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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **EDC and Project LIFT partner up for workforce readiness**



*Anita Fischer, Director of Workforce Readiness*

**Port St. Lucie, FL/Jan. 9, 2024** – Help wanted signs have been multiplying rapidly in St. Lucie County. Cheney Brothers, Accel International, FedEx Ground, TAMCO, Maverick Boat Group, Pursuit Boats, Contender Boats, Walmart Distribution Center, A-1 Industries and many others are hiring, along with small businesses and construction companies.

“The success we’ve seen over the past five years in attracting employers to St. Lucie County, along with strong growth in our existing industries, has made focus on talent development and workforce readiness essential to our region’s economic prosperity,” said Pete Tesch, president of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC).

The EDC has been working with St. Lucie Public Schools, Indian River State College and the Treasure Coast Builders Association for several years on career training and workforce programs. Two years ago, Palm-City-based Project L.I.F.T. opened a Fort Pierce location to provide counseling and skills training to at-risk youth. In 2023, Project L.I.F.T. obtained a three-year federal grant to expand its training capabilities.

“At Project L.I.F.T., we go far beyond training and counseling, our mission is to improve lives,” said CEO Bob Zaccheo. “In order to accomplish that goal, we need to be able to properly prepare our participants for good-paying, available jobs. We have to be able to closely connect with area employers so we know we are teaching the skills and abilities they are looking for.”

Addressing the talent development challenge from different angles, Zaccheo and Tesch collaborated on a partnership that could not only connect Project L.I.F.T.’s trainees with sustainable, long-term careers but could also provide wider support for local employers and other organizations engaged in workforce training.

An important component of that partnership was the appointment of a workforce readiness professional who would work closely with employers, schools, trade associations and other organizations to help close the gap between trainers and employers. Employed by Project L.I.F.T., the professional would serve as a loaned executive to the EDC as director of workforce readiness.

Port St. Lucie resident Anita Fischer’s background was an excellent match for the position’s requirements. Fischer had been a solutions-oriented business development and client retention professional for Manpower in St. Lucie County since 2016. Prior to that, as the general manager of a large fitness club, she was responsible for staff training and development. Active as an enthusiastic volunteer for multiple community organizations, Fischer’s ability to make and nurture connections would provide a running start for the new position.

“There is no limit to what this collaboration can achieve,” said Fischer. “I’m so inspired by the passion and dedication of the Project L.I.F.T. team, matched with the vision and leadership that the EDC has demonstrated in talent development since the very first Skills Gap Summit they held in 2017. Together, we’ll get this done!”

Organizations and employers interested in working with the EDC and Project L.I.F.T. on this initiative should contact Anita Fischer at [afischer@youredc.com](mailto:afischer@youredc.com) or by calling 772.324.2014 Ext. 204.

### **About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County**

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County's economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.324.2014, [contact@youredc.com](mailto:contact@youredc.com) or [www.youredc.com](http://www.youredc.com).

### **About Project L.I.F.T.**

Project L.I.F.T. is dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk teens and their families through treatment of substance use disorders, mental health counseling, mentoring, and vocational skills training. The nonprofit organization's innovative delivery of mental health services provides therapy through the unique platform of the skilled trades. At no cost, 14- to 21-year-old young men and women engage in hands-on training in welding, HVAC, solar installation, construction, auto repair, manufacturing, small equipment operation and more, while licensed therapists work with them to address issues including depression, anxiety, addiction, trauma, abuse and anger management. Project L.I.F.T. provides services in Fort Pierce, Palm City, and Belle Glade. For more information, visit [www.projectlift.org](http://www.projectlift.org).