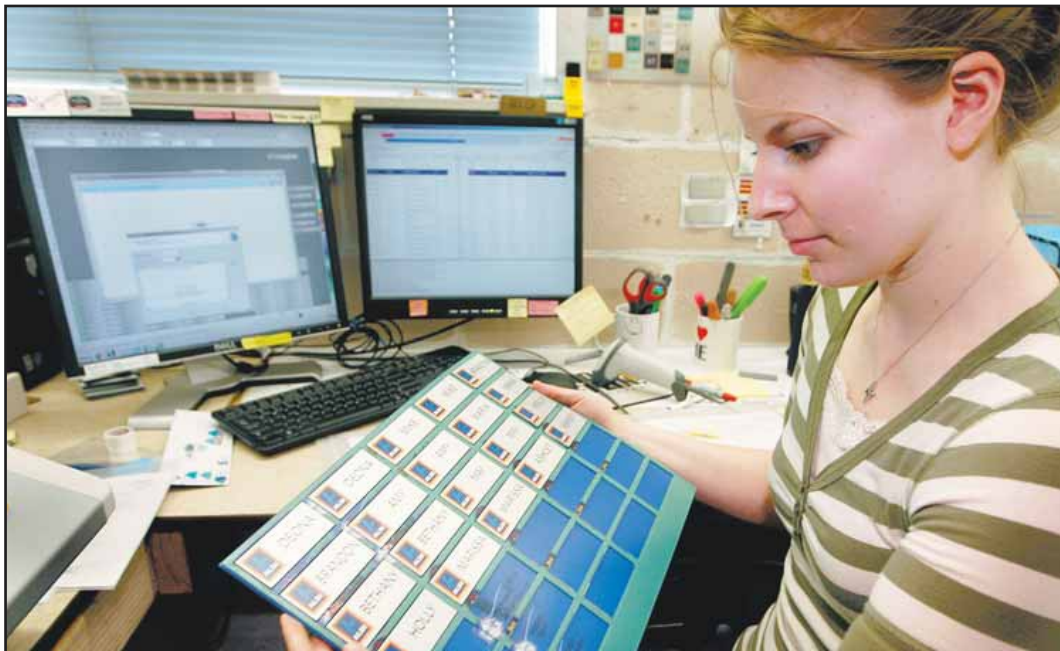


## MANUFACTURING GROWTH



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Jasmin Williams, a production printer at a Grants Pass manufacturing business, Recognition Specialties, checks name badges she just printed for a firm from Minnesota. The manufacturing sector has remained strong over the year with a gain of 70 jobs, according to employment data.

## Business up at production plants

By Linsay Cathey  
of the Daily Courier

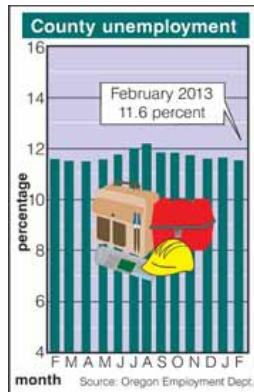
Business is up nearly 15 percent during the first quarter of 2013 over the first quarter of 2012 at local manufacturing business, Recognition Specialties.

And last year was a record year, said Lowell Gibson, president of the company where 70 percent of its business is making name badges for large businesses across the nation. It also offers products such as name plates, trophies and plaques, among other items.

We were growing at a 30 percent growth rate going into the recession, and then we took a slight dip for a year and a half, Gibson explained. We have been adding for the last two years.

Two full-time employees have been added during the past 12 months, and other employees are working increased hours in the customer service, sales and website departments as the economy continues to recover.

Krauss Craft, a local manufacturer of playground equipment for clients nationwide, has also experienced year-over-year growth, said its chief operating officer, C.J. Schatza. During the past year, there has been a 20 percent increase in employment at the business that currently



employs about 120 people.

We're kind of a little seasonal but we've added net to our manufacturing head count out there consistently throughout the year, Schatza said. We've been growing pretty strongly.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the manufacturing sector continues to add jobs in Josephine County over the past 12 months, up by 70 workers compared to February 2012. The sector with the largest increases in the last 12 months is retail trade, which is up a net 80 jobs, a number that reflects about 110 positions added by home improvement giant Home Depot, which opened Febru-

ary 2012.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Josephine County showed slight improvement in February at 11.6 percent, down just 1/10 of a point from the 11.7 percent rate in January, according to a report issued this week from the Oregon Employment Department. In February 2012, the rate was 11.7 percent.

Regional economist Guy Tauer said Josephine County is in the same place it was a year ago in terms of the unemployment rate and overall job change. However, the county is experiencing a decline in its labor force, a trend across the state and country.

The labor force participation rate is at historical lows since 1976, Tauer said. Basically, (the Josephine County labor force) is down about 1,000 from a year ago, down to levels we haven't seen since 2003.

Sectors that continue to lag in over-the-year growth include construction down 90 jobs, and financial activities and transportation, warehousing, and utilities each down 30 jobs.

A lot of areas are picking up in construction. We haven't seen much turn around in Southern Oregon, Tauer said.

Local government employment continues to be a drag

on the economy, as that sector has lost 170 jobs over the past 12 months. The decline is largely due to layoffs in county government in May and June, following voter defeat of a request for a property tax increase to fund public safety services.

Douglas County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate went from 11.4 percent in January to 11.3 percent in February, and remains lower than 12 percent reported in February 2012. Jackson County's rate went from 10.4 percent in January to 10.3 percent in February and remains lower than 10.8 percent reported in January 2012.

Statewide, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged at 8.4 percent from January to February and is lower than the 8.9 percent rate reported a year ago. Oregon's rate remains above the national rate of 7.7 percent in February, down from 7.9 percent in January. A year ago, the national rate was 8.3 percent.

Josephine County has the fifth highest rate in the state. Counties with higher rates than Josephine include: Crook at 13.4 percent; Grant at 12.9 percent; Harney at 12.4 percent; and Jefferson at 12 percent.

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