Hopes rise with jobless declines



HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

Nearly 3,600 people have gone back to work across the state. At Automation Engineering Corp., the company found new markets and now plans to add 70 jobs. Story, Page 3B.

Employment by sector

Since January 2010, the state has seen employment rise by approximately 18,600.

Natural resources and mining
100

Construction
-3,900

Manufacturing
3,400

Trade, transportation and utilities
1,700

Information
-600

Financial
300

Professional and business services
20,600

Educational and health services
3,500

Leisure and hospitality
1,400

Government
-11,800

Source: S.C. Dept. of Employment and Workforce

State's jobless numbers fall for 5th straight month

By Jenny Munro
STAFF WRITER
jmunro@greenvilleonline.com

South Carolina's jobless rate is continuing to fall, giving hope to those looking for a job and maybe easing the anxiety for people who fear losing one.

January was the fifth month in a row that the state's unemployment numbers headed in the right direction, falling from December's 10.9 percent to 10.5.

In Greenville County, the news was even better with a drop to 8.2 percent from 8.8. Pickens County fell to 9.1 from 9.3; Anderson dropped to 10.3 from 10.4; and Laurens declined to 10.8 from 11 percent.

In some rural areas of South Carolina, though, the jobless rate remains stunning — such as the almost Depression-era 21 percent in Marion County. Lexington County had the best at 7.4 percent.

GET HIRED

■ Learn tips on shoring up your resume, interviewing and other jobs advice for jobseekers at GreenvilleOnline.com.

The Upstate's Union County had the second-highest jobless rate at 17.7 percent. Only Aiken, Beaufort, Charleston and Lexington had rates better than Greenville.

An additional 3,599 people went back to work statewide. In the past year, employment has increased by 18,600.

Local staffing agencies and training organizations have said they see employers beginning to hire again, either through contract work or permanent employment.

"I think it's safe to say across the board we're seeing

See JOBS on page 4A

Most of Upstate saw a decrease in jobless rates

Seven of the 10 Upstate counties experienced lower unemployment rates in January.

County	Jan.	Dec.
Union	17.7	17.7
Cherokee	13.8	14.2
Abbeville	12.3	12.1
Greenwood	11.6	11.6
Laurens	10.8	11.0
Oconee	10.7	11.0
Spartanburg	10.4	10.7
State	**10.5**	**10.9**
Anderson	10.3	10.4
Pickens	9.1	9.3
Greenville	8.2	8.8

Source: South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce

SUZIE RIDDLE/Staff



HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

Glenn Newton works on assembly of a treading table at Automation Engineering Corporation. The company plans to hire 70 people in the next five years.

JOBS

FROM PAGE 1A

an increase in hiring," said James Taylor, regional manager for Robert Half International, a consulting and staffing firm specializing in accounting and financial jobs. "It feels so much better than it did last year."

Uncertainty still exists, he said. Many firms that could hire three employees are hiring one and waiting to see what happens with the economy.

Companies also are running leaner with smaller and more productive staffs, Taylor said. He said companies are more selective and are demanding employees with combined skills. Some are struggling to fill positions.

Education and training are vital, Taylor said. The unemployment rate among college graduates, including those without a specialized degree, is 4.3 percent — considerably below the overall jobless rate.

January's labor force — including both employees and unemployed workers who are actively seeking a job — declined for the month by 5,716 in a labor force of 2.2 million.

"People are leaving the labor force," said Steve McLaughlin, an analyst with the state's Department of Employment and Workforce.

They include discouraged workers who don't believe they can find a job, people attending school for more training, and people who retire.

"The ideal situation is for employment to rise, unemployment to decrease and the labor force to rise," he said.

The current improvement in unemployment and people working is encouraging, McLaughlin said. "It's gradual but it's in the right direction. It's progress."

HARDWOOD FLOOR
RESTORATION
NO DUST!