

# Job picture here best in state

Statewide payrolls growth posts one of largest increases in decades last month

## JOBS

Continued from Page 1A

social assistance added 3,200 jobs and leisure/hospitality added 2,700.

Manufacturing grew with 300 additional jobs.

However, retail trade fell by 1,700 positions and financial services by 1,000.

Since February 2011, South Carolina has added 28,000 jobs, with manufacturing setting the pace with 9,500 new jobs.

Other sectors adding jobs include employment services, 5,200 jobs; leisure/hospitality, 4,000 jobs; health care/social assistance, 3,800; and transportation and warehous-

ing, 2,900 jobs.

More and more surveys and other information are being released that show businesses are becoming more optimistic — cautiously optimistic — about the economic outlook and the prospects of hiring.

A recent Marketplace Staffing survey of more than 200 business leaders in the Upstate and Midlands found nearly 68 percent believe the economy is slowly improving and 26.6 percent said they expect to increase their payroll this year by an average of 5 percent. Another 67.6 percent expect their employee base to remain flat over the year.

Despite the good news, some people continue to

leave the labor force, Jones said.

Sometimes that is because they become discouraged in their job search.

Other times they may be taking time out to evaluate their job search. Or they may be gaining training and education.

Some people also drop out of the labor force for personal reasons such as taking care of family members.

What's important is that Greenville's unemployment rate, which is up from 7 percent in January, is still the lowest in the state.

"People will come to an area where they feel there is more opportunity," Jones said.

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Greenville County's unemployment rate of 7.2 percent, up slightly from January, was the state's lowest in February as South Carolina's jobless rate for the month fell to 9.1 percent, the seventh consecutive monthly decline.

The drop in the state's rate from 9.3 percent in January was driven by an increase of 9,864 people being added to the state's payrolls, the third-largest increase in 36 years.

Marion County reported the highest unemployment rate in the state at 19.1 percent, down from 19.3 percent in January. The national unemployment rate remained flat at 8.3 percent last month.

"Jobs and unemployment are a good indicator of what is going on out there," said Dean Jones, administrator of Greenville County's SC Works office.

Job fairs have been popping up all over the Upstate as companies continue hiring that began in the last year or so. Job creation is picking up this year.

Bosch Rexroth Corp. and HTI Employment Solutions are hosting a job fair April 4 to fill 50 positions at Bosch Rexroth Corp., which is in the midst of an expansion.

Also, The Gordian Group, a Mauldin software company, said it plans to hire more employees soon as it continues to grow.

"The market is improving," Jones said. "We're having more jobs listed," with manufacturing key to the Upstate's job growth.

"It is continuing to grow. Manufacturing covers logistics

to production to assembly to clerical," he said.

And that includes not just the BMWs, Michelin North Americas and General Electrics, but the smaller supplier firms and the mom-and-pop manufacturing concerns.

In a welcome development, Jones said he began seeing construction jobs — in both commercial and residential building — picking up in this region in the last quarter of 2011. That is especially true of welding and other specialty trades, but demand for carpenters also is increasing.

Other major sectors hiring include health care, information technology and professional services, such as clerical and management positions, he said.

Bruce Yandle, dean emeritus of Clemson University's College of Business and Behavioral Science, said the data show "a mixed bag. ... The economy is rolling along at a pace that has the econo-

my expanded but with different effects on various sectors."

Abraham J. Turner, executive director for the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, said, "The continued decline in the state's unemployment rate and the increase in employed persons is good news for South Carolina."

Non-farm employment in the state increased by 17,900 jobs in February. Most of the gain came from increases in education as schools and universities added 10,100 jobs as they completed spring staffing.

Professional and business services added 3,900 jobs during the month while health care/

## Upstate February unemployment is mixed

Two counties in the 10-county region saw lower unemployment, five saw higher and three remained steady.

County	Feb	Jan
Union	15.0	15.2
Cherokee	12.4	13.2
Greenwood	10.7	10.7
Abbeville	10.6	10.6
Anderson	9.8	9.0
Laurin	9.7	9.3
Spartanburg	9.5	9.4
State	9.1	9.3
Oconee	9.4	9.4
Anderson	9.1	8.9
Pickens	8.6	8.5
Greenville	7.2	7.0

Source: SC Dept. of Employment and Workforce

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See JOBS, Page 3A