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## A SIGN OF THE TIMES

PORT ST LUCIE, FL—It seems that no matter who you are, the current economic condition is affecting you. Unemployment has continued to rise and both employers and employees are feeling the pressure.

“There are currently 37,193 unemployed on the Treasure Coast,” the Chief Executive Officer of Workforce Solutions Gwenda Thompson said.

A recent article published in Scripps Newspapers noted employees are afraid of taking vacations for fear of returning to find they have been replaced. Another article based on a study conducted by The National Public Radio (NPR)/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health reports people are afraid to call in sick even when they have paid sick leave available. The fear and uncertainty also has employees questioning their employer’s policies and procedures.

Even Workforce Solutions, the region’s workforce services provider, is also feeling the pressure. “At today’s public Workforce Solutions’ Board of Directors meeting, the receipt of an anonymous letter sent to all Board Members was discussed. The issues raised in the letter are being addressed. I am confident that the Board’s policies and procedures, frequently monitored by government officials, adequately cover the concerns,” the Chairwoman of the Board Catherine McKenzie said.

The letter was received two weeks ago by board members. During the public Executive Committee meeting held on Friday, August 14<sup>th</sup> the letter was addressed and it was determined that Thompson would investigate these issues with Workforce staff via daily written communications. Thompson is addressing each of the issues with staff via email and encouraging staff to comment, ask questions, or to meet privately with her to discuss any of these issues.

“While the letter was anonymous, I realize these are difficult times and staff may need reassurance that we are doing things right. Our goal is to provide quality on-time services to our communities and it takes a well-trained, confident staff to reach this goal.” Thompson said.

During these tough economic times, Workforce Solutions has proceeded with their Business Improvement Plan which has significantly impacted the quality of their delivery of services. In fact clients that may have visited the former “one-stop locations” are pleasantly surprised when they visit the new Career Centers. The change started with the name, from the Workforce Development Board to Workforce Solutions, but has impacted every aspect of their business.

Workforce Solutions is a private, non-profit, Florida corporation with a Board of Directors consisting of private business, economic development and education representatives, community and state agencies, and elected officials. Members of the Board represent the diversity of businesses, organizations and trades that operate in the Treasure Coast Region, including Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie County. Chartered by the State of Florida to create and manage a workforce development service delivery system responsive to the needs of businesses and jobseekers, Workforce Solutions offers award-winning complimentary programs and partnerships recognized locally, statewide, and nationally. Our staff members are certified workforce professionals often recognized by their peers as leaders in workforce development.

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