



On the Economic Scene



A weekly economic development briefing from the Volusia County Department of Economic Development

February 8, 2016

ONLINE VERSION AT FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG

CHOCOLATE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY? -- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 Annual Survey of Manufactures, Products and Services, \$14.9 billion is the estimated value of chocolate and cocoa product shipments for manufacturers of these products. The median age for men and women at first marriage is age 29.5 and 27.6, respectively.

SOLAR INDUSTRY ADDING LOTS OF JOBS -- A recent census by the nonprofit Solar Foundation reveals that the solar industry expanded 20 percent over the previous year and now provides 209,000 jobs. Solar-related jobs represent 1.2 percent of all new jobs added in the U.S. in 2015. This number is expected to rise 14.7 percent in 2016. The nonprofit Interstate Renewable Energy Council is working to expand solar skills training programs. For information go online to: citylab.com/work/2016/01/solar-job-growth-american-economy-marco-rubio/424035/.

ACADEMY PREPS STUDENTS FOR AGRISCIENCE CAREERS -- The Academy of Agriscience at New Smyrna Beach High School prepares students for careers in agriscience, horticulture, veterinary assisting, and aquaculture. Through the school farm and the area's marine environments, students have opportunities to connect with local projects in agricultural sciences. For information email Jaime Davis, director, at: jmdavis1@volusia.k12.fl.us.

TRAINING GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY VETS -- The Florida VETS Training Grants Program provides funding to qualifying businesses for existing or customized educational programs through partial reimbursement to businesses hiring and training veterans. Businesses are reimbursed for 50 percent of training costs, up to \$8,000 per new, fulltime veteran employee. The training can be completed in-house or through a third party. For an application, go online to: veteransflorida.org/grant.

3.2 MILLION WORKING IN GIG ECONOMY JOBS -- According to a Pew Research Center analysis of census data, about 14.6 million people were self-employed in 2014. Of those, about 3.2 million are working in the so-called "on-demand" or gig economy. The on-demand economy is defined as an online marketplace or application that connected providers/freelancers with customers. In addition to transportation and home or apartment rentals, this also can include job sites or other services.

NO SURPRISE: FRUITS, VEGETABLES MOST POPULAR FARMER'S MARKET PURCHASES -- More than 97 percent of respondents to a recent survey of Floridians who have attended a farmer's market report purchasing fruits and vegetables. In addition, half of the respondents purchased food products to include honeys, jams, and prepared food items other than baked goods. Other, less frequent, food purchases included eggs (25.6 percent), cheese (21.7 percent), baked goods including bread (21.4 percent), meat/fish (20.6 percent), and milk (11.7 percent). To learn more, visit www.farmersmarketonline.com/fm/Florida.htm.

WORKSHOP FOR SMALL BUSINESS STARTUPS -- The local SCORE chapter will offer a workshop for anyone starting a small business or a new business owner seeking funding. The workshop is February 11 from 6 - 8 p.m. To register go online to: score87.org or call 386-255-6889.

FLORIDA ORANGE CROP DROPS -- Florida produced its smallest orange crop in 52 years during the 2014-15 growing season, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The overall acreage of orange groves in Florida, the top U.S. grower, has dropped to the lowest level since 1966. The biggest consumers of Florida fresh citrus are Floridians, followed by consumers in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. VISIT Florida gives away about 35,761 gallons of juice to travelers each year, enough to fill six swimming pools.

NEWS ITEMS WANTED! -- Please send your business news items to Dave Byron, Volusia County Community Services Department Director, at dbyron@volusia.org. If you wish to be removed from this weekly broadcast, please let us know.