

Area businesses hiring

Despite the economic downturn, some employers still on lookout

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By-products of the recent economic downturn — job losses, floundering businesses and dwindling retirement accounts — no doubt have members of the United States work force fearing for their financial futures. However, there are still a few employment opportunities out there

— if you know where to look for them. Coincidentally, Hinesville and the surrounding Liberty County area just may be good starting points.

Some area businesses are defying the odds as they continue to search for viable employees.

"I think that there are different strata of retail that are doing well," said Greg Parker, owner of the local chain of Parker's convenience stores

600,000 U.S. jobs lost in January

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation lost nearly 600,000 jobs last month, the worst showing in a third of a century, as a vicious cycle of cutbacks by consumers forced ever more layoffs by beleaguered employers. The unemployment rate catapulted to 7.6 percent, the highest in 16 years, and

seemed headed for double digits

Some 3.6 million positions have disappeared so far in the deepening downturn, which now ranks as the biggest job destroyer in the post-World War II period and has raised pressure on President Barack Obama and Congress to agree quickly on a huge economic stimulus plan to stop the hemorrhaging

and gas stations.

"McDonald's, discount clubs (like Sam's Club) and convenience stores

are actually doing well," he said.

Because consumers are looking

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save money, Parker said businesses that offer deals can remain profitable.

"For example, grocery stores are doing well because people are eating out less," he said.

A recent report from the Georgia Department of Labor puts the state's jobless rate at the end of 2008 at about 8 percent. A few businesses, however, have not been put off by the grim statistics.

Parker's chain is currently hiring. Stores on Highway 84 and on E.G. Miles Parkway currently are accepting applications.

"We're doing better than some other sectors of retail," Parker said.

Parker's chain isn't the only area business looking to add to its work force.

Ed Derham, manager of the Hinesville Lowe's store, said he's also hiring right now.

"This is our busiest season. Spring is like our Christmas," Derham said. "This is our biggest time of year."

Derham said his store hasn't strayed from its annual springtime hiring practice because people are slowly starting to spend again after the initial economic scare a few months ago.

"For the past two weeks or so, the flow has started to come back," he said.

And while Derham admits his store isn't posting record profits, he said he will be able to provide some local residents with secure jobs.

"We're doing OK," Derham said. "We're not seeing any major losses, but could it be better? Yes."