

## Hey buddy, Can you spare me a job?

[By Ashley Gebb/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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When Yuba City resident Shaun Adams quit work as a cross-country truck driver, he envisioned finding a job closer to home and family.

He did not imagine that two months later, he would be sleeping on a friend's floor and staring at an empty bank account.

But from November to December, the number of unemployed residents in the Mid-Valley area rose by the hundreds, and Adams, 27, became one more face in a crowd of applicants.

Sutter County saw its unemployment rate rise to 15.3 percent in December, up from 11.6 percent a year ago, according to updated jobless rates announced Friday by the state Employment Development Department. Yuba County's rate was slightly lower but had grown from 10.3 percent to 14.4 percent in the same time period. Colusa County continues to have the second highest rate in the state, at 21.6 percent.

California's unemployment rate has almost doubled, reaching 9.1 percent or about 1.7 million people.

An imbalance between a number of job seekers and positions for them to fill is nothing new to the Mid-Valley.

But that imbalance is now compounded by recent layoffs and hiring freezes — a product of the poor economy.

Local residents are left wondering how they will survive.

### **A changing job pool**

For nine months, Marysville resident Kimberly Scott has pored over newspapers, the Internet and local career-building services in hopes of finding a job, but to no avail. She estimates she has applied for 75 or 100 jobs and gone on just four interviews.

"I got laid off and moved here in August," said Scott, 40. "I thought I could get a job no problem."

On Wednesday, she tried a new method - a free video resume filmed by "Good Day Sacramento" in partnership with the Appeal-Democrat. Scott was one of 131 people who turned up for the filming, a number many said was indicative of the failing local job market.

"I'm just trying to be competitive," Scott said.

Many currently in the job market say they are willing to make sacrifices they never imagined.

Some say they are now willing to make long commutes and flip burgers for minimum wage in spite of their education and experience.

Daniel Tormes, 33, drove from Sacramento to Marysville on Wednesday to widen his job search.

An environmental scientist who specializes in mold remediation, he was let go from his previous job one year ago, and has been paying the bills with blue collar jobs while he searches for a new paycheck.

"I'm digging ditches, pulling cables, just doing things to feed my family," he said. "It's been a humbling experience."

In Colusa County, those who recently lost jobs are relying on unemployment claims to get them through difficult times, said Luis Moreno, deputy director of the county's One-Stop.

Some hope businesses are on the way, and others are simply waiting for existing companies such as SK Foods-Colusa Canning to start hiring again.

A year ago, the job center was serving about 170 people each week. Now, according to Moreno, more than 200 people are vying for seven advertised jobs. At 21.6 percent, Colusa County's December unemployment figure was "a lot scarier," than expected, Moreno said.

Farm laborers may be the key to reversing the statistics, he said.

That seasonal workforce, which makes up the majority of the county's unemployed, has been taking advantage of the One-Stop's free training, and looking for year-round jobs.

### **Knowing where to look**

For some residents, the path to a new paycheck may be knowing where to look — and ask — for help.

The One-Stop job centers in all three counties are free and open to the public, offering job listings, resumé guidance and a variety of classes and tutorials to improve job skills.

"Just because you have a degree does not mean you should not come here and check," said Joe D'Andrea, director of Sutter County One-Stop. "We get them all."

At any given time in recent weeks, 14 to 18 people are at the office, checking the employment boards and asking for help, D'Andrea said. The adult education and training classes also are increasing in size.

"As the economy worsens and people lose jobs, they turn toward retraining and education to become more competitive," he said.

Those people will be primed for jobs when the economy does start to turn.

Yuba College is seeing a similar trend. Not only are the unemployed trying to further their education, but many students are opting for more-affordable community colleges instead of four-year universities, said Alice Epler, career planning specialist. The college's enrollment is up about 18 percent from last spring.

Yuba College's Career Center, offers job seekers a new resource. The center recently opened its doors to nonstudents in light of the dismal economy.

The center advertises 175 job listings in the Yuba-Sutter and surrounding areas, including those for mail carriers, tow truck drivers, and skilled jobs in carpentry and plumbing.

But people applying for such jobs are largely overqualified.

And while they are between jobs, some seek public assistance for the first time.

These are known as the "newly poor," said Rob Schotwell, deputy director of the Yuba County Health and Human Services Department.

At a recent meeting in Sacramento, county agencies asked state representatives and the director of the state's Department of Social Services what can be done to help.

"These folks are scratching their heads as well," Shotwell said.

County and local agencies are better equipped than the state to lend assistance, but the core issue is still the number of jobs, Shotwell said.

"It's pretty grim," he said. "We are just doing our darndest to help folks out."

### **Gotta keep going**

When Adams, the former truck driver, applied to be a full-time custodian for the Wheatland Unified School District in November, he was shocked to learn he was one of 90 applicants.

"There's so many people for the same job, it is astonishing to me," he said.

Three years ago, 30 people might have applied for the position, said Paula Kesterson, of the district's human resources department. The school also no longer struggles to fill part-time positions, such as preschool aides and paraeducators, she said. A hiring freeze implemented last week by Superintendent Debra Pearson means such positions will not be available if an opening arises.

Yuba City resident Carla Ritchie, 42, would not let herself be discouraged.

"A lot of people say no, but you have to go for the target," she said.

Ritchie became a familiar face at the Sutter County One-Stop after browsing the job wall nearly every day for three weeks.

"Make a job out of finding a job, and you'll get one," she said.

Her persistence finally paid off. After applying for 25 to 50 jobs, she starts Wednesday as the assistant general manager at a Burger King restaurant. "There's always hope," she said. "Just don't let it get you down."

Adams is holding on to that philosophy, which has brought a few leads and interviews, but nothing solid. He is willing to do anything to bring in a paycheck, even a minimum wage job.

"I'm living on a floor and have \$50 in the bank," he said. "You gotta keep going, you have to keep trying."

### **Where to go for job help:**

#### **Yuba County One-Stop**

1114 Yuba Street, Marysville

530-749-4800

www.yuba1stop.org

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday-Friday

**Colusa County One-Stop**

144/146 Market St., Colusa

530-458-0326

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday

www.colusa1stop.org

**Sutter County One-Stop**

256 Wilbur Avenue, Yuba City

530-822-5120

www.sutteronestop.com

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday-Friday

**Yuba College Career Center**

2088 North Beale Rd, 100 B building, Marysville

530-741-6804 or 530-741-6790

Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday-Friday

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