

# Beacon Council on march to get 4,000 veterans on payrolls

By SCOTT BLAKE

The Beacon Council has a new mission: help 4,000 veterans, including newly discharged military personnel, find jobs in the next two years.

Unemployment among veterans is higher than the overall population, as they face various challenges in returning to the civilian world, said Diana Gonzalez, program coordinator for the Miami-Dade Defense Alliance, which is part of the Beacon Council and is heading the hiring effort.

The council, which is Miami-Dade County's economic development arm, plans to test the commitment of companies and organizations – including some national corporations – to follow through on their statements of support for hiring and helping veterans.

The council and the alliance also want to bring other em-

ployers into the program – called “Joining Forces Miami” – that have not yet given much thought to the issue.

“We want to check back with these employers to see if veterans are being hired or not and, if not, we want to find out about the obstacles and work to resolve them,” Ms. Gonzalez told Miami Today.

There are some incentives. In addition to helping jobless veterans, participating businesses can be eligible for federal tax credits and also might be able to enroll veterans in job training programs at no cost to their companies, she said.

“Some programs that could help are not currently tied together,” she added. “We want to make sure whatever resources that are out there are being used.”

According to Ms. Gonzalez, there are more than 67,000 veterans of all ages in Miami-Dade.



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**Frank Nero**

The Beacon Council and its 274 member companies are “committed to energizing and collaborating with the South Florida business community” to collectively strive to hire 4,000 veterans by the end of 2013, the council announced.

“If there is no job training available, in those cases, we want to work with colleges and universities to see what training could be done to make veterans more employable,” Ms.

Gonzalez said.

Targeted to help in the effort will be major public and private employers, including those recruited to Miami-Dade.

Among those targeted will be the US Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Defense Communities, Miami-Dade County, Workforce Florida, Enterprise Florida, local chambers of commerce, local veterans support organizations, The United Way and local universities.

“Joining Forces Miami will provide our organization with a conduit to reach out to our local business community to ensure that we are maximizing the resources available to assist our veterans and military community,” Beacon Council CEO and President Frank Nero said in a statement.

The program is an offshoot of a White House initiative spearheaded by First Lady Michelle Obama and Vice President Joe Biden.

“The First Lady and Dr. Biden have met with military families, learned about their successes and challenges, and made it their priority to support them,” a White House statement reads.

“Joining Forces is a comprehensive national initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to give our service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned.”

# More sputtering economy ahead for Florida, forecasters say

By SCOTT BLAKE

Florida may have to endure another one or two years of sputtering recovery before the economy builds sustainable momentum, a newly released report states.

The picture in South Florida is largely the same, as employment and housing starts are expected to gradually increase in coming years, according to the “Florida & Metro Forecast 2011-2014” from the University of Central Florida’s Institute for Economic Competitiveness.

“We expect that Florida’s recovery will slowly build momentum in 2012 and 2013 before approaching full speed in 2014,” the report states.

“This economic growth will eventually help the labor market move along its own longer and more difficult path to recovery, and even the beleaguered construction sector will begin to see job growth by 2013.”

In the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach metro area, personal in-

come – including wages, investment interest and other sources – is expected to grow by 4% annually through 2014. The average annual wage level at \$52,200 will continue to be the highest among the 12 Florida metro areas studied.

Greater Miami is expected to average population growth of 1.3% a year. Employment is expected to rise 1.6% each year, with unemployment averaging its current 10.7% level through 2014.

The area’s fastest-growing job sector is expected to be professional and business services at 4.2% a year, followed by the construction-mining sector at 2.3% a year and education and health services at 1.9% a year.

The report listed the region’s top employers as:

- Miami-Dade County Schools – 44,132 employees
- Broward County Public Schools – 39,714 employees
- Federal government – 36,600 employees
- State government – 33,500 employees

employees

- Miami-Dade County – 32,000 employees

- University of Miami – 12,765 employees

- Publix Super Markets – 11,760 employees

- Baptist Health South Florida – 11,615 employees

- Jackson Health System – 10,500 employees

- American Airlines – 9,000 employees

- Miami-Dade College – 6,500 employees

For now, the labor and housing markets continue to be major obstacles to Florida’s economy recovery.

“The Siamese twins of Florida’s economy, the labor and housing markets, are both experiencing a creeping convalescence and have not yet actively participated in the economic recovery,” the report states. “In 2013 and 2014 both will be standing on much sturdier legs.”

In South Florida, housing starts are

expected to increase to 10,220 next year, up from 7,131 this year, according to the report.

In 2013 and 2014, South Florida housing starts are projected to jump to 17,031 and 25,445, respectively. The latter total would be the highest number of annual housing starts in the area since 2006, when there were 32,730. Area housing starts peaked at 41,642 in 2005 and hit bottom at 3,627 in 2009, the report shows.

Currently, the report states, Florida’s consumers generally have more economic burdens than consumers in a number of other states. The reasons: greatly diminished home equity, persistently high levels of unemployment and meager job creation to date.

“The stark reality is that the damage inflicted upon household balance sheets by the financial crisis, and the housing crisis in particular, will linger for many years,” the report states. “This lost housing wealth in particular will be a burden to Florida’s homeowners for decades.”

# Miami’s fairs part of global trend changing economics of art

By MARILYN BOWDEN

As attendance at art fairs around the world explodes, experts say exhibiting in them is becoming crucial for artists and galleries.

In 2011, Miami International Art Fair drew more than 19,000 collectors, almost doubling attendance from its first year in 2010, said Lee Ann Lester, co-founder with husband David Lester of the event. In the past two years, attendance at Art Palm Beach grew from 8,000 to 19,000.

The Lesters are founders of International Fine Art Expositions, which pioneered the Miami Beach market with Art Miami in 1991 and established Art Asia Hong Kong in 1992, Palm Beach International Art & Antique Fair and Art Palm Beach in 1997, Beverly Hills International Art & Antique Fair in 1998 and Dallas International Art & Antique Fair in 2000.

In 2003, Ms. Lester said, they sold the fairs, and when they returned to the business in 2008 “we saw some pretty dramatic changes.

“The gallery business as we once

knew it was a centrally located high-traffic operation concentrated in London and New York.

“Now, with rising rents, there isn’t one gallery left on London’s Bond Street. In New York as well rents have tripled and the galleries had to leave.”

In their place, art fairs have picked up momentum, she said, and they’re reaching a broader demographic.

“In Miami and Palm Beach, we’ve seen a tremendous increase in attendance,” she said, “and many other art fairs are seeing this as well. There is significantly more interest among the general public in art and the cultural entertainment that fairs bring to a community.”

Ms. Lester attributed this in part to continued cultural diversification.

“As our population ages and our cities become more international,” she said, “we have more people from countries in which going to art fairs and museums is part of the culture, and this is starting a whole new culture for Americans.”

Whether increased attendance translates into more sales depends on how

buyers feel about the economy, Ms. Lester said.

“No trade show or consumer show can supersede the states of the economy, but a recent report commissioned by several art dealers associations concluded only about 5% of sales are made in actual galleries. They happen at fairs and other events. You have to go where your clients are.”

The 13th edition of New York’s Armory Show last March attracted a record-breaking 65,000 people, said Paul Morris, Armory Show founder and vice president of MMPI Art Shows & Events. Many dealers reported sold-out booths, he said, and some “blue-chip sales” were reported.

The fair’s 2011 focus was on modern and contemporary Latin American art, and Mr. Morris said Latin American galleries reported “great success.”

For local galleries, Art Basel is just the beginning, said Andreina “Nina” Fuentes, treasurer of the temporary incorporation board of the newly formed Miami Art Dealers Association, or MADA, and principal of Hardcore Art Contemporary Space in Wynwood.

“Since my gallery was established in 2005, we’ve seen a lot of growth both here and in the Midtown area,” she said. “I thought that the recession would affect that, but actually we have more artists and studios here than ever.

“Some come and go, but there’s a group of about 25 galleries that have been here from three to 10 years.”

But survival, Ms. Fuentes said, depends on reaching beyond the local community.

“Our art season in Miami lasts only from now through February,” she said. “To make it through the rest of the year, we have to travel to other shows. We have to promote ourselves outside Miami to survive.”

Ms. Fuentes said she goes to shows in New York and elsewhere, and to two fairs in Europe every summer. Her clients, she said, are from New York, Europe, Texas and Latin America.

“Through MADA we are able to promote ourselves outside Miami,” she said, “and now more collectors from outside are coming here.”