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Total employment in the four county Dayton Metropolitan Area (Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Preble Counties), which currently stands at 407,900, has fallen by 27,800 jobs over the six year period ending this past September. This represents a 6.4 percent decline from the 435,900 employment total that existed in September 2000, the year of the region’s employment high water mark. Nearly all of this job loss has been suffered by the manufacturing industry, which shed 23,500 of its September 2000 total 80,200 jobs over the same time period (a 29.3 percent decline). Year over year declines have occurred in each of the past six years, although they have become smaller in recent years.

It is important to note that the region’s job loss statistics are slightly overstated since movement by workers to residences in northern Warren County as well as other counties outside of the federally defined four county MSA are counted as employment losses to the region even though they haven’t effectively left the region. Nonetheless, such measurement errors are not large enough to substantially alter the overall picture of significant manufacturing job losses.

While the Dayton MSA has not shared in the employment growth that has occurred in the nation as a whole, where employment has risen by 4.4 percent since beginning to recover in 2003, it is not alone. Regional economies throughout the nation that are dependent on manufacturing employment as an important part of their economic base have been suffering similar persistent job losses. Employment in the manufacturing industry nationwide began an uninterrupted year over year decline from 1998 through last year. Overall, U.S. manufacturing employment was 19 percent lower in September 2006 than in September 1998. Thus, many other manufacturing based regional economies, especially in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, have been suffering job loss patterns similar to Dayton’s.

The lost manufacturing industry employment has not hurt the broader regional economy as much as it could have. Buyout payments and retirement benefits have accompanied more of the lost jobs than would normally be expected. Nonetheless, the loss of these manufacturing jobs still hurts the region because the high hourly wages and benefits packages they generated will not be replaced within region for similarly skilled workers, an impact that ripples through the rest of the region. Furthermore, the many firms that supply goods and services to local manufacturing facilities have suffered lost sales as manufacturing activity declined.

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Aside from manufacturing, employment across other industries in the region has been relatively flat. Employment in the service sector fell by 1.2 percent to 334,460 employees from September 2000 to September 2006, while private service employment, which makes up the majority of jobs in the region, has fallen only 0.5 percent over the same time period. While employment growth in this sector lags far behind national trends, after considering that many local employers who provided services to the manufacturing industry were impacted by the manufacturing decline, this sector has proved fairly resilient. Many local providers of business to business services appear to have been able to offset lost demand from manufacturing by exploiting new business opportunities in other markets.

The best performing industry at generating employment for the region is health care, which has grown by 11.5 percent in the past six years (although it did flatten over the past year). Importantly, the professional and business services industry has emerged as a source of employment growth over the past year, rising by 2 percent over the twelve months ending in September 2006. This industry, which includes technology and engineering firms, may well represent the region’s best prospects for future employment growth.

Earnings by the local workforce have successfully kept up with national trends. Mean annual earnings and median annual earnings, respectively, for workers in the Dayton MSA were $37,680 and $30,200, in the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics Metropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates from May 2005. This compares with $37,870 and $29,432 respectively across the United States.

Key Industries and the Outlook

Manufacturing and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base remain the two most important factors in the health of the local economy, primarily due to their size and role in providing significant inflows of income from outside the region. The outcome of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission process promises in increase in defense jobs for the area. Of course, the Department of Defense’s long-standing efforts to “do more with less” will still create pressure on the overall employment level in the service sector. By mid-year, service sector employment is forecasted to be nearly the same as this year. If this forecast proves to be accurate, service employment in the region will continue to lag behind the national trend of increased service employment.

Total Employment: Following a seasonal increase in employment during the fourth quarter and during the first quarter of 2007 (primarily due to a normal decline in construction employment), total employment in the region is forecasted to be nearly the same as this year.

Finally, the Dayton area remains a relatively affordable place to live and work. Depending on the source, the cost of living in the region is between 5 percent and 9 percent below the national average.

The forecasts presented in this issue are estimated based on econometric models of manufacturing employment, and service employment for the Dayton region.

Manufacturing Industry: Manufacturing employment is expected to remain flat in The Dayton Metropolitan Statistical Area (Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Preble Counties) through the middle of 2007, as manufacturing employment throughout the nation continues to stabilize following a significant downward spiral that began in the late 1990s. It is anticipated that significant job losses will occur in manufacturing beyond the horizon of this forecast as the Delphi Corporation implements its bankruptcy reorganization plan in the last half of 2007.

Service Sector: Employment in the service sector is expected to follow its traditional seasonal pattern of increased holiday-related employment during the final quarter of this year, before declining back to its long-term trend after New Year’s Day. Although employment in professional and business services may continue increasing, it will not do so by enough to make a large impact on the overall employment level in the service sector. By mid-year, service sector employment is forecasted to be nearly the same as this year. If this forecast proves to be accurate, service employment in the region will continue to lag behind the national trend of increased service employment.