

BIZfact

\$23,050

Median annual wage of Long Island's 150 baggage porters and bellhops

Source: New York State Labor Department

CITIES ADDED THE MOST JOBS IN 2017

American cities accounted for about 96 percent of the country's job growth in 2017 as they added nearly 2 million new jobs, according to the latest annual report from a bipartisan coalition of mayors.

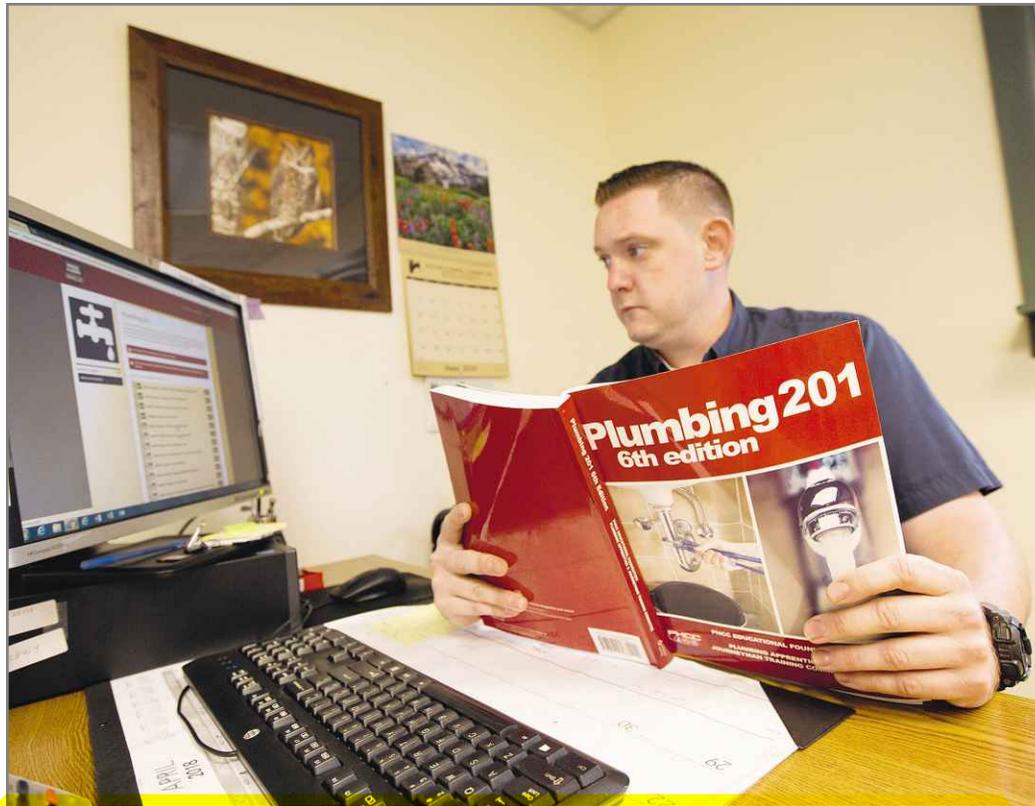
The U.S. Conference of Mayors, meeting in Boston through Monday, says in its new "Metro Economies" report 10 metropolitan areas generated \$6.8 trillion in economic value in 2017, surpassing the output of most states. Those metro regions are: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Houston, Philadelphia, Boston and Atlanta.

The report also found that 86 percent of Americans live in metro areas, and 88 percent of jobs are located in them.

Britain-based IHS Markit, which prepared the report, also projected economic growth will continue to be strongest in the American South and West in the coming years, since population and labor force growth is fastest in those regions.

But it warned that the looming retirement of the Baby Boom generation will likely slow economic expansion and increase the burden on federal programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

The report recommended policymakers focus on ways to expand the labor force, such as increasing the availability of workforce training programs for the chronically unemployed. — AP



BARRY SLOAN

Learning in the ONLINE pipeline

Apprentices can add to their skills in new plumbing courses

BY CARRIE MASON-DRAFFEN
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Every week apprentice James Burns sets aside his plumbing tools for an hour or more to delve into the digital side of his profession.

Burns, 30, logs onto a computer once or twice a week at his employer, Pat Dolan Plumbing in Massapequa, and begins the course work that will ultimately allow him to obtain his journeyman's card, sort of a coming of age in the plumbing world.

Until earlier this year Burns' options for such a course of study would have been largely

limited to a brick-and-mortar program generally offered in the evening.

The program, known as the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association e-Learning Apprenticeship Academy debuted in March. The state education and labor departments have accepted the plumbing online curriculum as a substitute for classroom instruction.

The new initiative takes aim at a chronic problem on Long Island and statewide: a shortage of plumbers. The primary causes are the waves of Baby Boomer retirements and the entry of too few young people to take the seniors' place.

Nearly 18 percent, or 1,200 plumbers on Long Island, are 55 and older, said Shital Patel, labor-market analyst in the state Labor Department's Hicksville office.

"The industry will struggle with the impending wave of retirements and the insufficient number of millennials entering the skilled trades," Patel said.

Meanwhile, the number of job openings in the industry continues to swell. The Island's plumbing industry averages 270 job openings a year, including 80, or almost a third, due to retirements, Patel said. The rest, 190, stem from growth.

Local plumbing businesses

Apprentice plumber James Burns does online course work at Pat Dolan Plumbing and is "very grateful" that his Massapequa employer pays the expense.

continue to bemoan how hard it is to find enough skilled workers.

"We are interviewing all the time," said Deborah O'Reilly, office manager at Pat Dolan Plumbing. "A lot of the young people aren't going into the trade as much as you would have seen 10 or 20 years ago."

So local plumbers are hoping the e-learning academy, which is run by the PHCC Educational Foundation, can reverse that. The national foundation teamed with the PHCC state chapter to get state approval for the program. The chronic shortage of plumbers has kindled states' interest in the online program, which is combined with on-the-job training, plumbing officials said.

"As the shortage of skilled workers becomes more critical in the plumbing, heating and cooling industry, the states are more willing to accept online training as an option," said Cindy Sheridan, chief operating officer of the foundation, based in Falls Church, Virginia.

About 450 apprentices nationwide are enrolled in the four-year e-learning program, she said.

The online program doesn't shorten the course requirements. In fact, since New York's plumbing apprenticeship programs require five years of instruction, apprentices in the state must do an additional year of off-line training. The final year includes such things as federal safety regulations and sexual harassment training, said Al Esposito, former owner of a Farmingdale plumbing company and the current chair of the state e-learning program.

Apprentices enrolled in the program must be employed at least 40 hours a week by a master plumber who sponsors them. Burns is sponsored by his employer, Pat Dolan, who not only gives him access to a computer but pays for the course, which is \$1,695 a year for PHCC members and \$2,695 for nonmembers.

"I am very grateful that my company pays me to come in here and study during business hours," Burns said.

See PLUMBING on A32

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ONLINE COURSES HELP APPRENTICE PLUMBERS LEARN IN SPARE TIME

PLUMBING from A31

Apprentices who obtain a journeyman card can earn more money and can work longer periods on the job without the presence of a licensed master plumber, said Pat Dolan, who is president of his company. In some cases they can apply locally for a limited plumber's license. In New York licenses are issued by local municipalities.

The state and national PHCC chapters keep track of the apprentices' progress through the program's four courses, each of which is equivalent to a year of instruction. Burns, who started the program about a month ago, was able to skip the first year after doing well on a placement test.

Previously apprentices had to hit the books in a classroom at a local community college or in the training facilities of a local plumbers' group, after toiling more than 10 hours at work. "The vast majority of apprentices . . . might not be able to go to school after working all day," Sheridan said.

Burns, who often works 50 to 60 hours a week, agrees.

"It's hard to work this job and go home and study," Burns said. He has worked for Pat Dolan Plumbing for nearly three years.

The certificates that apprentices can print out after completing the courses give them a leg up in job hunting, some plumbers said.

"A better candidate comes into my company rather than someone walking off the street," Esposito said.

Some said the e-learning program will ensure more staying power for young plumbers in the industry.

Long Island PHCC president Joseph Cornetta, of Cornetta Bros., an Elmont plumbing and heating company, said one of his employees will enroll in August.

"It benefits me as a business owner because now I have this young individual not only showing up for work every day, but he is learning, and I don't worry about losing him."

More information

Email Dorothy Reddy at dreddy@nysphcc.org for more details about enrolling in the e-Learning Apprenticeship Academy.

More smoothies coming



RETAIL ROUNDUP

Tory N. Parrish

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Smoothie King thinks Long Island will be a sweet spot.

Franchisee AB Smoothies LLC has signed a lease to open a second Smoothie King on Long Island — in Massapequa Park — in August, said Andrew Weinstein, co-owner of the franchise.

Weinstein and his business partner, Barry Edwards, own a 7-year-old Smoothie King in Carle Place. They plan to open about five more Long Island locations in the next five years, Weinstein said.

They also own four Smoothie King franchises in Florida and are buying 10 more existing stores in Atlanta, he said.

Dallas-based Smoothie King has more than 900 stores nationwide offering frozen beverages made with fruit, juice, nuts and/or vegetables.

"We love the brand, the cleaner blending initiative . . . It's a meal in a cup that tastes great and can be made in a hurry and keep you going," said Weinstein, a Syosset native who lives in Palm Beach, Florida.

The 1,000-square-foot Massapequa Park location, planned in a former Checkers at 5075 Sunrise Hwy., would have a double drive-through. The franchisees still need to apply for a building permit from the Town of Oyster Bay, Weinstein said.

Chris Ferencsik, an agent at Melville-based Schacker Realty, represented the Smoothie King franchise and the property sublessor, Brooklyn-based real estate firm J.W. Mays Inc., in the deal.

The local Smoothie King expansion is in line with the company's growth nationwide, as the chain plans to have 150 new stores in 2018 and it opened 96 last year, said Jamison Young, field marketing manager in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions.

There is no shortage of smoothie spots on Long Island — Tropical Smoothie Café has 18 local locations, and Jamba Juice, the biggest player in the industry, has seven on the Island — so it will be interesting to see how the competition shakes out.

I chatted with some restaurant experts about why the num-



Smoothie King plans to open a second Long Island location like this one, in Massapequa Park.

ber of drink spots is growing.

Last year Smoothie King's sales grew by 10.5 percent, said David Henkes, senior principal at Technomic Inc., a Chicago-based restaurant research firm.

"I think when you look at that category . . . Jamba Juice, Tropical Smoothie, Smoothie King — smoothies are very much on trend with what consumers are looking for. There is a perception of healthy," he said.

Smoothie shops are more popular with younger consumers, and their franchising can be less costly than other restaurants because they are smaller, so rent is cheaper, and they don't require cooking equipment, said Darren Tristano, CEO of CHD-Expert Americas, the Chicago office of a France-based restaurant research group.

Bedding boom

After opening its first store in Paramus, New Jersey, last month, Fortunoff Mattress is set to open three more on Long Island in July and August.

Leases have been signed for stores ranging from 2,400 to 5,600 square feet in Carle Place, at 214 Glen Cove Rd.; Huntington Station, at 277 Walt Whitman Rd.; and Massapequa Park, at 4934 Sunrise Hwy., according to Jericho-based Fortunoff Mattress.

A store also will open in Union, New Jersey, this summer.

You may remember the name Fortunoff from a former regional chain of family-owned stores that sold jewelry, furni-



Fortunoff Mattress has signed leases to open three LI stores.

ture and other home items.

Now Fortunoff Mattress is a new entity, under a license of Fortunoff Brands LLC, which also licenses the brand to Fortunoff Backyard Store and Fortunoff Fine Jewelry.

It made sense to add mattress stores to the enterprise, said Bernie Sensale, CEO of Fortunoff Mattress. "We saw a gap in the marketplace to provide a differentiated and upscale assortment of products and shopping experience," he said.

Founded in 1922, Westbury-based Fortunoff shut down in 2009 after filing for bankruptcy protection.

The Fortunoff and Mayrock families, who owned and operated Fortunoff for four generations, bought the intellectual property of Fortunoff, including the brand name and related trademarks, in 2009, according to the company.

Now the company plans to open more Fortunoff Mattress stores over the next five years in the metro area.

Eight to 10 will open in 2018 and 10 to 15 in 2019 if Fortunoff can find suitable locations and staff, and at least seven of those stores will be on Long Island, Sensale said.

Why the bedding boom?

Maybe because retail mattress sales are rising and shrinking. (Sorry, I had to do it.)

The customer base for mattresses has expanded since the recession officially ended in 2009, unemployment has declined and disposable income has increased, according to IBISWorld Inc., a market research firm in Los Angeles.

Furthermore, more shoppers are going to specialty stores for mattresses instead of general furniture stores — 19 percent in 1993 compared with 47 percent by the end of 2014.

Kmart job cuts

When Sears Holdings Corp. announced on May 31 it would close 63 Sears and Kmart stores nationwide in early September, it said the number of employees affected was not available.

The Hoffman Estates, Illinois-based retailer did not respond to my inquiry about how many workers would be laid off at the closing Kmart in West Babylon, or nationwide.

We now know that 85 employees will be laid off at the West Babylon store, courtesy of Sears' state-mandated filing of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notice.

The notice was posted on the state Department of Labor's website Wednesday but filed May 31, the same day the layoffs were announced.

RETAIL ROUNDUP is a column about major retail news on Long Island — store openings, closings, expansions, acquisitions, etc. — that will be published online, and in the Monday paper. If you have news to share, please send an email to Newsday reporter Tory N. Parrish at tory.parrish@newsday.com.