

Solid

jump in area job numbers

Growth comes with decrease in earnings

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MANKATO — Employment in the Mankato region jumped 2.8 percent in October compared to a year earlier, far outpacing other regions of the state.

The job numbers are the highest they've been since February 2008.

But the growth in jobs has come with a nearly 8 percent decrease in the average earnings of local workers.

Total non-farm jobs hit 53,728 in Blue Earth and Nicollet counties, 1,482 more than in October 2010.

The employment numbers were up 2.3 percent from September of this year.

All sectors added jobs locally with government growth the lowest at 0.8 percent.

Workers, however, earned on average less per hour this October (\$22.82) than a year earlier (\$24.55).

People also worked fewer hours — 33.7 hours per week, compared to 34.4 hours last year.

Other regional centers saw lower growth or losses in year-over-year job numbers in October: Minneapolis/St. Paul grew 1.2 percent; Duluth numbers fell 0.5 percent; Rochester rose 1.7 percent; and St. Clouds job numbers fell 1.3 percent. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development also said Thursday that Minnesota's unemployment rate fell half a percentage point to 6.4 percent in October — that despite the fact the state lost 6,100 jobs during the month.

The jobless rate and the job loss data are arrived at from two different economic surveys that often run counter to one another.

In Minnesota, jobs in education and health services were down 3,000, leisure and hospitality down 2,000, financial activities down 1,600 and government down 800.