JOBLESS RATE DROPS IN STATE

More in Greenville County finding work

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

6.6 percent Greenville County	9.1 percent South Carolina	7.8 percent National rate

By Rudolph Bell
Staff Writer
dbell@greenvillenews.com

Greenville County's unemployment rate dropped by a full percentage point in September, to 6.6 percent, the third monthly drop in a row after seesawing up and down over the past year.

The statewide rate fell half of a percentage point, from 9.6 percent to 9.1 percent, according to the latest data from the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce.

Unemployment dropped in every county, except for Aiken, where the rate was unchanged at 8.3 percent.

Doug Woodward, an economist at the University of South Carolina, said he's surprised to see the statewide rate much better at this point than what he and colleague Joey Von Nessen predicted at their annual economic outlook conference in December.

Back then, Woodward and Von Nessen said they didn't expect the state rate — calculated at 10.5 percent at the time — to change much in 2012.

After the latest figures came out Friday, Woodward told GreenvilleOnline.com that South Carolina is still far from full employment.

"But it certainly goes in the right direction," he said. "It shows you what we could potentially accomplish going forward."

South Carolina's joblessness remains higher than the country as a whole. Nationally, the unemployment rate was 7.8 percent in September.

Greenville County's rate was second-best in South Carolina, behind Lexington County's 6.3 percent.

More than 2,700 people found work in Greenville County from August to September, the state data showed.

Ticking up in tandem were the county's total work force and the number of people employed — a good sign, according to Ben Haskew, president of the Greenville Chamber.

See JOBS, Page 3A

JOBS

Continued from Page 1A

It means the county created enough jobs to absorb new people coming into the work force and push down the unemployment rate at the same time.

"When you have both of these metrics moving in tandem like this, you know that you are on the right track," Haskew said.

Hank Hyatt, the chamber's vice president for economic development, said he sees a positive mood among Upstate manufacturers and other employers.

But Blanton Phillips, chief executive of Phillips Staffing in Greenville, said many of his manufacturing and distribution customers are continuing to hire temporary workers, instead of permanent ones, because of uncertainty about the outcome of the presidential election "and where the economy might go after that."

Marion County once again had the highest unemployment rate in South Carolina at 15.9 percent.

