

Workforce center a comprehensive career help source

By **ONOFRIO CASTIGLIA**
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — For those residents looking for a new job or career path, the Valley Workforce Center at 419 N. Cameron St. is “a one-stop shop,” according to Gov. Terry McAuliffe, who presided over a ribbon-cutting ceremony

there Tuesday.

“I need skilled workers,” McAuliffe said, referring to a problem employers are having regionally and across the state filling open technical career opportunities with skilled applicants.

Unemployment in the com-

See **Jobs**, Page **A10**

Jobs

from **Page A1**

monwealth is low, about 3.8 percent, McAuliffe said. Still, open positions in cybersecurity, manufacturing, robotics, HVAC, commercial driving and other technical fields are remaining open because job-seekers don't have the skills needed to fill them.

"I either fill these jobs, or they'll go someplace else."

The office, run by the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Services Board (SVWSB), is meant to be an all-inclusive walk-in resource center for people looking for new or better work opportunities in the Winchester area. It's set up to deal with an individual holistically, finding out who they are, what they want and need and what is available for them in terms of job training and job placement, and guiding the person through the application and interview process.

Located on the Our Health Campus, the 5,500-square-foot space is home to three organizations: SVWSB (Valley Workforce), which puts job-seekers who need skills in touch with training and necessary funding; the Virginia Employment Commission, which helps people who have training find jobs; and Lord Fairfax Community College basic adult education services, which offers GED and English as a second language classes, as well as literacy and mathematics tutoring to job-seekers who need it.

"We've got training going on here, we've got job searching going on here, and we have funding," said Charles Peacock, office manager. He said Valley Workforce is also looking into night hours and community workshops on resume and application writing.

The office, which employs about 15 people across the three agencies, opened in May, after moving from a 1,050-square-foot office, also on the Our Health campus.

Sharon Johnson, CEO of SVWSB, said the office is "by far" the largest of five outposts. The other four are in Harrisonburg, Fishersville, Luray and Buena Vista.

Johnson said the Winchester office's location on the Our Health campus, which is run by Valley Health, puts workforce services in close proximity to other local nonprofits — enormously beneficial to

both the people being helped and to nonprofit employees.

"You may have multiple [appointments,] and they're all right here," Johnson said. Medical, social and employment services are all available on the campus; such concentration is "unusual," she said, and will make the board better "able to serve the job-seekers and businesses in the northern Shenandoah Valley."

Other resources at the center include placement into further education, resume writing, interview practice, and help with financial and other aid needed for

school. Prospective students are walked through funding options and grant opportunities for schooling, such as the Workforce Credential Grant, which uses state money to pay for up to two-thirds of tuition for eligible participants.

And there is a range of funding available to cover the other third.

The Valley Workforce Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, with the exception of Wednesday, when it opens at 9:30 a.m.

— Contact Onofrio Castiglia at ocastiglia@winchesterstar.com

The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, which works with disabled people, and the Senior Community Service Em.