

SLIDELL BUSINESS News and Notes

Workforce: Shortages for today are very real Chamber meeting hears from experts and their plans

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SLIDELL – Listening to four experts speaking on the subject of the workforce in St. Tammany Parish it is apparent there is a growing trend that is preparing young people to provide a strong and multi-talented hiring pool in the future.

However, the current situation in the country, as well as St. Tammany, where there are “Help Wanted” signs on nearly ever corner, brought few suggestions for how it will be alleviated anytime soon.

The St. Tammany Chamber hosted a “State of the Workforce Breakfast” this past week, drawing a large crowd of business leaders from the east and west sides of the parish. It was clear there is a hunger to find answers to the current shortage of people to hire.

Panel discussion speakers included Dr. William Wainwright, chancellor of Northshore Technical Community College (NTCC); Dr. Daniel McCarthy, dean for the College of Science and Technology at Southeastern Louisiana University; St. Tammany Public Schools Superintendent Frank Jabbia; and Melissa Kirsch, executive director for the Workforce Development Board in St. Bernard and St. Tam-

‘We have to show kids that a four-year school is not for everyone and there are many other pathways to very good careers.’

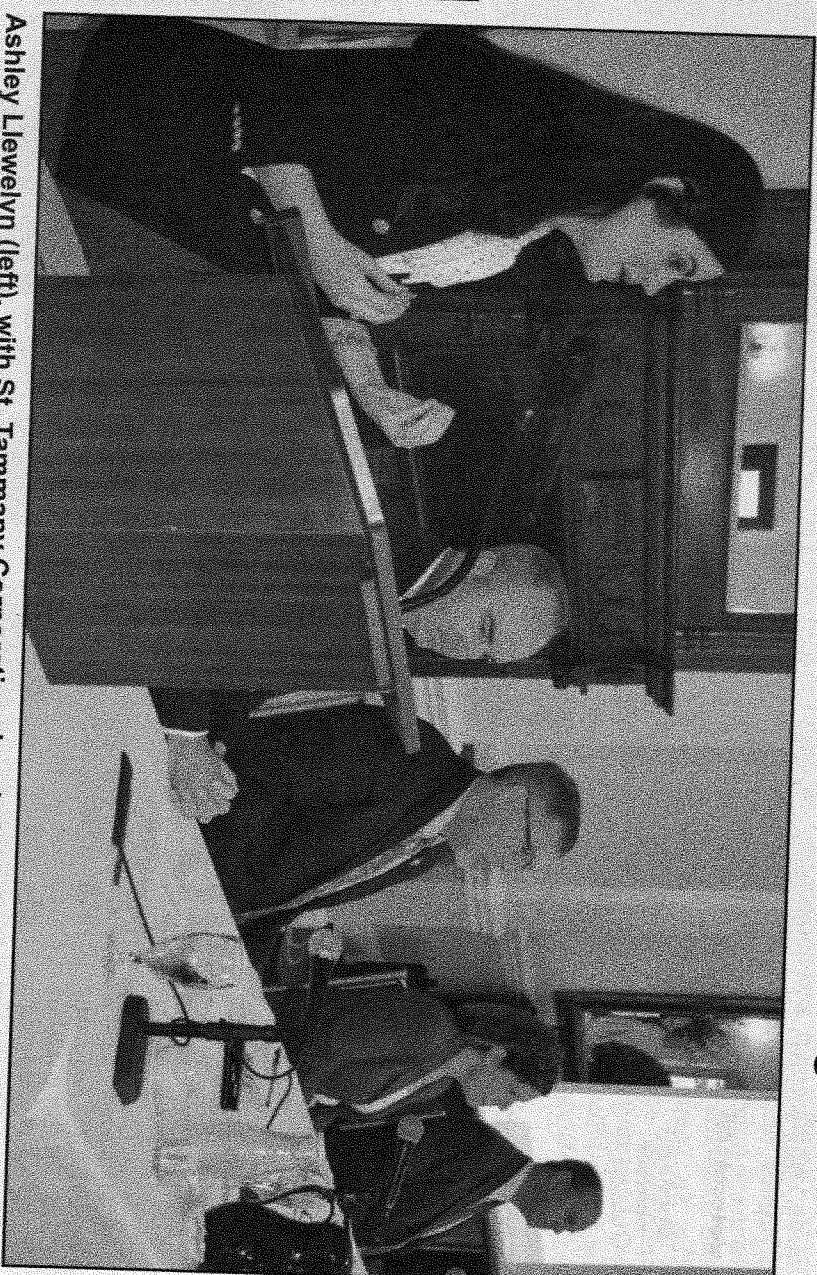
—NTCC
Chancellor
Dr. William
Wainwright

many.

Ashleigh Llewellyn with St. Tammany Corporation was MC for the event and led the discussion that especially highlighted the way various educational and workforce options are ramping up education training for students to be prepared for the career of their choice.

All agreed that parents and school leaders need to help students as young as junior high begin finding their career path, especially since there is wide agreement these days about the varied options—many that do not include a four year college.

“A generation ago our kids were being told they wouldn’t be successful if they didn’t get a four-year degree,”



Ashley Llewellyn (left), with St. Tammany Corporation, headed the program at the St. Tammany Chamber Workforce Breakfast. Four experts on the topic headed a panel discussion, including (from left) Dr. Will Wainwright with Northshore Technical College, St. Tammany Schools Superintendent Frank Jabbia, Workforce Development Board Executive Director Melissa Kirsch, and Dr. Daniel McCarthy from Southeastern Louisiana University. (Staff photo by Kevin Chiri.)

said Jabbia. “We know now that it was a disservice to kids to tell them that. There are so many different career paths and we are now making the options clear to the students in our school system.”

Jabbia noted the many careers that can come from a year or two at NTCC, while high schools are offering many options for students to get certified in different professions with newly-offered classes before graduation. The superintendent also highlighted the military as yet another career path they make sure students are aware of.

Wainwright was among all panel members noting the tremendous need for more nurses and health care

workers and his school is already finding ways to speed up the process of getting degrees for students.

“We are working with existing health care facilities and getting more partnerships where current nurses are teaching classes,” he said. “Another area where we have a great need is for heavy equipment operators, so we are starting classes, and creating more relationships with existing businesses to provide internships.”

“The intern opportunities with local businesses are so important since we frequently see those interns become the next hire for the company due to the relationship they build,” he added.

COVID has hindered the speed at which

nurses are graduating from four-year colleges or Northshore Technical since requirements at hospitals suddenly did not allow interns to come to their facilities.

“Internships are so important since they help a student envision what a career at that business would be like,” added Llewellyn. “That’s why we need more businesses to open the door for internships so students are exposed to different careers.”

Kirsch said their agency, which offers a variety of job training options to fit employees to needed jobs, said they have programs where businesses can pay a small portion of training costs, and the Workforce Develop-

ment Board pays the other portion.

Several of the panel members pointed out that today’s potential employee is different than a generation ago.

“It used to be that money was the number one thing to potential hires. But even though we see a lot of businesses throwing bigger salaries or more money per hour at the problem, we have found a lot of young people are interested in more than the money,” Kirsch said. “In today’s world this generation is interested in time off, work flexibility and addressing the childcare challenge since that is so expensive.”

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