

Virginia Workforce Center

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VIRGINIA WORKFORCE CENTER NEWS

ROANOKE NEWSLETTER – January/February 2005

Earned Income Tax Credit: This is a federal tax credit designed to assist low and moderate-income workers in increasing their financial stability. EITC is the largest federal aid program benefiting working families but is not utilized by all who are eligible for it. In Roanoke in 2003, it is estimated that 19.2% of eligible persons failed to claim this credit, resulting in \$3 million being unclaimed. Total Action Against Poverty (TAP) has offered a free tax clinic since 2001 to help persons claim the EITC. This year's clinic begins operations on January 24 and has a goal of preparing 479 returns, of which 65% are EITC returns. TAP has a marketing blitz tentatively scheduled for December 20th and is willing to hold "pre-qualification" events at agencies that may have clients likely to qualify for the EITC. Contact Anne Lemon at 344-7006 x104 for additional information.

Velma: The Virginia Electronic Labor Market Access (VELMA) system is a powerful online labor market information tool accessed as a web site on the Internet. It was specifically designed for job seekers, students, employers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others seeking to explore local labor markets in Virginia. VELMA provides fast access to a complete set of employment tools in one website.

Use your mouse to point and click your way through VELMA's services. This system is

designed to be comfortable for everyone, even the person who has little computer experience.

Features to help job seekers and students within the system include:

- Assess your job skills, set goals, and research training providers
- Research possible career choices online
- Review available jobs and apply online
- Research regional labor market information, such as salaries.

Employer users will find the following features helpful:

- Research labor market information on salaries and economic data
- Search for qualified candidates
- Assess the current trends in the job market in Virginia to assist you when advertising your job openings
- Review the current economic climate for your industry anywhere in Virginia
- Analyze the labor market in areas of Virginia that you maybe looking at locating your business.

The user-friendly VELMA system can be found at <http://velma.virtuallmi.com/>

Money Management Classes: The Virginia Center for Financial Education offers free classes monthly at the Roanoke Workforce Center. Classes currently scheduled include:

2/10/05, 5-6pm, When Your Income Decreases But The Bills Don't.

3/1/05, 10:30-11:30am, You and Your Credit Report

3/10/05, 5-6pm, Your Money Action Plan

4/7/05, 5-6pm, Your Credit Action Plan

4/12/05, 10:30-11:30am, When Your Income Decreases But The Bills Don't.

To register call Veronica Maus at (540) 366-2227 ext. 1320.

Monthly Job Fair: Employers and job seekers are invited to participate in the monthly "First Thursday" job fairs held at the Roanoke Workforce Center on the first Thursday of each month from 2pm-6pm. For more information, contact the Center's Business Resource Center at 561-7533.

Tax Assistance Scheduled: The League of Older Americans' Tax Aide Program provides free tax counseling and preparation for all taxpayers with middle and low incomes, with special attention to those age 60 and older. Volunteer counselors are trained to understand the tax laws that affect older persons. Assistance will be available at various locations throughout the Roanoke Valley beginning February 1. Questions can be directed to Jean Curtis at 540-345-0451.

Job Fair 2005: The 7th Annual Southwestern Virginia Regional Job Fair is scheduled for April 5, 2005 at the Roanoke Civic Center Exhibition Hall. High school students attend from 9:30am-11:00am, then the doors open to the public from Noon-3pm. Last year 70 employers and over 3,500 job seekers participated in this event. Employers interested in registering for this event should contact Cheryl Cobbs at 540-853-6556.

Together Rx Access Card Program: An easy to use prescription discount card program available to many individuals under age 65 who are without prescription drug coverage. The program offers savings on more than 275 brand-name prescription products from 10 pharmaceutical companies. In addition, the program automatically notifies users that they may be eligible for further savings, and in some cases, free medicines.

To qualify for the program, applicants must be legal U.S. residents under age 65 and not eligible for Medicare, and without private or public prescription drug coverage, and income eligible. The income limit for the Rx Access Card is \$30,000 for an individual and \$60,000 for a family of four.

Individuals may enroll immediately and free of charge by calling (800) 444-4106 or by visiting www.togetherRXAccess.com. The program will be effective mid-February. Enrollment forms and information about the program will also be available through participating pharmacies and physician's office.

Check your eligibility NOW and see if you can start saving money on your prescription drugs.

Employer Registration and Tax Filing: New employers can complete business registrations on-line and all employers can file and pay unemployment taxes on line using Virginia's I-Reg and I-File programs. For more information, visit the VEC website at www.vec.virginia.gov and click on the links for I-Reg and I-File.

Free On-line Income Tax Preparation and Filing: "Free File" is online tax preparation and electronic filing through a partnership agreement between the IRS and the Free File Alliance, LLC. In other words, you can e-file... free. Visit www.irs.gov and click on the Free File link to get started.

Labor Market Information: Unemployment statistics for Roanoke and other selected areas follow. Rates for other areas can be obtained from the VEC web site located at www.vaemploy.com by clicking on the link for “Labor Market Information.”

ROANOKE MSA (Roanoke and Salem Cities; Botetourt and Roanoke Counties)

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>CIVIL LABOR FORCE</u>	<u>EMPLOYMENT</u>	<u>UNEMPLOYMENT</u>	<u>RATE</u>
December 2004	128,077	124,752	3,325	2.6

<u>Statistical Areas</u>	<u>December 2004</u>	<u>November 2004</u>	<u>December 2003</u>
Bristol MSA	4.3	4.2	6.0
Charlottesville MSA	1.9	2.0	2.7
Covington LMA	3.2	3.2	4.3
Danville MSA	7.3	7.6	9.2
Lynchburg MSA	3.4	3.6	4.6
Henry/Patrick/Martinsville LMA	9.8	10.0	13.3
New River Valley PDC	2.6	3.0	3.9
Norfolk/VA Beach/Newport News	3.9	4.1	3.9
Northern Virginia MSA	1.7	1.9	2.2
Richmond/Petersburg MSA	3.6	3.7	3.8
Roanoke MSA	2.6	2.7	3.1
STATE	3.0	3.2	3.5
NATIONAL	5.1	5.2	5.4

<u>Roanoke VEC Office Statistics</u>	<u>December-04</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Job Openings Received (7/1/04-6/30/05)	650	5,053
Applicants Registered for Work (7/1/04-6/30/05)	1,446	9,015
Total UI Benefits Paid (1/1/04-12/31/04)	\$772,017.34	\$9,291,404.09

Consumer Price Index for December 2004:

All Urban Consumers: 190.3 (1982-84=100), down 0.4% over the month and up 3.3% over the year.

<u>NON-FARM EMPLOYMENT</u>	<u>December 2004</u>	<u>November 2004</u>	<u>December 2003</u>
Roanoke MSA	144,300	145,000	143,800

Non-Farm employment is down over the month and up 500 or 0.35% over the year.