child Support Division, Bell County and Judge Michael Nelson, Central Texas engages with non-custodial parents so that they can secure employment in order to meet their child support obligations, establish better relationships with their children and move toward self-sufficiency.

"This program has been so successful – many of the participants have never been in a Workforce Solutions office and now have an opportunity to work with our employment experts to learn how to maneuver through the job search and interview process and become an employable asset in the job market," said Workforce Solutions Program Specialist Ben Lopez.

From April 2013 to April 2016, 75 percent of the 287 participants served have found employment; many within 2 ½ weeks of starting the program, and have paid more than \$773,000 in child support. The PEER project has impacted 646 children with an average of \$1,103 collected per child.

Some of the specialized services provided to Non-Custodial Parents are:

- Résumé development and interview skills
- Counseling for six months after job attainment
- Financial assistance for work related transportation and GED testing.

"Clearly this project demonstrates the important connection with Workforce Solutions for customers who have barriers to employment. The return on investment in real dollars is evident, but as important are the relationships that are often rebuilt in these families. The true winners are the children. Collaborations like these should be encouraged, replicated, sustained and celebrated," said Central Texas Workforce Center Director Jerry Haisler. ■



## Large and Small Employer of the Year for Adult Education awards announced 2016

The 2016 Annual Texas Workforce Conference (TWC) will introduce several new awards, including the Large and Small Employer of the Year categories and several Performance Quality Improvement Awards in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL).

The Texas Employer of the Year award recognizes a private sector employer for contributions to their community's workforce through innovation and collaboration with their local Workforce Solutions network partner. The nominations are submitted by the 28 Workforce Solutions offices across the state and top finalists are recognized at the annual conference. This year, TWC will have two awards that will supersede the Employer of the Year: Large Employer of the Year and Small Employer of the Year.

Changes to three AEL Performance Quality Improvement Awards categories and the addition of four more will provide more opportunities for recognition of partnerships across the state. The College Integration award, Board Integration and Employer Partnership awards have extended the award levels from two to three in each category with varying levels of award amounts. New this year are the **High School Equivalency Individual Subtest Completion, High School Equivalency Achievement, Educational Functioning Level Gains (EFL) for Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education, EFL Gains in English as a Second Language and EFL Gains Overall**. The four new awards will be calculated based on the number of gains made across National Reporting System levels 1-6 for each category.

Winners will be recognized during the 20th Annual Texas Workforce Conference awards ceremony in Houston on Dec. 7-9. ■

## \$1 Million for High Demand Job Training Announced Initiatives recognized at TEDC Mid-Year Conference

Recently, the Texas Workforce Commission announced the availability of \$1 million in additional funding for the High Demand Job Training program, which supports collaborations between Workforce Solutions partners and local economic development corporations (EDCs). These grants are part of a statewide effort to create occupational job training programs that will improve the skill sets of individuals for jobs in high-demand occupations in Texas communities.

Through an initial \$1 million funding for the High Demand Job Training Program in 2014, TWC matched funds provided by EDCs to local workforce development boards for job training projects in Port Arthur, Kilgore, Lubbock, San Angelo, Coleman, Terrell, Abilene, Mansfield, and a combined effort at Mt. Pleasant, Paris and Sulphur Springs. Instruction was provided to train new employees or upgrade the skills of existing employees for in-demand jobs including welders, nursing assistants, machinist, automotive technicians, CNC operators and registered nurses.

At their 2016 Mid-Year Conference, the Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC) recognized two High Demand Job Training initiatives for Workforce Excellence.

- The city of Coleman, Texas, received the Population Up to 15,000 Workforce Excellence Award for the West Central

High Demand Job Training project, which addressed the need for local certification of Certified Nurses Assistants, in partnership with Workforce Solutions West Central.

- The Lubbock Economic Development Alliance received the Population 100,001 and Above Workforce Excellence Award for their collaboration on three workforce initiative efforts, including the South Plains High Demand Training Project matched by two High Demand Job Training grants, which provided six area school districts occupational training in welding, nursing assistant, machinist and general maintenance and repair technician, in partnership with Workforce Solutions South Plains.

The TEDC also recognized Workforce Solutions Alamo with the Regional Workforce Excellence Award for its successful workforce initiatives and partnership with the Alamo STEM Workforce Coalition.

Local workforce development boards can apply for up to \$100,000 to match funding committed by local EDCs while funds are available. For more on this program and to start the application process, visit the TWC web page for the High Demand Job Training program or email: [oeihighdemand@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:oeihighdemand@twc.state.tx.us). ■

Save the Date  
**NOV 10**  
**2016**

## Hiring Red, White & You!™ Statewide Hiring Fair

Join the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Workforce Solutions in partnership with Texas Medical Center for the **5th Annual Hiring Red, White & You!** Statewide Hiring Fair to connect veterans, service members and their spouses to Texas employers.

No cost to veterans, participants or employers. [www.texasworkforce.org/hrwy](http://www.texasworkforce.org/hrwy)

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The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards, forms Texas Workforce Solutions.

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