

Hundreds show up for job fair People flood Liberty Center for employment at U.S. Corrugated By BRIAN SLODYSKO • The Eagle-Gazette Staff • July 12, 2008

LANCASTER - A line of job seekers wrapped around the side of Liberty Center Friday morning, as U.S. Corrugated opened the building doors to kick off a job fair for its new Lancaster-based cardboard manufacturing plant. Friday's event was the first day of the two day job fair and enthusiasm was running high.

"I heard they were expecting a lot of people to come out today, so I was real early," said David Taylor of Lancaster, who was in line at 5:45 a.m. "The line was out the door and I just came to turn in my resume."

The new U.S. Corrugated factory, slated to begin manufacturing in November, is expected to hire between 20 and 25 people, but 800 people turned in applications Friday. In fact, in the first two hours, more than 400 applicants walked through Liberty Center's doors, said Nida Reid-Williamson, workforce development supervisor for Fairfield County Job & Family Services.

"I don't know why so many people lined up (this morning) It doesn't matter if you're first or last, all applications will be considered," Reid-Williamson said.

An average plant wage will start at \$10.62, but after a probationary period will be bumped up to \$11.29. The company also will offer comprehensive medical coverage and a 401k plan. U.S. Corrugated requires all applicants to pass a drug screen, have a high school diploma or G.E.D., and have two to three years of industry experience.

The company plans to hire more workers during the next three years, for a total of 90 manufacturing jobs, said future plant manager, Ron Iden.

The job fair continues from of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. today.

The mere presence of the factory and the jobs it creates is expected to be an economic boon for the area, freeing up jobs previously held by recent U.S. Corrugated hires.

What's more, the wages earned by plant employees are inevitably destined for businesses in the area, which will, in turn, stimulate the local economy, Reid-Williamson said.

Lancaster was selected as the site of the new factory because of it's proximity to Columbus and the U.S. 33 shipping corridor, said Reid-Williamson.

"I believe rising (shipping) costs require any business to look at their business model. Location to shipping routes is pretty important," she said.

But shipping routes weren't he only consideration U.S. Corrugated took into account in selecting Lancaster as a location.

"From a human relations perspective, (Lancaster) can provide people with a background suited to the job," Said John Ammons, who works in U.S. Corrugated's Human Resources department. "The questions that were asked as people came through the doors indicated they had plenty of experience in the manufacturing industry."

Ammons and Iden said Fairfield County was a fruitful area for manufacturing workers, partially because Ohio comprised a major part the manufacturing core of the U.S., and partially because smaller communities place a premium on hard work.

"From my experience rural culture promotes a good work ethic," Iden said.