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The Boston Globe

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## Groups promote tech-sector jobs



James Marsh received the City Pride Award in Lynn. (David Kamerman/Globe Staff)

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By Kathy McCabe  
Globe Staff / December 30, 2007

The North Shore Technology Council has teamed up with the regional employment board to share information about workforce development in biotechnology, nanotechnology, and other emerging high-tech sectors. The two groups last spring held focus groups, attended by staff from local technology companies, to explain what each business does and how it recruits employees.

"It gave us a chance to get to know these companies firsthand," said **Mary Sarris**, executive director of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board, based in Salem. "They're highly specialized companies, but we didn't have a real understanding about their workforce needs. We know that technology is an important sector of our regional economy."

Technology is a key growth area identified in a Labor Market Blueprint, a snapshot of the job scene in 19 local communities from Saugus to Cape Ann. Biotechnology now employs 3,500 people working in 100 companies in suburbs north of Boston, according to the report.

Most of the jobs require math and science skills and advanced college degrees. The workforce board, which runs career centers in Gloucester, Lynn, and Salem, often helps lower-skilled workers enter the workforce or train for better jobs. But Sarris believes the board can be of help to technology companies. "This is an important job sector. Technology is just everywhere. You really need to have it as a basic skill. As these companies expand, we want to be able to help them grow their workforce," Sarris said.

**Tom Cheatham**, president of the technology council, hopes the new partnership will address job training needs. "We have a lot of companies, and we'd like to have the [workforce board] work on our training needs," he said.

Software, biotech, defense, and semiconductor companies make up the bulk of high-tech employment on the North Shore. But the industry hasn't done a good job of building awareness, he said.

"The North Shore has been weak branding its own self-image," said Cheatham, who works for a Marblehead company that specializes in cellphone technology. "But we hope to change that. We need to promote our industry."

The council, which has more than 200 members, is based at the Cummings Center in Beverly. Monthly meetings are posted on its website, [nstc.org](http://nstc.org). In addition to teaming up with the workforce board, the council is looking to address regional issues. Infrastructure, such as improving access ramps along Route 128, is a high priority. So is identifying land, such as Amesbury's "golden triangle," 70 acres of private land along interstates 95 and 495, to become a tech hub. "The land now lies fallow," he said. "But we see it as an area that could take off, if it could be developed."

#### Nonprofit rolls out its online program

The United Way of the Greater Seacoast rolled out eWay, an on-line giving program, with help from the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. With the number of large employers dwindling in the New Hampshire Seacoast area, due to mergers and consolidation, the United Way is now targeting small businesses, said **Liza Dube**, executive director.

"Our pool of donors is changing," Dube said in an interview. "Before, we focused on large businesses, where we had the most chance to sign up a lot of employees at once. Now we're looking for help from small businesses."

The United Way collects donations from workers to provide financial assistance to human service agencies in 47 Granite State communities. The agency last week launched eWay with help from the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. E-mails containing a link to a special home page were sent to all chamber members not currently on the United Way's donor list.






Employees will be able to decide for themselves if they'd like to give to the nonprofit. Since the program is new to the Seacoast United Way, Dube doesn't know what the response will be. But she hopes it will give the agency a boost when donations are tallied in the spring.

#### Award winners named in Lynn

He brought the Boston Pops to the renovated Veterans Memorial Auditorium at Lynn City Hall. He turned High Rock Tower Observatory into a cosmic classroom. And he has pitched in on most major Lynn development projects, such as the city's industrial waterfront. And for that, **James M. Marsh**, chief of staff to Lynn Mayor **Edward J. Clancy Jr.**, received the City Pride Award this month from the Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce. Other 2007 Business Excellence Awards were presented to **Fitzroy Alexander**, owner of Traditional Breads, Businessperson of the Year; **Wayne Burton**, president of North Shore Community College, Community Service; **Project Cope**, Nonprofit Business of the Year; **Richard Rehal**, Hall of Fame; **Marc Paster**, President's Award. All were honored at the Breakfast for Chamber Champions, led by **Leslie Gould**, the chamber's new executive director.

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