

## **For Job Seekers and Businesses, BERC Works**

In these tough economic times, job seekers and businesses need all the help they can get. The Business & Employment Resource Center (BERC)—part of the Carroll County Department of Economic Development—offers a wide array of free workforce tools and services for both groups, from resume assistance and skills assessments to employee recruitment and training. Some even call it the best-kept secret in Carroll County.

“We’re essentially a one-stop workforce development center,” says Larry Twele, director of economic development for Carroll County. In fiscal year 2010, BERC served about 3,000 job seekers. “Since the economic downturn, we’ve seen a dramatic increase in the number of job seekers,” adds Twele. “People who have been working for 15, 20 years are suddenly finding themselves out of work. Many of them don’t even have a resume. We can help them get back on their feet and find a job that matches their skill set.”

For job seekers, BERC offers a team of certified workforce development professionals to walk them through the employment process. Services include:

- Professional career assessment and counseling
- Individual skill development
- Job search workshops
- One-on-one assistance with resume and interview preparation
- Job fairs featuring local major employers
- Onsite career and employment resource lab
- Youth Services Program to help those ages 14 to 21 obtain a high school diploma or GED and explore career opportunities

BERC can also assist those who desire a career change or wish to reenter the workforce. Job seekers can meet individually with a workforce development professional or use BERC’s onsite career and employment resource lab on their own. While individuals do not need an appointment to meet with a BERC staff member, Twele recommends that visitors make one ahead of time.

Valuable resources are available to area businesses through BERC as well. “We want businesses to turn to us when they’re ready to hire,” says BERC Manager Denise Rickell. “We have hundreds of highly qualified people who are ready to work.”

For businesses, BERC offers:

- Recruitment assistance, including applicant pre-screening and matching
- Special job fairs for new and expanding businesses
- Information on employer tax credits
- Customized employee training
- Labor market information
- Outplacement assistance for companies that are downsizing

Over the past fiscal year, BERC has served approximately 2,200 businesses. “While Carroll County has weathered the economic storm well in general, we have noticed a reduction in hiring. But we’re starting to see a change as businesses are feeling more confident in the economy,” says Rickell.

Both Rickell and Twele believe BERC is not only good for job seekers and businesses but also good for Carroll County. "It's important to have a strong workforce for businesses to survive. A strong workforce is essential to a strong community," says Twele.

For more information about BERC, visit [www.carrollworks.com](http://www.carrollworks.com) or call 410-386-2820. Hours of operation are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

*Story by Theresa Fletcher, Carroll Hospital Center  
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