



[November 18, 2008]

Alltel adding 130 jobs at local call center: Center currently at 280 employees

MANKATO, Nov 18, 2008 (The Free Press - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- Wireless telephone provider Alltel Corp. plans to add 130 fulltime jobs at its Mankato call center by January.

The announcement comes at a time when many companies across the country are announcing layoffs or budget cuts. Alltel said its customer base is growing and it is adding jobs to keep up with demand.

Since Alltel purchased Midwest Wireless, the company's Mankato site has been used as a call center. The Mankato site is staffed by customer service representatives who specialize in technical support.

Scott Morris, manager of corporate communications for Alltel, said the company has been pleased with the performance of Mankato workers.

" These are good, solid jobs with good benefits," Morris said of the 130 new jobs. " We're growing, we're adding customers, and customers are doing more with their phones as phones are becoming more and more sophisticated."

The added jobs constitute a bit of a rebound from previous cuts. In March 2007 the company announced it would lay off a quarter of its workers at the Mankato site, or about 150 workers.

Morris said the company will be recruiting workers in December and hopes to have the jobs filled by Jan. 1. The new hires will answer customer calls about data products, programming, software and other issues.

" We're expecting more growth and we need more customer service reps to handle it ... Mankato workers have a very good work ethic," he said.

Alltel is also involved in a buyout from Verizon Wireless, but Morris said the 130 new jobs will not be affected.

" This is already baked in," he said. " Verizon is aware and they've agreed to it."

Alltel is the fifth largest provider of wireless communications in the nation, serving nearly 14 million customers.

Morris was unable to provide a pay range for the new jobs. The 130 new jobs will bump up Alltel's Mankato site by nearly 50 percent (currently at 280 employees).

All of the jobs will be at the call center. None will be at the retail locations. The jobs announcement comes at a time when the statewide and nationwide jobs picture looks glum.

So far this year the U.S.economy has lost about a million jobs. Nationally, the unemployment rate of 6.5 percent is the highest it has been in 14 years.

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