



Newsletter



2022 Edition Issue 1 · April 5

- Gateway to Career Connection Job Board is Now Active

Workforce Campus Project
Partners with the University
of South Alabama

South Baldwin County
Wage and Benefit
Survey Results Are In

SOUTH BALDWIN WORKFORCE CAMPUS

The Gateway team continues to work with leadership from our chambers, tourism officials, and education partners on the South Baldwin Workforce Campus.

A major piece for the success of this project was to have a tract of land where the campus could be built near our tourism-related businesses. The City of Foley stepped up right away and offered 150 acres on the Foley Beach Express under the caveat that Gateway bring a four-year university to the campus. On March 3, 2022, we did just that by receiving a letter from President Jo Bonner of the University of South Alabama (USA). In a letter to Gateway, President Bonner stated that USA intends to create educational programs at the Campus, such as hospitality and tourism management and other programs that will serve the needs of the community including early childhood education.

We have teamed up with Opportunity Alabama (OPAL), a nonprofit initiative dedicated to connecting investors with assets in Alabama's Opportunity zones. By using a data-driven approach, they bring investors, opportunities, communities, and key institutional supporters together for the purpose of improving economic vitality and quality of life in low-income communities across Alabama.



"The property being offered for the campus sits in an opportunity zone which gives us the benefit of working with OPAL on the proforma numbers necessary to entice investors," said Tyler Morgan of the Gateway team. "We want to be prepared for a public/private partnership if it becomes necessary for the bricks and mortar elements of the campus."

Most of our efforts recently have been to educate our lobbyists and elected officials on the investment benefits of this campus. "The problem our community faces is very easily defined," said Ed Bushaw of Gateway. "In order for us to handle the steady and increasing demand for year-round tourism that Baldwin County faces we have to bring new people to our area. These people can be students, opposite-season workers, or people looking to relocate to paradise to take a hospitality job." What is missing is an affordable place for these people to live that offers transportation and childcare. The added element of training opportunities from microcredentials to full degrees on the campus makes this project truly unique.



ENTERPRISE VAN POOLING PROGRAM

The Gateway Initiative team is working with Enterprise Commute to offer a new employee transportation solution to South Baldwin County. "Over the last month, we have been meeting with Enterprise and the Baldwin Rural Transit System to establish a program which utilizes federal subsidies to develop affordable alternatives to employees driving their own vehicles to work," said Ed Bushaw of the Gateway team. "We have been very impressed with Enterprise through this journey and are very encouraged by the potential to address a problem we've had for many years".

Enterprise works with your business to determine employees who work similar shifts, who live near each other, and they supply a recent-model vehicle.



Each team has a coordinator who works with Enterprise on maintenance and fuel. At least two members of each team are established as drivers who are registered through a third party. The cost of the program is distributed between government subsidy, employee share, and in some cases employer share.

"When employees commute together it creates a positive scenario for our community and our environment," said Tyler Morgan. "Commuting contributes to a more sustainable future by significantly reducing emissions. In addition, it reduces congestion on our roadways and opens more valuable parking spaces for customers".

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM INDUSTRY WAGE AND BENEFIT SURVEY

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- In November of 2021, the Gateway team administered its second bi-annual wage and benefit survey for tourism-related businesses in South Baldwin including restaurants, vacation rental management, attractions, hotels, and golf.

"Our sample size for the survey was much higher in 2021 than it was in 2019," said Ed Bushaw of the Gateway team. "This sample size gave us a strong view of exactly where wages and benefits stand in our market." The intent of the survey is to give human resource and other managers a clear understanding of current pay rates and benefits being offered in our market. On average, we found that wages increased nearly 38% in the last two years with benefits for full-time employees increasing quite dramatically. If you'd like to receive our full report, please write to Ed@gatewayinitiative.com.

To show state officials that the hospitality and tourism industry has jobs that are both high-demand and high-wage, Gateway worked with the Alabama Restaurant & Hospitality Association to administer the survey statewide. As of this writing we have closed that survey and are analyzing the results. We will publish our report this coming month.

**Wages are
up 38%
Since 2019**

Job Fairs

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The Gateway team routinely works with area high schools to organize and promote job and career fairs for students. In addition, the team works with area employers to develop career paths and competencies necessary for students to learn while in school in order to be successful in the job market. On February 23, Gateway organized a first-of-its-kind job fair where students from three schools participated in one location. The fair was held at Foley High School with students attending from Foley High, Elberta High, and South Baldwin Christian Academy. On the 24th a career fair was held at Gulf Shores High School with Gateway assisting to bring more than 50 businesses there to recruit.



Gulf Shores High School hosts Job Fair for Students and General Public

TalkHiring

We have heard loud and clear from many businesses who say most young people applying for their job openings completely lack the skill to interview well. That's why the Gateway Initiative has partnered with a company called **Talk Hiring**, a digital software platform that promotes job readiness with virtual mock interviews.

The lowest paying jobs may not have challenging interviews, but to get the jobs with career-growth and good pay, you need to interview well. We believe this starts at a young age, and the skills are developed throughout secondary school. Talk Hiring makes this process easy by offering a tool that is remote and self-directed, and easy to use by counselors, career coaches, and teachers in our south Baldwin County schools. The students will be able to simulate a virtual interview with a cell phone, landline, or web browser, and will receive instant feedback and assessment. The students can practice with 400+ industry-specific or traditional interview questions.

Gateway contracted 1,500 "interviews" for students with Talk Hiring to pilot for this current school year and next. Each student will have unlimited access for continual practice and are able to check out their interview recordings (virtual or phone calls) and reflect on how to do better next time, which will build confidence after each try. We have split up these interviews per student to our schools as well as the South Baldwin Literacy Council and are currently conducting the onboarding process for the teacher training. Gateway is excited to offer these opportunities to our students and know this will make a huge difference to practice in the classroom before the actual mock and real interview processes.



Gateway is working with YellowHammer IT to create **Gateway to Career Connection**, a job board specifically targeting our south Baldwin County area. Local businesses will be able to cut through the noise of big-name job posting sites and be able to target individuals in south Baldwin County so the businesses looking for new hires are right at the forefront. With this website locals are also able to seek out positions right in their backyard and won't have to be bogged down by the never-ending list of open positions around the country. Narrowing your options down to what's around you means less time searching and more time finding a job that fits your needs.

Gateway to Career Connection is launching the first week of April and will be here just in time for busy season! We hope to ease the burden of the current workforce shortage our area is facing. Stay tuned for the release and please utilize this job board to post your open positions. We are also marketing this not only in the community but to our local high school students, veterans, local career centers, and the unemployment office.

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is an industry-driven career pathway that lets employers prepare their future workforce and develop the skills they need to go above and beyond in their desired career path. Employees can obtain classroom instruction, paid work experience, and a nationally recognized credential that they are able to use anywhere in the country.

Gateway has been working with local businesses to onboard their apprentices and tailor the apprenticeships to each individual business so that they are able to train their employees in ways they can benefit most from the program. Gateway also works with Coastal Alabama Community College (CACC) to offer additional training and educational opportunities to individuals looking to build their career. With the help of CACC the apprenticeship program has been able to grow and offer additional resources to local businesses and their employees.

Take a look at our website for the full list of current businesses we are working with.



Jean Cheatwood and Paula Sims from Frances Holk-Jones State Farm Insurance Co. receive their national credential from the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship.



Gateway Training Academy

A major objective of the Gateway Initiative is to continually search out professional development training opportunities for our investor businesses and organizations. The Gateway Training Academy brings world-class training and process improvement opportunities to small and large businesses, and across a variety of industry sectors.

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Customer Service Opportunity Through ATAC, ATN & SAWDC

We recently collaborated with one of our partners, Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) to create their first Customer Service Training which is currently taking place with three of our businesses including Wolf Bay Restaurants, Spectrum Resorts, and Panini Pete's Restaurant Group.

Through another partner of Gateway's, Alabama Technology Network (ATN) was able to work with these three businesses to write and provide the customer service grant for free. This series of six classes is currently being administered and are valued at \$15,000 per business, with the funds coming from the Department of Commerce through the South Alabama Workforce Development Council. If your business is interested in applying for this grant opportunity, please contact the Gateway team.

Statewide Grant Awarded to ACCS for Hospitality Training

The Gateway Initiative has been working with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) since Fall of last year to help write and develop the curriculum for a new training program through the ACCS Innovation Center. ACCS received a \$1 Million grant from the state to create web based, self-paced training (also including a one day in-person lab accompanying each industry training). Gateway helped pilot the first of 23 industry trainings across the state, which was the Food and Beverage Services course. Panini Pete's Restaurant Group was the first to pilot the training, which took an average of 5 hours to complete for the online portion, and then used the culinary facility at Coastal Alabama Community College, directed by Chef Jim Hurtubise, for the 8 hour in-person lab day. Upon completion the trainee received an ACCS credential which can count towards college credit, and an extensive knowledge of how a restaurant works, while understanding the upward mobility in all positions.

As we know, the restaurant and lodging industries were hit hard during the pandemic, especially in our area. The Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association (ARHA) partnered with this state-wide credentialing incentive to provide this training for free in the industries on Food & Beverage Services, Accommodations & Recreation Services, and Facilities Maintenance Technician.

If you are interested in assisting the ACCS with developing relevant training for your future or current new hires, for FREE, please fill out this employer interest form today. To date there have been 130+ certificate completions placed into jobs across the state. We have seen and believe this training will be a very important aspect of building our workforce in south Baldwin County.



Chef Hurtubise teaches the trainees from Panini Pete's Restaurant Group how to make a vinaigrette dressing.

Thank you to our **TOP INVESTORS** for your partnership, leadership, active participation and support in the Gateway Initiative.

Our Partners!



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
HARBERT COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



Our Team!



Pictured Left to Right: Travis Valentine, Tyler Morgan, Ryan Moberly, Greg Alexander, Donna Watts, Ed Bushaw, Penny Hughey, Kaitlyn O'Neal, and Lori Pressley

