

Career Series Articles

Delivering Jobs by the Thousands

By Sally Edwards
July 27, 2008

There is positive economic news on the city's waterfront. Jaxport is expanding in a phenomenal way. That's good news for job seekers looking for a high-wage career path.

The port's client Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd. promises delivery of much more than tons of consumer goods to a new 158-acre container terminal under construction at Dames Point. The deal with the Japan-based shipping giant is bringing thousands of job opportunities to the Jacksonville region.

Ripple effects already are reaching across Northeast Florida with warehousing, logistics and transportation companies looking to be where the action is.

Currently, the number of port-produced jobs is 50,000. Jaxport projects the total will reach 75,000 to 100,000 in the next five to 10 years.

"There is a plethora of opportunities, from the longshoremen who work the docks to maritime lawyers," said Joanne Kazmierski, the port's manager of Community Outreach. Over 175 employers post jobs online at JAXPORTjobs.com.

With all the new cargo and jobs come hefty challenges. Rolling out the red carpet for Mitsui and another interested Asian shipper in its wake, Hanjin of Korea, involves an enormous to-do list related to infrastructure, such as dredging, rail and road work to accommodate the expansion.

Another big item is education. A pipeline of workers with the required training and skills is needed to fill all these jobs, most paying above-average income. Several Florida community colleges and universities have joined forces to address the needs of Jaxport and businesses impacted statewide.

"We are all trying to be prepared to educate our workforce so that we can provide the talent that companies need to succeed," said Elaine Puri, director of the Employ Florida Banner Center for Logistics and Distribution at Lake City Community College. Banner centers were formed to get educators, employers and government collaborating on economic priorities and needed curriculum.

"Part of our mission is career awareness," Puri said, adding that many people do not know what logistics is. "Logistics involves all the resources it takes from when the product is made to when it's put on the shelf and delivered to the customer."

A new online associate in science degree in supply chain management premieres at Lake City and Polk community colleges this fall. The courses fully transfer to state universities, including UNF and the University of Florida, according to Puri.

Florida Community College has an associate degree in business with a concentration in **logistics and distribution**. Students can earn a certificate in half the time and go right to work on docks, diesel parts, forklifts and heavy equipment.

"I am impressed with how the universities and schools in this area work together," said Andy Wiley, Coastal Maritime's vice president of Operations. "The education is up to date with what we do in the industry."

Many students are already in the workplace. "They want to advance or get more training that meets the needs of this expansion," said Sandra Beck, director of Workforce Development at FCCJ.

Irma Flores studies logistics at FCCJ and works at Coastal Maritime, ensuring that international vessels leave the Blount Island terminal on schedule and with the right cargo. Her goal is to earn an advanced degree.

Michael Starling operates a forklift at PenserSC. He and warehouse manager Robert Touchton, a 26-year supply-chain veteran, are in FCCJ's certificate course. "The greatest thing about this field is there's a different challenge every day," said Starling who is also in the two-year degree program and has plans for a bachelor's in business.

"In the port industry, the blue collar workers are just as important as the white collar workers," Kazmierski said, "and they get paid well because of the required technical skills."

There's technology in most roles, from bar coding and robotics in warehouses to IT in corporate offices. Even forklifts and trucks are computerized. FCCJ and Lake City offer professional truck-driving. FCCJ's growing **aviation program** is yet another vital link in the supply chain.

Jaxport and related businesses are creating a world of opportunities. These jobs have a future.

For more information about **programs at Florida Community College**, call 904.646.2300.

© 2008 Florida Community College at Jacksonville

To request information, contact the Learner Support Center at info@fccj.edu or 904.646.2300.

Revised July 31, 2008