

Jobs group: North Shore market improving

By Chris Stevens / The Daily Item | Posted: Wednesday, January 8, 2014 3:00 am

LYNN — The news is not all bad in terms of employment on the North Shore, according to the North Shore Workforce Investment Board.

Jobs in health care are up and holding steady, and more people are back to work.

Edward Sullivan, director of Programs and Operations for WIB, said 203,167 North Shore residents were employed in 2013, which is up from 2010, the height of the recession, when only 195,871 were working.

“Part of WIB’s job is to do labor market research,” O’Sullivan said.

O’Sullivan, along with his colleague Will Sinatra, spoke to about a dozen people from a variety of agencies Tuesday about the job market on the North Shore.

“Our intention in holding this is to get a better understanding of the labor market on the North Shore, particularly for our students,” said Operation Bootstrap Executive Director Edward Tirrell, who hosted the event.

Operation Bootstrap offers high school equivalency and English as a second language classes with the goal of preparing people for college or job training programs. Tirrell said it helps to have a picture of the job market, so the organization knows where it should steer students in terms of jobs or additional training.

“Health care and social assistance are huge employers in our area and have had consistent growth,” O’Sullivan said. “Retail has consistently gone down, but it’s still an important industry in our area because it employs a lot of people and is a good stepping stone.”

Sinatra said the area of health care could be tricky for those looking for entry-level jobs because many jobs need specific training or degrees. But he said it’s also a good field in which to grow. Someone could start out as a certified nurse’s assistant with minimal training and make on average \$12-\$14 an hour while studying to become an LPN, licensed practical nurse, who can make between \$40 and \$45 an hour, he said.

Health care workers on average make \$884 per week, Sinatra added, which includes workers in all fields, doctors to aides.

“It’s a good area of consistent employment,” he said, adding that between August 2013 and December 2013, there were 1,008 health-care-related job postings listed online for the North Shore area.

The area of finance is not as consistent a field as health care but Sinatra said he would still encourage anyone who can count and likes math to try and break in. In the same time period, there were 247 job openings in financial services.

“If you can get in and make a career ladder, it pays pretty well,” he said.

There were also 350 finance jobs lost since 2009, but, again, Sinatra shrugged off what could be seen as a negative. He blamed the loss on a combination of things such as consolidation and technological advances.

“People are using ATMs a lot, which means there is less of a need for bank tellers,” he said.

But the side effect of automation is it creates computer-related jobs, Sinatra pointed out.

While many of the finance jobs need higher degrees, there are plenty of entry-level opportunities as well, Sinatra said.

“Tellers and customer service account for almost half the jobs (advertised),” he said. “So this is a good time to get your feet in the door.”

The top employers on the North Shore in both areas were North Shore Medical and Eastern Bank, which Sinatra said came as no surprise.

The pair only highlighted health care and finance fields.

“This is a two-part presentation,” Sinatra said. “We’ll be back in three weeks to talk about durable goods, construction and an overview of life sciences.”