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Oconee jobless rate holds steady at 5.7%

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SENECA — The unemployment rate dropped to 5.5 percent in South Carolina last month, but remained at 5.7 percent in Oconee County, the state Department of Employment and Workforce reported Friday.

A hiring spike in the leisure and hospitality sector, construction industry, professional and business services, and education and health services jobs helped the state achieve its lowest unemployment rate since 2008.

Richard Blackwell, executive director of the Oconee Economic Alliance, recently told The Journal that the local unemployment rate is at its lowest since the early 2000s, when the textile industry was still thriving.

"We know that we're going to work and stay focused on creating more jobs for the citizens of Oconee County," Blackwell said.

Despite remaining unchanged at 5.7 percent unemployment, the job outlook continues to improve in Oconee. The county started the year with a jobless rate of 6.6 percent. In March of 2013, Oconee had an unemployment rate of 7.7 percent.

In Pickens County, the jobless rate went up from 4.4 percent in February to 4.6 percent last month.

Lexington County has the lowest jobless rate in the state at 4.2 percent, followed by Greenville at 4.4 percent.

Cheryl Stanton, executive director of the Department of Employment and Workforce, said the state's jobless rate has dropped in 10 consecutive months.

"The state's economy is on the right track," Stanton said in a statement. "More South Carolinians are working than ever before."

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