

## S&S TRUCK PARTS

# Company thrives through unique partnership with SB County

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**ONTARIO** » S&S Truck Parts this month doubled its operations in the city, moving from a 27,000-square-foot warehouse to a 42,000-square-foot operation in the eastern industrial portion of the city.

When the Chicago area-based company decided to open this branch in California five years ago, it was taking a gamble.

S&S Truck Parts — a diesel replacement part wholesaler — was looking to provide faster service to its West Coast customers. Realistically, the company could have gone to San Diego because it would have been closer to the ports, said Justin Roberts, general manager of the Ontario branch.

But San Bernardino County offered up what no other region was willing to do — at no cost — helping to recruit staff and provide a training assistance program through its Workforce Investment

**TRUCK » PAGE 6**

Board.

“It’s the reason we’re here,” Roberts said. “Training is expensive, and you don’t know if the person is going to work out. To have a program where they are able to pay for half of that or more of their salary is essential for a company just opening.”

Since 1998, the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board has been paying attention to emerging economic trends, listening to employers, creating strategic partnerships, and providing no-cost services for San Bernardino County businesses and residents, said Miguel McQueen, deputy director, business services and operations for the Workforce Investment Board.

In the last year, the in-

vestment board has worked with more than 6,151 businesses and trained 1,950 residents (219 through on-the-job training), he said.

“The WIB’s locally led programs are critical in closing San Bernardino County’s skills gap. As the economy improves, demand increases for products and services, but businesses such as S&S Trucking find it difficult to identify qualified applicants because many of the region’s unemployed are not trained for the new jobs available,” McQueen said.

“The Workforce Investment Board services impact the economy by working directly with the business community to strategically target funds to meet the workforce demands of growing industry sectors. By doing so, the board elevates the skills and employability of the residents in San Bernardino County. This creates the ‘multiplier effect’ by residents earning good wages, paying taxes, buying homes, shopping at local businesses, using less public services.”

With operations staff being so small, Roberts said he didn’t have the time to filter through 1,000 resumes for a limited amount of openings.

The workforce board was able to narrow down his search, providing him with resumes of possible candidates, he said.

“I almost refuse to go to a place like Monster or other places because it is such a mass overload of emails from everybody. This is kind of our filter,” Roberts said. “Hiring from the county, you are helping the people that have been down and out for a while. You are helping them get off the system and get them a steady job.”

Despite keeping 10,000 truck parts on site, it is a

small operation for the Ontario branch, with nine on staff as of September.

It started with four employees, and two of those were brought on through the workforce board.

There are now three employees who have been hired on through the program, and Roberts said he expected to hire one more through the workforce board.

When the company moved into its larger warehouse in October, Roberts said it provided their branch with much needed office space.

“We’ve outgrown this warehouse for over a year. We need more sales staff. Right now they only have two sales staff.”

This month they are going to be adding four more sales staff for a total of six, Roberts said.

