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Shale tied to 8,000 new jobs

By BRENDA J. LINERT

YOUNGSTOWN - More than 8,000 new jobs have been created in the last year with a direct link to the Utica Shale boom. And that's just a start, business officials said.

Development of the Utica Shale, described by a top executive of Consol Energy as still in its "infancy stages," will mean jobs and probably lots of them.

Harry Schurr, general manager of Utica Operations and Hess J.V., was one of a number of speakers at Thursday's Youngstown Ohio Utica & Natural Gas, or Y.O.U.N.G., expo who talked candidly about jobs and his company, which employs 9,000 people nationwide.

"Coal and natural gas provide 75 percent of the power in the United States," Schurr said. "And we are sitting on two of the largest shale plays in the U.S. It just doesn't get any better than that."

Safety, he said, is his company's highest priority, and if an applicant has a poor safety record, he or she likely will be passed by for employment.

Drilling rig workers, Schurr said, will earn a very high wage - easily in the six-figure range - when the time comes. But he cautioned it's very "dirty, strenuous work in all kinds of weather."

"That's the type of opportunities that are out there," Schurr said. "Show me another industry that can provide those kinds of jobs for people out there."

As far as the number of rigs that will need workers, David Mustine, managing director of energy, chemicals and polymers for JobsOhio, said there have been 360 oil and gas drilling permits issued, 129 wells drilled with 27 producing as of Aug. 22 in the state.

"There is still a lot of work to determine how big the play is," Mustine said, adding that Chesapeake, Consol, Hess, Gulfport are here with major oil companies like Exxon-Mobil, Shell, BP and Chevron just getting started.

Mustine attributed much of Ohio's job growth - 111,300 new jobs in the last 18 months to "general improvement" in the economy's nine key sectors headed by IT, but pointed out the energy industry has invested more than \$860 million.

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