



Groom Ever Estrada walks a horse to the walking ring at Canterbury Park in 2018.

FILE PHOTO

## Worker shortage forces many area employers to get creative

BY RACHEL BLOOD  
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Familiar signs plaster the windows of businesses and services all over Scott and Carver counties: Help Wanted. Now Hiring. Apply Here.

A large increase in open positions and a drastic lack of job-seekers make for a worker shortage that spans all industries across the two counties, straining small businesses and community service areas alike.

Scott County Business Development Specialist Jo Foust said 4,486 jobs within the county had been posted online within a 30-day period this summer.

Carver County Income Support Manager Kate Probert Fagundes provided a TalentNeuron report that listed 9,455 job postings in the county between Dec. 1, 2020 and June 2, 2021, a 10% increase from the year prior.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT

Shakopee Director of Parks and Recreation Jay Tobin said while many posi-



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**Buckingham Companies Vice President Mike Buckingham-Hayes.**

tions are available and nearly everyone is hiring, the real problem is a lack of applicants for the available jobs, especially in the community service area.

Filling the positions necessary to

provide the expected programs and services has proved a challenge, especially in terms of public safety. Lifeguards, ice rink employees and guest service area job searches have yielded unpromising results. One entrance to the city's community center was forced to resort to reduced hours due to a lack of staffing.

The competition for employees is fierce, said Tobin, as nearly every restaurant, store and other institution seeks to hire. Even before the pandemic, guest service-related jobs were a challenge to fill due to the demands of interacting with customers.

"The kind of services that we deliver take a certain skill set that not everyone's comfortable with, and I think that's part of our challenge, too," Tobin said. "People need to be comfortable engaging with the public, confident in their ability to deliver, and able to operate with a degree of independence."

"I'm proud of my department and proud of Shakopee as a city in our response during the pandemic," Tobin said. "When under COVID (restrictions), we were having to adjust our protocols, adjust our processes on a regular basis without a lot of long-term notice. Right now, I guess other than the staffing shortage, my team and I are very happy to be able to operate with some degree of normalcy."

Tobin and his team are prepared for the possibility that this lack of staffing becomes the new normal.

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### SMSC



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