

- Meet the JobLink Greeters
- Customer Service Tips
- Congratulations Surry County!

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# JobLink Connections

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## Forsyth County JobLink Achieves Level II Status

After months of hard work and a lot of sweat and tears, the Forsyth County JobLink System is proud to announce that we have been granted a Level II Charter from the State of NC.

The project was a joint process of the Forsyth County JobLink System partners who worked together to develop and write the Business Plan. However, the “hero” in this process, was JobLink System Coordinator, Ron Wilkins, who worked tirelessly to write, re-write, cajole partners to provide data, copy, and collate. On top of all this, he spent many hours on the phone, Internet and in meetings with Linda Strong, our State JobLink Manager, making sure that we had everything we needed to



meet State guidelines and get our Centers up to standard.

After Ms. Strong reviewed the chartering documents, Ron once again spent hours collecting more data, recompiling and remaking the notebooks.

It was a long process that ended at the State Workforce Development Conference in Greensboro in October, when the Forsyth County JobLink System was awarded the Level II Charter. Along with this charter comes a cash award of \$25,000 that will be used by the JobLink System to improve customer service in the Centers.

The comprehensive Forsyth County JobLink system site, located at the Employment Security System, holds the main charter; with sites at Goodwill Industries and Forsyth Tech.



Accepting the Level II Charter plaque. pictured left to right are: Forrest Lineberry (JobLink Coordinator/Forsyth Tech/West Campus location), Anthony Cornell (JobLink Coordinator/Goodwill location), Archie Hicks, ESC Manager, Ron Wilkins, FC JobLink System Coordinator & Roger Shackelford Director of Workforce Development for the NC Commerce Department



**Odessa Page**

Greets our visitors at the Comprehensive JobLink at the ESC



**Stacy Wharton**

Makes visitors feel welcome at the JobLink at Goodwill



**Linda Poindexter**

Welcomes visitors at the JobLink at the Forsyth Tech West Campus location

## Meet the JobLink Greeters

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression! Our greeters at the 3 locations of the Forsyth County JobLink system know that. They are three very special people who do a fantastic job of welcoming our new and returning visitors when they come to the JobLink Centers. But if you think that's all they do, you couldn't be more wrong! Take a minute to learn about who they are, and why they do what they do!

### *Odessa Page*

After 32 years of working for the ESC, Ms. Odessa W. Page, decided in March 2005 that it was time to retire. But after 3 1/2 years she realized retirement just wasn't her thing. "I wanted to continue working with the public. I enjoyed talking with clients and solving problems. It made getting a smile, a 'thank you', or a 'you made my day' worthwhile. I worked on a few assignments with temporary agencies, but I wasn't working with the public. I just felt it would be good for me to come back. When I first started with ESC, everything was on paper; not computers. The staff had to work overtime and sometimes take work home". Now there is less staff and more work for us to maintain. We have to do more with less! Everyday I assist clients so they will have a short wait for service. Sometimes the job is difficult. No matter what though, you need to have a clear mind, patience and the ability to understand how to continue assisting clients."

One only needs to see Odessa in action to realize she knows what she's doing, because she does it so well!

### *Linda Poindexter*

Ms. Linda Poindexter greets all JobLink visitors at the Forsyth Tech West Campus location." I try to make sure all our visitors are greeted with a smile, and I offer them any information to make their time at our location worth their trip here. I love what I do, and I enjoy meeting people. I try to treat people the way I would like to be treated. I believe that's important."

Linda does such a great job serving our customers. We're glad she is on our team!

### *Stacy Wharton*

Stacy Wharton says, "Every day that I come into Goodwill Industries of NWNC, I am honored to meet and greet each person with a good morning and when anyone asks me how I am doing, I am forced to say to them, "I'm blessed!" God blessed me to overcome many issues that would be considered obstacles by some people.

"My life was no picnic", says Stacy. "I survived many challenges that came my way. I believe that this job came to me as a way for me to help others know that life may send some lemons your way, but that's when you make lemonade!"

Stacy greets not only all visitors to the JobLink at Goodwill, she is the first point of contact for any visitor to that facility. She is the perfect person for the job!

Stacy's infectious personality and smile sets everyone at ease. If you have the good fortune of meeting her, you will certainly walk away feeling better than you did before she uttered a word to you.

## 4th Annual Veterans Stand Down

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Triad Homeless Veterans Stand Down was held Friday September 26 at the NC National Guard Armory located at 110 Franklin Boulevard in Greensboro. Homeless veterans from across the Triad, and as far away as Charlotte, were brought to the National Guard Armory to receive services. Representatives were on hand to speak with the homeless veterans, who were offered free physical screenings, dental screenings, substance abuse services, standard haircuts, clothing, and hygiene items.

Employment services were provided by JobLink staff members using the JobLink Mobile Unit. Hot meals were served throughout the event.

According to event coordinator Archie Barrow, Veterans Unit Supervisor with the Greensboro ESC, over 200 veterans received services this year; an increase from the 140 that received services in 2007. “We were able to offer more services this year than last year.”

Plans for next year’s event are already in the works. Here’s hoping we will be able to reach as many and more than we did this year.



Vet supervisor Tony Mizzi and other event volunteers are pleased with the outcome of their hard work

## Forsyth County DSS Receives Award

The Forsyth County Department of Social Services was recognized by the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services. At their meeting on Wednesday, November 26, the Board of the Department of Social Services announced that the Forsyth County DSS won a statewide Best Practices Award. The award was in recognition of the Work First Employment Lab located at the Department of Social Services and



DSS staff pictured from left to right Cynthia Sullivan, Valerie Sifford, and Linda Henderson

staffed by employees of the NC Employment Security Commission JobLink (Linda Henderson, Cynthia Sullivan and Valerie Sifford). This collaboration with DSS comes as a result of a three-year grant that was awarded in 2006. The purpose of the lab is to assist participants in obtaining gainful employment in preference to receiving financial assistance. This program has successfully placed over 200 during the last reporting year.

## Pressing Forward

We Want  
You!



*The Forsyth County JobLink System is developing its Rewards and Recognition Program and we need your input. If you want to serve on a subcommittee to help shape the program, call Ron Wilkins, Forsyth County JobLink System Coordinator at (336) 776-6729.*

As a substitute teacher for over 10 years, it was my practice to look for a part-time job during the summer.. About two years ago while teaching at Brunson, I ran into an elderly woman who worked for the Urban League. The school season was about to end and I was seeking a part-time. She said the Urban League had a program for people 55 and older. Because I had enrolled at Salem College, I needed hours in the morning only. I went to the Urban League and applied and the following week, they placed me at the Employment Security Commission for training. I was thankful. Sometimes you pray for the help you need and you *get* exactly what you need.



I have struggled for many years to complete my education. By God's grace, I raised six children, several of whom went on to college, and I assisted with the now eighteen grand-children. For the first time in my life, I am a fulltime student working at a steady part-time job! I want to thank the Urban League and the Employment Security Commission for considering an elderly woman for employment at a time when the economy is so dire.

This has been a long journey for me. I will graduate in May 2009 with a degree in Creative Writing. My plans were to go to graduate school, but recently I was selected as a finalist in the North Carolina Literary Competition; judged by the fiction editor of the Atlantic Monthly. Out of over 300 submissions, my short story entitled, "Trouble in the Sixties" was one of the top 10. This has introduced me to other possibilities.

Another blessing that came my way through my job at the JobLink/ESC was the Job Corps and Ms. Jackie Bigby, who have made such a beautiful difference in the life of my 16-year old granddaughter. She is currently away at school with the Job Corp. Again, more than all things, I have learned to thank the people and God for success that comes sooner or later.

# Why Soft Skills Matter

What are soft skills and why do they matter? During a recent interview with the New York Times, Peggy Klaus, the author of “Brag!” helped explain these two important questions.

She began by explaining the difference between hard skills and soft skills. “The hard skills are the technical expertise you need to get the job done. The soft skills are really everything else — competencies that go from self-awareness to one’s attitude to managing one’s career to handling critics, not taking things personally, taking risks, getting along with people and many, many more.”

So why are soft skills important?

Soft skills, also known as emotional intelligence, can be a huge factor that can positively or negatively impact an individual’s career. While some might term this skill set as “touchy-feely” the consequences of poor soft skills are clear. As Ms. Klaus states “What is so warm and fuzzy about how to deal with a colleague who steals credit, pitching an investor for his multimillion solar portfolio or inspiring and motivating people after your company has laid off



thousands.”

I’ve built my consulting business helping organizations better understand the importance and results that can be gained by placing equal emphasis on both the hard skills as well as the soft skills. The results I’ve seen when soft skills have been enhanced has been impressive both for the individual employee and the organizational culture.

The Job Readiness Skills course I teach for Forsyth Technical Community College has incorporated more soft skills training into the curriculum. The importance of listening, developing professional relationships, and accepting feedback are all examples of soft skill training we cover in our course. It’s not only important for our students to obtain employment we also want to provide them with the skills necessary to make important contributions once they are employed.

*Lisa Fields has over 20 years experience in training, organizational development, adult education, home visitation, counseling and social work. Lisa invites you to view her webpage @ [www.lisafieldsassociates.com](http://www.lisafieldsassociates.com)*

## Thumbs Up to Surry County!



The Surry County JobLink/ESC was granted a Level II Charter from the State of North Carolina. Proudly receiving the Level II Charter plaque from Roger Shackleford, Director of Workforce Development for the NC Commerce Department are William Pass of Workforce Development, Reni Geiger of Goodwill Industries of NWNC, Carmen Parker Eldridge of Surry Community College, Roberta Wessling of Surry County JL/ESC .



# The 10 Commandments of Great Customer Service

Article by [Susan A. Friedman](#), originally printed on About.com

1. ***You are in business to service customer needs, and you can only do that if you know what it is your customers want.*** When you truly listen to your customers, they let you know what they want and how you can provide good service.
2. ***Be a good listener.*** Take the time to identify customer needs by asking questions and concentrating on what the customer is really saying. Listen to their words, tone of voice, body language, and most importantly, how they feel. Beware of making assumptions - thinking you intuitively know what the customer wants. Do you know what three things are most important to your customer?
3. ***Communicate regularly*** so that you are aware of problems or upcoming needs. The more you know your customers, the better you become at anticipating their needs.
4. ***Make customers feel important and appreciated.*** Treat them as individuals. Always use their name and find ways to compliment them, but be sincere. People value sincerity.
5. ***Help customers understand your processes.*** If customers don't understand them, they can get confused, impatient and angry. Take time to explain how the process works and how they simplify transactions.
6. ***Always look for ways to help your customers.*** Always do what you say you are going to do.
7. ***Know how to apologize.*** When something goes wrong, apologize. Deal with problems immediately and let customers know what you have done. Make it simple for customers to complain. Value their complaints. Customers are not always right, but they always deserve the right to be heard.
8. ***Give more than expected.*** Since the future of all companies lies in keeping customers happy, think of ways to elevate yourself above the competition.
9. ***Get regular feedback.*** Encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could improve. There are several ways in which you can find out what customers think and feel about your services.
10. ***Treat coworkers well.*** Coworkers are your internal customers and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how important they are.

# Are You a Customer Service STAR?



Providing good customer service is so much easier than it sounds. If you eat out regularly, you know the importance of good customer service; particularly during the busy lunch hour.

We all know what it's like to be treated poorly in a place of business, but sometimes we don't realize we are doing the same thing to people we deal with on a daily basis. Being a Customer Service STAR is pretty easy. It's really just a matter of being polite, courteous, and friendly. So, what does it mean to be a STAR?

**"S"**mile there's hardly a warmer greeting to a person entering your place of business. Have you ever noticed when you smile, generally, people smile back?

**"T"**ry to determine the person's needs quickly.

**"A"**cknowledge them by calling out or approaching the person.

**"R"**espond to questions as completely as possible (or know where to get the needed information)

A smile, a friendly "hello", a genuine concern for your customers' needs is what Customer Service is all about. No special training is required, just be nice! Not only should you remember the "Golden Rule" you should try to adhere to the 10 Commandments of Great Customer Service. (See page 6)

## Make It Count!

North Carolina  
**JobLink**  
Career Center  
Career Planning, Training & Placement Services

**Automated Office Check-In System**

Indicate the reason(s) for your visit today by touching the appropriate boxes below. To uncheck a reason, touch the box again. Please touch the Continue button when you are done.

<p><b>Services Provided by Staff</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Career Counseling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Help With Job Search</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on the Job Market</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Determine Your Job Skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Training Class or Workshop</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information on Training &amp; Education</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Other Services</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Case Management</p> <p><b>Unemployment Insurance Claims Services</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> File a New UI Claim</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Problem With a UI Claim</p> <p><b>Self Services</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use a Computer in Career Resource Room (search jobs, prepare resume, e-mail, etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use the phone or fax machine</p>
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Don't forget to issue swipe cards to your clients

### **JobLink Connections**

is a newsletter by and for partners of the Forsyth County JobLink System

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***Want to contribute?***

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## Forsyth County



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**Your future begins here...  
Tomorrow begins today!**



### Our mission is

**“To promote workforce development and employment opportunities for the Northwest Piedmont Region by providing access to resources and connecting jobseekers and employers.”**



**We're on the web  
[www.northwestpiedmontworks.org](http://www.northwestpiedmontworks.org)**

## Governor-Elect Perdue stops by the Prosperity Center to say Hello!



Listening attentively to governor-elect Beverly Perdue are Reni Geiger of Goodwill Ind., Laura Elliott, Rep Larry Womble, and Rep. Earline Parmon

Before being sworn in as the *first* female governor of North Carolina, then governor-elect Beverly Perdue stopped in at the Career Connections and Prosperity Center to offer words of encouragement to the staff and visitors at the center. She took a tour of the facility, learning about the various agencies that operate from the Prosperity Center and assured all present that she will continue to work hard to bring jobs to North Carolina.