

[home](#) > [city hall](#) > [press releases](#)

Job Fair Focuses on Solid Alternatives to College

More than 600 Perris Valley high-school seniors met skilled workers in a variety of fields that don't require a college degree—Marines, law officers, emergency responders, bakers, welders, ironworkers, and electricians.

The Nov. 3 Career Fair at the Bob Glass Gymnasium introduced teen-agers soon to be in the job market to working pros who earn solid, middle-class salaries, enjoy paid vacations and health insurance and accrue retirement benefits to ensure comfortable living when they leave the workforce.

Attendees included various organizations within the building and construction trades, the United States Armed Forces, Riverside County Sheriff, Cal Fire, University of California, Riverside Extension Center, and Mount San Jacinto College Career and Technical Education program. Both Perris Union High School District and Val Verde Unified School District attended the event, including students from Citrus Hill High School, Rancho Verde High School, Orange Vista High School, Val Verde High School, the Student Success Academy and the Val Verde Academy (virtual school.)



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke talks to Perris High School students during a recent job fair at the City of Perris.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke welcomed the students and employers to the job fair.

"This kind of event really gives our students good exposure they would not normally get," Busch said. "It's good for them to explore other employment options. Life isn't always about getting a college degree. You can get a job in the trades that are good jobs with good pay. Our staff did a great job in organizing this program. There are a lot of vendors here and that makes us happy."

Burke, who works with job seekers as part of her job with the State of California, agreed that skilled tradespeople are highly sought and well paid. She chatted with several students as she visited various vendors and posed for photos with the teen-agers.

"Not everyone is going to go to college," she said. "Schools need to provide skills so students can work in the working world. Highly-paid skilled blue-collar jobs often springboard individuals to further their education in the future. The turnout today is great. We are planting the seeds for future careers. Perris is once again leading the charge and heading in the right direction. We are leading the way, not just in our City but the whole region."



Ironworker Tom Robles says union ironworkers can make \$61 an hour after just four years on the job.

Looking for good help

Ironworker Tom Robles from Local 433 in Los Angeles said he is always looking for good men and women in his trade.

Union ironworkers earned \$27 an hour as beginning apprentices and \$64.55 per hour after they become "journeymen" in four years. There's plenty of work in Southern California, Robles said, including working on a new football complex to serve as the home of the Los Angeles Rams.

"We're looking for physically fit men and women ready to go to work," Robles said. "You've got to want to work. If you show up to work, I will get the work out of you. It can be hard, demanding and dangerous but if you listen and learn, you'll be all right."

Jenny Hughes, a specialist in career technical education at Mount San Jacinto College, said skilled tradespeople will be needed desperately in the near future. About two-thirds of the country's skilled labor force is expected to retire in the next decade. That means opportunities for today's students interested in jobs like computer engineering, cyber security, the construction trades, culinary skills, nursing, firefighting, homeland security and law enforcement.

She praised the City for sponsoring the job fair.

"It's very impactful," Hughes said. "Communities all over this region should be doing these kinds of job fairs."

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