

# Local high tech industry hungry for trained workers

■ U.S. Rep Kurt Schrader discusses job creation to benefit local companies

By **PATRICK JOHNSON**  
WILSONVILLE SPOKESMAN

With Oregon's unemployment rate hovering over 10 percent, Wilsonville is feeling just the opposite.

Now, according to the business community, the city has a shortage of workers.

What started as a networking breakfast last August with U.S. Congressman Kurt Schrader (D-Canby), has turned into a task force to find the best way to get a bigger number of trained workers for the optic companies located in Wilsonville.

The task force met at Rockwell Collins in Wilsonville last Friday.

"Recently we have filled a technician position for the third time because we can't seem to find qualified people," said Cholan Muthukumarasamy, director of op-



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**Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Canby), middle, talks with Terry Outcalt, general manager of Flir's Portland site and Dave Austin, site manager for Rockwell Collins, during a roundtable discussion last week about the need for educated workers.**

erations for Coherent, a company that designs and manufactures lasers. "We spend at least six months training people for this position. Engineers aren't the problem, it's people who are able to be technicians. Engineers we steal from each other."

Steve Stark, vice president of engineering for InFocus, agreed.

"For 20 years we had big com-

panies like Tek and Intel to train people at this skill level, and now I think we need to get together and find ways to train people to be technicians either through (the Oregon Institute of Technology) or let engineering students know there are jobs here," Stark said.

Schrader, a member of the House Committee on Small Business, said he hopes dialogue will

help local companies find the workers they need.

"Right now, as you might imagine, it's about jobs," Schrader told the group. "And I would like to grow this industry in my district for obvious reasons. Building the work force is a big issue and it has an impact on everybody."

## COLLABORATION THE GOAL

Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp said the meeting was intended to "locate synergies," or find ways that allow the public and private sectors to collaborate on this goal.

"We are looking for ways to work together to create some economic development and support our high tech companies in Wilsonville," Knapp said.

Officials from Business Oregon, Workforce Investment Council of Clackamas County and Clackamas Community College all were interested in how they could help find workers to assist the high tech companies in the Wilsonville area.

"It already sounds like you are all doing a lot of in-house training right now," said Scott Glitz, dean

of the Technical Career Education Division of Clackamas Community College. "To whatever extent you would be willing to share that curriculum, that could be translated to an open-to-the public curriculum. I think that's a good head start. As well as people you have on staff that would be a natural mentor in education or even adjunct teaching positions."

Schrader said the Oregon Legislature is interested in education programs supported by businesses.

"You may not like all the spending going on in Washington D.C., but it is necessary right now to get this economy going and I would like to position my district, as (Mayor Knapp) put it, to be the epicenter of new technology," Schrader said. "You guys are experienced and I think we can work on this."

Flir general manager Terry Outcalt suggested the business leaders meet again in a task force, without the elected officials, to figure out ways to move forward with the education portion of the discussion. ■