

The Southwest Ohio Region
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 26, 2013

Workforce connections helped Bob Evans with staffing

Sometimes serendipity just happens.

One Saturday in early August 2013, Scott O'Shaughnessy, manager of the Bob Evans restaurant in Sharonville, noticed the shirt of a woman sitting at one of his tables. It said Finneytown Soccer. He decided to introduce himself. O'Shaughnessy was soon to be the manager of Bob Evans' new restaurant in Finneytown, which was opening in late September, and he wanted to spread the word.

His customer was Sherry Kelley Marshall. Not only was she a Finneytown resident, with a son who had just graduated from Finneytown High School, she was also President/CEO of the Southwest Ohio Region Investment Board. Her job involves meeting owners and managers of new or expanding businesses, and connecting them to resources that will help them in hiring.

And that's exactly what happened. O'Shaughnessy passed Marshall's contact information to Scott Atkins, corporate hiring manager for Bob Evans. "In a matter of days, Sherry had introduced me to the SuperJobs Center and the principal of Finneytown High School. Everyone in the community was so helpful, it was an absolute joy to be in the community," Atkins said.

The Business Services team at SuperJobs – the one-stop job center for Cincinnati and Hamilton County – helped to spread the word about the three hiring events Bob Evans was planning before its opening Sept. 30. "I was excited about the number of people SuperJobs directed to us," Atkins said. About 400 candidates applied for jobs at the restaurant. Approximately 80 were hired, with perhaps 15-20 coming from SuperJobs referrals, he said.

Marshall also connected Bob Evans to another source of candidates -- a program at Finneytown High School called Jobs for Cincinnati Graduates. JCG, which is part of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, is partly funded through the Workforce Investment Act, and is contracted to the SWORWIB to provide career and educational services to high school students in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. JCG frequently helps its students find jobs.

"We always want to have kids from the community working at Bob Evans," said Atkins. "Down the road, they grow with Bob Evans." He contacted Carmen Gaines, the JCG Specialist at Finneytown. The store's hiring events started a week before school began, so there were logistics to figure out.

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“Sure enough, during our last hiring event, droves of high school students came in,” Atkins said.

Added O’Shaughnessy: “We really felt the JCG kids were an impressive group. They were all very professional, eager and have turned out to be great employees. They all went through a tough training schedule, and all hung in there like troupers!”

JCG students Jaylah Howell, Panor Parker, Kevin Walker and Haley Hatfield now work at Bob Evans Finneytown. They work approximately 18 hours a week, after school and on weekends, while balancing a full load of classes and extra-curricular activities.

“I think they are busier than I am,” said O’Shaughnessy. “They bring such energy and excitement with them. Most have great future plans that we are proud to help with.”

Sidebar:

Bob Evans restaurants believe in giving back to the community. When a new restaurant opens, it holds several practice sessions. People are invited to come in and order at half price. Money raised during the practice meals is donated to local non-profit organizations.

In Finneytown, beneficiaries included Finneytown High School’s After Prom, which provides post-prom social and recreational activities between midnight and 5 a.m., and also offers a safe, non-drinking environment for students. Whitaker Elementary, St. Xavier High School, and Clovernook Center for Blind and Visually Impaired also benefited from the Bob Evans’ program. “Funds are raised doing what we do best, serving our guests great food with smiling faces,” said O’Shaughnessy.

The Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board is a nonprofit organization serving the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County in workforce development. SWORWIB is comprised of leaders from business, education, labor, and government, with the majority of its board members representing the business sector. SWORWIB sets the vision, policy direction, and performance expectations for the regional workforce development system, including the SuperJobs Center at 1916 Central Parkway.

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