

Local jobless rates show improvement

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Columbia-Greene Media

Unemployment rates for counties across the state have continued to fall as 2016 reached the halfway point in June.

The New York State Department of Labor released the unemployment statistics for June 2016 on July 21 and delivered good news for Greene and Columbia counties.

Columbia County had the lowest unemployment rate in the state, at 3.2 percent, while Greene County came in at 4.3 percent.

The report revealed the state's private sector job count increased by 23,900, to a new record high of 7,918,400, according to the state Department of Labor. The state unemployment rate is at its lowest level since August 2007.

"I am very pleased to see we are the lowest in the state again," Columbia County Chairman Board of Supervisors Chairman Matt Murrell, R-Stockport, said. "I hope this trend continues; we have a lot of good small businesses in the county."

Among the low rates in the Capital Region include Saratoga County with the second lowest across the state with 3.4 percent. Albany and Rensselaer counties each came in at 4 percent.

In the Hudson Valley, Dutchess and Ulster counties came in at 4 percent, while Ulster County's rate was 4.5 percent.

Columbia County Tourism Administrator Ann Cooper said she wasn't surprised to see the rate so low in the county and that it was encouraging for the future.

Across the state, in Hamilton County, the rate was 3.5 percent and in Nassau County, the rate came in at 3.6 percent.

"The economy has been very strong here in Greene County, new jobs are coming in and many businesses are searching for help," Jeff Friedman, executive director of the Greene County

Rate of Unemployment by County of Residence		
New York State, June 2016 vs. June 2015 (Seasonally adjusted)		
COUNTY	June 2016	June 2015
Albany	4.0%	4.4%
Columbia	3.2%	3.9%
Dutchess	4.0%	4.7%
Greene	4.3%	5.7%
Rensselaer	4.0%	4.5%
Saratoga	3.4%	4.1%
Ulster	4.0%	4.8%

Rate of Unemployment by County of Residence

Chamber of Commerce, said. “Our members have been inquiring regularly about needing more employees for their businesses.”

Friedman said the issue of underemployment has been an ongoing issue for Greene and Columbia for some time and a workforce development board is trying to find solutions to fix the problem.

Friedman and Greene County Administrator Shaun Groden agree there is a trend of workers considered to be highly skilled but working low-paying jobs. Groden said workforce development needs to take place to help the employees redevelop their skills for the 21st century and toward a more tech-based workplace.

“This is more good news for us when the rate goes down,” Groden said. “On the flip side, we are getting to the point now where employers are having a hard time finding qualified people to fill the positions.”

Groden said the Greene County economy’s main drivers are tourism and retail. He said historically the county will be the last to see its rate decrease because of its lack of manufacturing to fall back on.

Capital Region State Department of Labor Market Analyst Jim Ross said the state’s private sector job count is “based on a payroll survey of 18,000 New York employers conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics.”

According to the report, the federal government calculates the state’s unemployment rate based on the results of the current population survey, which contacts around 3,100 households in New York State each month.

“It’s not uncommon to see Columbia County among the lowest rates in the state, we are seeing a lot of the baby boomers retiring,” Ross said. “Many young people are coming in and taking their jobs as the retirees are leaving the work force.”

According to the July 21 press release from the Department of Labor, any labor force statistics are based on statistical regression models specifically given to each state by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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