

Job fairs hope to attract summer workers

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- **CAPE COD** - With the visitor industry on Cape Cod generating more than \$2 billion in direct spending, a push is on to recruit more workers for the 2008 season.

Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Suzanne M. Bump said the Patrick administration plans events to help attract summer workers to the Cape and Islands.

The action comes after the expiration last year of a federal exemption by Congress, which had allowed workers with employment histories to return to the same employers each year without being counted toward the national annual limit on H2B visas.

In response to this cap and the expected workforce shortages on the Cape and Islands, the Patrick Administration has been meeting in collaboration with regional partners, including the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, the Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board and the Career Opportunities Career Centers, with employers to create an emergency response plan to help alleviate these shortages.

"Federal restrictions are forcing employers on the Cape and Islands to scramble to find makeshift solutions to ensure their businesses can be up and running to serve customers this season," said Bump. "Working collaboratively, we are seeking to tap into a wider pool of workers to include high school and college students as well as residents from the Fall River and New Bedford areas."

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, with the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, Career Opportunities Career Centers and the Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board will sponsor two hospitality industry job fairs.

Thursday, April 10, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., White's of Westport, 66 State Road, Westport. Employers including Cape Cod Restaurants, the Catania Hospitality Group, Chatham Bars Inn, Ocean Edge Resort, Wequassett Inn Resort & Golf Club and Mac's Seafood/Mac's Shack, will be recruiting workers to fill as many as 100 positions in areas such as sous chef, line cook, housekeepers, front-desk assistance, wait staff and banquet wait staff, dishwasher and room attendant.

At the job fair on April 10, representatives from Cape Destinations will be on hand to make arrangements for transportation for workers who live in the Fall River and New Bedford area to Cape Cod. They will continue to work with the Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board, Career Opportunities Career Centers and Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce to develop new routes that meet the needs of workers living off-Cape.

Monday, April 14, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Career Opportunities Career Center, 372 North Street, Hyannis. Employers including Academy Ocean Grill, Bayside Resort Hotel, Brewster Green Resort, Casual Gourmet, Catania Hospitality Group, Chartwells Dining/Cape Cod Sea Camps, Chatham Bars Inn, InnSeason Resorts, Lighthouse Inn, Mac's Seafood/Mac's Shack, Ocean Edge Resort & Club, The Cove at Yarmouth, The Edgewater Beach Resort, The Tidewater Inn and the Wequassett Inn Resort & Golf Club will be on hand recruiting for hundreds of similar positions as the job fair in Westport.

A special Web site, From the Massachusetts Office of Labor and Workforce Development has been established to provide information on job fair events and resources for employers and job seekers.

Affected employers who have applied for H2B visas are being sent information packages on how to post their vacancies on the state's on-line job bank through the state's 37 One-Stop Career Centers statewide.

“The Cape Cod and Islands visitor industry generates over \$2 billion in direct spending by guests who travel here year round. The looming worker shortages created by changes in the immigration visa rules could potentially impact our visitor industry, which is very dependent upon guest workers to fill our seasonal workforce needs,” said Wendy K. Northcross, Chief Executive Officer of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce. “The Commonwealth’s Labor and Workforce Development office has been extremely attentive to these issues and have made their resources available to local employers seeking staff for the high season, all of which has been very helpful to the Cape Cod Chamber and our employers.”

Additionally, on-line recruitment tools are being disseminated to area colleges. Information about employment opportunities for high school students is also being sent to guidance counselors at high schools throughout Bristol and Barnstable counties.

“This timing of the cut off of H2B workers and this year’s loss of available seasonal workers has required an emergency response,” noted David Augustinho, Executive Director of the Cape and Islands Workforce Investment Board. “The resources needed to provide for two hiring events and extensive use of the state’s job matching system provided by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development will help address what is an extremely difficult situation for many Cape and Island employers.”