

CHATTANOOGA JOBLESS RATE HAS DECREASED



The jobless rate in Chattanooga has reached its lowest level within the past three years. The area has not seen numbers like this since 2008. State economists also believe that with the expected employment gains, the jobless rates will continue to decline as more people will become employed with the news jobs that are available. An associate director for the University of Tennessee's center for Business and Economic Research, Matt Murray, has said, "I think 2012 and 2013 are going to be especially strong years for employment growth in Tennessee, better than the U.S. as a whole." He also says, "The unemployment rate will remain stubbornly high as more workers come back into the labor market. But I don't see the housing market getting any worse and the transportation equipment market, which is critical for Tennessee and places like Chattanooga, should continue to grow this year."

Unemployment rates in the Chattanooga metro area have reached 7.3 percent during the month of December of 2011. This is the lowest unemployment rate that the area has seen since the month of November in 2008. Within the past year alone, the metro Chattanooga area added a little over 5,000 additional jobs which helped produce a 2.1 percent growth in employment available in the area. In the nation, the jobless rate for December of 2011 was at an adjusted 8.3 percent and the unemployment rate in the state of Tennessee was at 8.1 percent. This shows that Chattanooga is doing better with its jobless rate than the state of Tennessee as well as the nation. In the metro area of Dalton, including Murray County and Whitfield County, the unemployment rate actually increased and was at 12.1 percent. The area lost just about 300 jobs in December alone. The President for the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce, Brian Anderson, has said, "It's hard to brag too much or feel to good about it when you've lost 6,000 jobs in the manufacturing [since the peak in 2007]." He also says, "We'll probably be above the 10 percent [rate for unemployment] for a number of months longer." One of the many individuals in Dalton who is currently out of work and looking for employment is a former Navy security officer. His name is Larry Kimmel and he is unemployed while living in the Dalton area, an area that has not seen much progress during the recovery. He is pessimistic about his situation and says, "Human resources people, they tell you to leave a number and they'll get back to you." He also says, "I've put in 30 applications, and you know how many have returned my call? None of them." Situations like these make the people of Dalton quite discouraged about finding necessary employment.

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