

JOBS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY SCARCE IN SPARTANBURG, S.C.



The astonishing numbers from The Labor Department are hitting home for people in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Currently tied for the fourth-highest unemployment rate in the country, which is at 11.1 percent, South Carolina is begging for employment. The Labor Department recently released that over 404,000 people filed for unemployment benefits just this last week and there are more than 14 million people looking for work in the United States. The Occupy Wall Street protests eventually found their way into the heavily conservative state with not so good results. About 20 people made it and there were a few honks of support. A few people shouted at the protesters to "get a job!" Not everyone protesting took those words of encouragement kindly, like Don Bramblett, who is an electrician. *"Especially in South Carolina – the very few hold on to all of the wealth and the working class and the poor are getting less and less of the pie."*

The Story of Spartanburg A food pantry at the First Baptist Church Helping Ministries Center in Spartanburg opens its doors three mornings a week to help those who are suffering. They are able to pick up sacks of food or used clothing. The number of unemployed people coming through each day is increasing. A regular named Rocky Gist, has been out of work for two years. Gist's unemployment benefits ran out and have had no such luck in finding a stable position. Gist has been to the church three times now and believes that many more visits are in the future: *"I never thought it'd be like this," he says. "Never thought it'd wind up like this. I hate that it had to come to this point. I really do. 'Cause I always have provided for myself, you know. I always have."* There are many cities like Spartanburg that are experiencing what unemployment really does. The cities that were built around one commodity are suffering the most, such as the textile or automotive industries.

Seniors Go Back For Their Education Many seniors are now realizing the importance of a high school diploma or GED when their jobs are being moved overseas. When cities focus on factories and it becomes the main employment within the city, many individuals will have a lot to lose. Now that those jobs are becoming scarce, seniors are going back to school to further their skills.

A Brighter Future Now that the manufacturing jobs in Spartanburg County have dwindled down to 24,000, people are looking for solutions. Cooper Standard, a company that produces sealing components for cars, is answering the calls for help and expanded their workforce this year. In 2009, things were not looking good for Cooper Standard – they filed for bankruptcy, had layoffs and many workers took a pay cut. However, with the recent tax break, the future looks much more promising. Human resources manager, Warren Snead, speaks about the company's future: "What didn't kill us made us stronger," Snead says. "We're cautiously looking to the future — do we have confidence that the economy is strong? I can tell you, we could hire more people today if we had confidence that the economy was going to remain robust."

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