More people have jobs in El Paso

By Darren Meritz

El Paso Times

Continuing a trend of job growth that spans industry sectors, the unemployment rate in El Paso fell to 6.7 percent in March, down from 7 percent in February and 7.5 percent a year ago, the Texas Workforce Commission said Friday.

Breathless job gains “indicate that we’re recovering positive growth at this time,” said Robert Cepeda, an economist with the Texas Workforce Commission in Austin. “It indicates El Paso has a fairly diverse economy that is allowing for growth through a lot of industries that are present in the metropolitan area.”

The main post office at 8401 Montana Avenue in El Paso gained 500 jobs last month. Manufacturing gained 300 jobs and the trade, transportation and utilities sector gained 500.

Despite the positive figures, some job seekers run into obstacles.

Elaine Lichter, 61, left her job six months ago after a kidney transplant. She is searching for a job in health-care administration.

“It seems to me it’s difficult as an older like me, it makes it more difficult,” she said. “I feel like people who are older like me, it makes it more difficult.”

Lichter said she added that younger generations have jobs that are available,” she said. “It’s a female and a person my age to compete for.”

“Nobody had ever called me an American before that time. I’d been called a lot of things — that was the first time in my life that I had been called an American.”

Armando Flores, a World War II veteran from Mission, Texas

During an average week, Armando Flores drives about 400 miles in his Nissan Versa to be a sales representative for Singular Wireless.

Although her employer reimburses her for mileage, salesmen says, she’s growing tired of spending about 150 dollars a week every week and is considering trading in her SUV for a smaller, more economical Honda or Nissan car.

“My job is out in the field, and sometimes I have to go from El Paso to San Antonio, or there’s a pretty good mileage,” said. “They added that younger generations have prices affecting her spending habits.

“Sometimes I set a limit and tell myself I can’t spend so much money on this or that so I can cover my gas,” she said. Gas prices are expected to hit $3.50 a gallon sometime this week-end, and many El Pasoans and city agencies say they’re starting to feel the effects.

Ruby Quiscela owns A&A Post Control and is quoted as thinking about trading in his three company pickups for motorcycles just to save on gas.

Please see Gasoline A2

Post office is open today for passport applications

By Louis Gild

El Paso Times

El Pasoans who want to get a passport but can’t get to the post office during the week have their chance today.

The main post office at 8401 Montana Avenue is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today for a “Passport Fair,” which officials hope will draw at least 100 people. Passports are priced at $105 for adults, $50 for children under 14, and $82 for children 14 and over.

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El Paso’s reputation as a low-wage city is changing to one with an educated, bilingual work force, said Sidney Alvarez, public information officer for Upper Rio Grande Valley Workforce.

“The biggest problem we used to have here in El Paso is that they thought of us as being an under-skilled work force,” he said. “That’s shifting.”

El Paso’s 6.7 percent unemployment rate compares with 5.7 percent for the state and 4.8 percent for the nation in March.

“armando florres, a world war ii veteran from mission, texas.

The pride that World War II veteran Armando Flores feels when he commandeers told him that American sol-diers don’t stand with their hands in their pockets epitomizes what that war did for Hispanics in the United States. It is also the reason Mag-nifiee Rivie-Rodriguez, a jour-nalism professor at the Uni-versity of Texas at Austin, has devoted time and ener-gy into the seven-year U.S.Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project.

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