

# Workers in demand for many jobs

County's fastest-growing fields include nursing, cosmetology, expert says

By COURTNEY SHERWOOD,  
JULIA ANDERSON  
and CAMI JONER  
*Columbian staff writer*

Clark County's jobless rate is the highest it has been since the county was emerging from the last recession, but there is a bright side for hundreds of people seeking work. Employment in many job categories is on the rise.

This Labor Day, we asked state labor economist Scott Bailey to rank the jobs in Clark County where demand for workers is highest. What we found might surprise you.

"Most sectors are growing a little bit, with construction being the exception," Bailey said. "The list of fastest-growing jobs is pretty diverse."

## Cosmetologist

It didn't surprise cosmetologist Crystal Nelson to learn that there are lots of opportunities for people with her skills and training.

"There are jobs everywhere; hair care is needed everywhere in the world," said Nelson, 28, owner of Crystal's Clip & Curl in Vancouver.

Bailey projects that there will be 65 openings for hairstylists, hair dressers and cosmetologists in Clark County in the next year, 47 brand new jobs and another 18 to replace people leaving the region or the field.

Median pay is \$10.59 an hour, which means that half make more and half make less, according to state figures.

"That sounds right," Nelson said.



**Crystal Nelson**  
Cosmetologist



**Michael Proudfoot**  
Registered nurse



**Ann Tracey**  
Elementary school teacher

## Inside

■ Laboring longer is a growing American trend.

**Page E1**

■ State economist Scott Bailey lists growing career fields. **Page A5**



# Jobs:

From Page A1

"It's a hard business starting out until you build a clientele. When you get your own station, that's when you really start making money."

So who should consider pursuing one of these jobs?

Well, you have to enjoy cutting hair, Nelson said, and you need to have good communication skills.

"People want a hairdresser who listens to what they want done to their hair," she said. "After that, you have to be able to talk to people. All my clients are friends."

And then there's the education. Nelson earned a two-year degree in cosmetology from Walla Walla Community College. The state requires 1,600 hours of schooling or apprenticeship work for the license.

## Registered nurse

A layoff from a shrinking industry led Michael Proudfoot, 49, to enter a field that was add-



N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

**From left: Crystal Nelson, owner of Crystal's Clip & Curl; Michael Proudfoot, a registered nurse at Southwest Washington Medical Center; Ann Tracey, a teacher at Union Ridge Elementary.**



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

ing jobs. Until 1988 he worked as a tool and die machinist at the former Alcoa plant in west Vancouver.

When Alcoa closed the smelter, he retrained for a job in medical administration at Clark College. He went to work at Southwest Washington Medical Center, where nurses told him to seek more education.

With the required two-year degree under his belt, Proudfoot has been a registered nurse at the medical center for eight years.

As baby boomers age and require medical care, the demand for nurses is climbing, Bailey said. "Meanwhile, many current nurses are nearing the 30-year mark and retiring, so new people are needed to replace them."

In Clark County today, there are more than 3,080 registered nurses. State figures forecast 127 openings here in the next year, with 85 being completely new jobs. Half of RNs make more than \$33.48 an hour, and half make less.



N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

Proudfoot, who is married with four children, says he's never complained about the money he makes.

"Anyone would take more money if it were offered, but it's not the money that will gratify you, it's how you feel when you walk out the door at the end of the day."

## Elementary school teacher

Educators require even more training than nurses, a bachelor's degree to start and con-

tinuing education once hired.

Most teachers start working toward a higher degree within two years of graduating from undergrad programs, said Ann Tracey, 24.

After earning her bachelor's degree at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Tracey started looking for jobs in the area to be near her family.

She was hired to teach first grade at Union Ridge Elementary in Ridgefield. Elementary school teachers are in high demand in Clark County because of local population growth and baby boomer retirements, said Art Edgerly, the Ridgefield School District superintendent.

Of the 84 openings expected across Clark County in the next year, many are due to turnover and retirements, but 35 positions are new creations, according to state figures.

The median yearly pay varies across school districts. In Ridgefield, half of all teachers make more than \$54,000 and half make less.

Pay and job growth are not what drew her to the job, Tracey said. "Teaching was something I always wanted to do."

## GROWTH FUELS OPPORTUNITIES

High turnover can make some jobs look hotter than they really are, so we asked Scott Bailey, labor economist with the state Employment Security Department, to tell us which jobs are likely to grow fastest in the next year because of real demand.

Jobs	Openings
Food prep and serving workers	129
Registered nurses	85
Nursing aides, orderlies and attendants	50
Office clerks	48
Hairdressers, hairstylists and cosmetologists	47
Medical secretaries	44
Home health aides	42
Child care workers	39
Teacher assistants	37
Elementary school teachers	35