

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK ▼

# Staffing Company Finds Work For An Underemployed Segment

By NILOU MOSTOFI  
*San Diego Daily Transcript*

Despite San Diego's record-low unemployment, a segment of the population remains jobless because of its unpreparedness for the workforce. But a nonprofit organization chaired by former football star Rosey Grier is working to alleviate that type of joblessness locally.

"I've been in the community since 1971, and I have seen a lot of people who do not have jobs, the necessary skills or the opportunity — transportation or other means — to find a way out of their position and help themselves," said Rosey Grier, chairman of the nonprofit **Impact Urban America**.

In response, IUA last year

formed its own staffing company, **WORKS Staffing**, and is working with local companies to help low-income jobless people get the necessary training and other assistance to bring them into the workforce and become less dependent on public assistance.

"San Diego is an ideal place to develop this pilot because it is not too big, it is a great-looking community and a wonderful place to be, yet it still has the same problems and needs as other places," Grier said.

Although there are currently about 70 employment agencies in San Diego County, **WORKS Staffing** also provides a service component that assists people with case management, clothes, food,

and production jobs.

Estean Lenyou, president and CEO of IUA/**WORKS Staffing**, said the organization is "presently in contact with approximately 20 local corporations with a humanitarian emphasis based mainly out of North County who help us place these people, especially from low-income families."

According to Patti Zatarian-Menard, resident services assistant program manager for the San Diego Housing Commission, the commission used **WORKS Staffing** to place five Public Housing and Rental Assistance candidates with

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**IUA/WORKS Chairman Rosey Grier greets employment placement prospect Janet Lee.**

transportation assistance and grooming.

Currently, there are 1,500 people in the **WORKS** database who are ready to be hired, according to Terrence Alexis, director of operations for the program. Out of that, more than 400 people are on the job in administrative, clerical data-entry, assembly

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jobs last spring. Now the Housing Commission is considering making WORKS Staffing its exclusive temporary agency for the entire Housing Commission.

"The low unemployment rate has created a very big gap between a lot of very low-wage jobs and high-wage jobs, which many low-income families cannot fill." Zatarian-Menard said. "What WORKS Staffing does is help them get their first jobs and provides additional skills training in computer technology and/or training in the certified medical fields so that they can jump the gap."

The agency charges clients 50 percent to 75 percent onto the wage paid the workers, which is typical of most employment agencies, but Alexis said the WORKS rates are lower than the norm.

Lenyoun said the qualifications for participants in this program are the same as for any other full-service staffing company, but they must show a desire and commitment to work.

While Lenyoun said IUA/WORKS will "touch the untouchables and

hug the unhuggables and help people re-enter the mainstream workforce," he also said that, "a lack of responsibility and accountability for their actions disqualifies them from our program."

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