

Unemployment rate continues steady decline

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Nelson County and most of the Lincoln Trail area saw a drop in unemployment in November 2012.

The latest numbers from the Kentucky Labor Force Estimates show that in November, the unemployment rate was 7.5 percent compared to October's 7.6 percent.

No one can really answer the question as to why unemployment rates shift, said Kim Huston, president of the Nelson County Economic Development Agency.

"There have been a lot of our industries hiring this fourth quarter," she said. "I've seen an increase in their business, so they have to hire more people to make the product."

She added that there are job postings all over, and they are increasing. There have also been some additional construction jobs and manufacturing jobs, including American Fuji Seal Company, which hired 45 people this year, she said.

"We have 40 manufacturing facilities in Nelson County, and hiring four or five people adds up," Huston said. "Sykes Enterprises continues to hire people and hire on a daily basis."

Huston said Sykes has been a major part of this positive rate in 2012, as well as the distilleries.

"Companies are just in status quo right now," she said. "I think everybody is just waiting. If the tax burden is too much on companies and they have to make up for that, the easiest way would be reducing staff, and we really hope that doesn't happen."

She said she's happy with these unemployment rates because Nelson County went from an all-time high of 15 percent and has cut its unemployment rate in half in two years.

"It's the lowest unemployment rate we've had in four years," she said. "If Congress decides to continue extending unemployment benefits, we probably won't see a change in that rate, but if they do not extend unemployment, a lot of people will have to go back to work."

Huston said there are still jobs in Nelson County, and companies, including Sykes, have come to her telling her they can't fill all their job openings.

"There are a lot of good jobs available in Nelson County," she said. "I think it just shows that Nelson County's economic climate is very healthy. We are growing, and we are one of the fortunate counties that are growing — not only are people moving here, but companies are moving here too."

Although the rate reflects Nelson County, Huston said it is not just jobs in Nelson County that contribute to the rate. She added that the good things that have gone on with Ford, General Electric and Amazon that are outside of Nelson County employ a lot of Nelson County people.

"As our region grows, a lot of people drive outside of Nelson County to work," Huston said. "We will continue what we will do to work with our companies here to help us sustain and grow and recruit new companies, whether big or small, to Nelson County."

She said an ideal unemployment rate would be around 5 to 6 percent, which Nelson County hasn't seen since the 1970s and 80s.

"Right now in this economy, when you hover below the state level, you're doing really well," Huston said. "The state is