

## Prepare Your Children to Find a Job at Home

Many young adults preparing to enter the workforce feel larger communities have more to offer in the employment, retail and entertainment sectors. While retail and entertainment are very subjective, the reality is that everyday employment opportunities in skilled, high-paying occupations go unfilled in our region.

The Wichita Falls region has grown or maintained its workforce over the past six years in both the industrial and retail sectors. From September 2005 to September 2006, 1,600 new jobs were created in our community. Wichita Falls is a hub city for the region in terms of the retail and industrial markets, which means people within 50 miles of our community look to the Wichita Falls area for employment purposes.

Every year thousands of graduates enter the labor force from area colleges and universities, in addition to the combined annual number of graduates from high schools within the region. This results in a labor shed of over 3,500 young adults new to the labor force in our region each year.

However, all too often we hear, "Why can't local economic development efforts recruit high paying jobs for my kids?" The problem is the skills possessed by our workforce are not a good match for local employers. Seldom do we hear there is a surplus of accountants, nurses, machinist, aircraft mechanics, welders, police, teachers, plumbers, electricians, network-administrators, or engineers seeking employment in our region who cannot find a job. These types of skilled positions are in high-demand in our community and pay well above a livable wage in our market. Training for high-skilled occupations is available locally, yet everyday these types of employment opportunities are unfilled in our region.

Within our community, we have both the supply of labor and the demand for jobs from local employers. Parents across the country want their children be able to find high paying employment and stay in or near their home town. Therefore, if we want our families to be able to find jobs in our home town, we should find out what types of jobs local employers need to fulfill and help set our children on a training and educational course to fill those needs.

**Average Hourly Wages by Occupation - Wichita Falls MSA**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
Accountant/Auditor	\$22.10	
Registered Nurse	\$20.95	
Licensed Vocational Nurse	\$13.02	
Machinist	\$19.49	
Aircraft Mechanic	\$20.46	
Welder	\$11.77	
Police Officer	\$16.83	
Teacher	n/a	\$38-40,000
Plumber - Construction	\$17.81	

Electrician - Construction	\$20.88	
Engineer - Industrial	\$31.84	

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, November, 2006.