

HardisonInk.com

Good news hand-delivered: Jobless rate drops, job growth is strong; Ocala MSA again posts second fastest job-growth rate in manufacturing



Gov. Rick Scott discusses how jobs and businessmen like Ocala hotelier Danny Gaekwad have “completely changed the state.” Gaekwad, his wife Manisha and their sons are pictured to Scott’s right (left in the photo).



Cissy Proctor, executive director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, highlights the February jobs report which she said includes “strong job growth and low unemployment” for the Ocala metro area. Gov. Rick Scott and Ocala hotelier Danny Gaekwad and Gaekwad’s family look on, along with local and state officials. Photos courtesy CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion

HardisonInk.com

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC

Communications Manager

CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion

Published March 23, 2018 at 3:48 p.m.

OCALA -- Gov. Rick Scott delivered good news about the region's unemployment rate and area job growth today during a visit to Ocala's downtown square.

Joined by Cissy Proctor, executive director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Scott and numerous dignitaries and elected officials were on hand for the ground breaking of Ocala hotelier Danny Gaekwad's new Hilton Garden Inn on the downtown square.

The unemployment rate in the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion region was 4.7 percent in February, a drop of 0.5 percentage points over the month and 0.9 percent lower than the same time last year. Out of an expanded labor force of 199,119, there were 9,448 unemployed, a decrease of 813 over the month and 1,631 fewer than February 2017.

The February unemployment rates were 5.0 percent for Citrus County, down 0.5 percentage point over the month; 4.0 percent for Levy County, down 0.5 percent; and 4.6 percent for Marion County, down 0.4 percent. Florida's not seasonally adjusted jobless rate – a measure that matches the way local rates are calculated – was 3.8 percent, a decrease of 0.3 percent.

"We have completely changed this state ...," Scott said. "Business people are changing their communities and Danny is an example."

Scott said that in the four years prior to his taking office, the state had lost 832,000 jobs; since then, Florida has added nearly 1.5 million jobs including 25,000 in February alone.

DEO's Proctor said she was happy to not only highlight what she said was the state's strong economy, but the local economy as well.

"We've seen an incredible turnaround," she said. "There is strong job growth here in Ocala (and) low unemployment."

In February, there were 103,000 nonfarm jobs in the Ocala/Marion County metropolitan statistical area, an increase of 1,100 jobs over the month and 1,400 more than February 2017.

For the second month running, the Ocala metro area had the second fastest annual job growth rate compared to all the metro areas in the state in manufacturing at 7.6 percent.

Marion County snagged the lion's share of job gains, with a labor force that grew by 1,246 over the month to 134,217, an increase of 1,749 in the number of employed at 128,079, and a 503 drop in the number of unemployed to 6,138. Compared to February 2017, when the unemployment rate was 5.5 percent, that's 3,036 more employed and 1,101 fewer unemployed.

Rusty Skinner, CEO of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, noted that the good news is shared by Citrus and Levy counties as well.

"The February jobs report shows true progress across all three very diverse counties," Skinner said. "It's not often we've seen expanded labor force across the region driven by healthy increases in employment along with drops in joblessness. And that's not just over the year, but over the month."

In contrast to January's numbers, when the labor force grew due to a bump in the number of unemployed, Skinner said that in February there were 189,671 people employed across the region, an increase of 2,648 over the month and 3,731 more than February 2017.

Last month, compared to January, Citrus County's labor force grew by 447 to 47,857, the number of employed increased by 680 to 45,223 and those without jobs fell by 233 to 2,634. That's an increase of 481 employed and 403 fewer unemployed over the year when the unemployment rate was 6.4 percent.

Levy County's labor force grew by 142 over the month to 17,045, the number of those with jobs increased by 219 to 16,369 and unemployed dropped by 77 to 676. That's an increase of 214 employed and decrease of 127 unemployed compared to February 2017 when the jobless rate was 4.7 percent.

HardisonInk.com

Over the month, unemployment rates dropped in 66 counties and remained unchanged in one. Citrus County tied with Sumter County for the highest unemployment rate among the state's counties, Marion County held the 11th highest and Levy County was 26th.

Among the metro areas, Citrus County/Homosassa Springs tied with The Villages for the highest rate, and Ocala/Marion County was fifth.

Ocala MSA industries that gained jobs over the year and grew faster in the metro area than statewide were manufacturing at 7.6 percent and 600 new jobs, education and health services (+4.3 percent and +800 jobs) and government (+0.7 percent and +100 jobs).

Other industries gaining jobs were professional and business services (+100 jobs), leisure and hospitality (+100 jobs) also gained over the year.

Trade, transportation and utilities lost 200 jobs; and financial activities lost 100 jobs.

Mining, logging and construction; information; and "other" services remained unchanged over the year.

In February, nonfarm payroll employment in the Homosassa Springs MSA was 33,100, an increase of 300 jobs over the month but a decrease of 200 jobs over the year.

March's unemployment numbers is scheduled to be released on Friday, April 20.