

Michigan Works: Great Lakes Bay Region Has Over 8,000 Active Jobs Available

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FILE - In this Sept. 2, 2020, file photo, a help wanted sign is displayed at a car wash in Indianapolis. (Associated Press)

Industries across the state are facing what we've been calling a labor shortage. Now, businesses are trying to adapt to the circumstances by finding additional ways to get talent back to work.

In the Great Lakes Bay Region, there are over 8,000 active job advertisements right now. And, 5,000 of those active job opportunities are full-time employment positions, according to an online database, Job EQ.

Christopher Rishko is the chief executive officer for Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!, which assists employers in finding and retaining employees in Bay, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland and Saginaw counties.

Rishko said talent is one of the biggest issues regional employers are facing — pre pandemic and now, in a more post-pandemic time. During the pandemic, he said health concerns, lack of child care access and increased unemployment benefits have “pulled folks out of the employment realm.” But, Rishko said, there’s a significant demand on the employer side.

“Although the unemployment rate now is higher than it was pre-COVID, there's actually less people actively engaged in the labor force,” he said. “So, although it's higher, there's less people looking for work. That makes it even more difficult for area employers to find talent.”

One local company is offering a sweepstakes program to encourage talent to find employment. Kathy Weaver is the owner of the Spherion Staffing office in Midland. The company is trying to fill more than 10,000 job opportunities for clients. At the local office, which serves Midland, Gladwin, Clare, Isabella, Saginaw and Bay counties, there are over 55 job opportunities available.

Weaver said the company launched a sweepstakes on July 12 to connect candidates with these opportunities. The sweepstakes offers prizes each week, from a tumbler cup up to a Ford Mustang sports car - the grand prize.

“We haven't heard as much from candidates as we would like to. As we're talking to them, we're telling them what a great time it is to apply with us and go to work with us. Because every week that they work with us, they are registered for the sweepstakes,” Weaver said. “Our clients (businesses seeking employees) are liking the sweepstakes, they feel it's a positive step forward to try to generate that candidate pool.”

Despite early challenges, Weaver said the sweepstakes is generating more candidates as the hiring incentive effort continues. She said the sweepstakes will end Sept. 15, when the grand prize winner is announced.

Rishko said Michigan Works! is offering job fair opportunities with employers in the region to help connect candidates with employers. He said business service teams are making additional efforts to train potential job candidates as well.

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