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INDIANAPOLIS State's jobless rate up to 8.4 percent

Indiana's unemployment rate rose slightly to 8.4 percent in June, but officials say the state experienced its largest one-month gain in manufacturing jobs in nearly nine years.

The Department of Workforce Development said Thursday that Indiana's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in June reached 8.4 percent, compared with 8.3 percent in May.

It said private sector employment in Indiana grew by 5,300 jobs and the 4,300 new manufacturing jobs was the most since August 2004.

INDIANAPOLIS Suit brings halt to vanity plates

Indiana will stop offering vanity plates until the outcome of a class action lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the agency's restrictions on tags wording.

Bureau of Motor Vehicles Commissioner R. Scott Waddell announced the move Friday.

A Greenfield police officer sued the BMV in May, saying its decision to revoke his vanity license plate "01NK" violated his free speech rights.

The agency revoked his plate after three years, saying its content was "offensive or misleading."

PLAINFIELD Body may be that of missing man

Police say a body found inside a car in a retention pond in Plainfield, west of Indianapolis, fits the description of a 27-year-old man who has been missing for two years.

Police said at a news conference Friday that they haven't confirmed whether the body is that of Morgan Johnson, who was last seen in May 2011 leaving his motel room in Plainfield.

The car found about 8 a.m. Friday also matches the description of the Pontiac Grand Am Johnson was driving.

VINCENNES Red Skelton Museum opens

A new museum celebrating the career of the late comedian Red Skelton has opened in his southwestern Indiana hometown.

Skelton family members took part in a grand opening ceremony Thursday evening in Vincennes on the 100th anniversary of his birth. The Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy features memorabilia and videos about his influence on early television and comedy with his characters, such as Freddie the Freeloader.

Valentina Skelton said she was impressed with the museum's videos of her father's old TV shows and its display depicting his dressing room.

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Salik Chowhan, 14, gets food during a Muslim Ifar dinner Wednesday hosted by the Pakistani-American community and Interfaith Paths to Peace at the Second Presbyterian Church. PHOTOS BY BRYAN ANGEL/MOSPITAL TO THE COURIER JOURNAL

Iftar event binds religions

Dinner at church a diverse affair

By Zahra Farah
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The Courier-Journal

Before the last light fell upon Second Presbyterian Church in Rolling Fields on Wednesday, the Islamic call to prayer carried throughout the church.

More than 350 people from different religious backgrounds gathered at the church to share an evening meal with members of another religion.

Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Jews sat side by side to share iftar — the traditional evening meal Muslims have when they break their daytime fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

If people with different backgrounds can eat together, then they can learn to tolerate one another, said Terry Taylor, executive director of Interfaith Paths to Peace, an organization that works to bring people of different religions together.

"When we break bread we break our hearts, but in a good way so that love can flow back and forth," Taylor said.

For the past three years, Louisville's Pakistani-American community and Interfaith Paths

to Peace have hosted the interfaith iftar dinner to promote religious understanding.

The problem is people may want to understand each other but fear the unknown, said Muhammad Babar, an organizer from Louisville's Pakistani-American community. "We must widen the circle of compassion, so we can reach the roots of the most common citizen," he said.

Babar said once everyone realizes they can be born into any faith, "they'll see an attack against any person or religion is an attack against all of us."

Leon Wahba, a board member of the Jewish Community of Louisville who was born and raised in Egypt, said he has experienced firsthand how religious discrimination can destroy a population.

The Islamic call to prayer he heard while growing up — "Allahu Akbar," or God is great — was endearing to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike in Egypt, he said.



From left, Sara Pracha, Nuzha Zuberi, Saima Zuberi, Shamila Zuberi and Nuzhat Shahid chat during the dinner.

"It greatly pains me personally that extremists so ignorantly used what is meant to be a language of unity and faith, into a language of division between people," Wahba said.

Wahba said that after Israel came into existence, his family had to flee Egypt because of growing animosity and suspicion held toward the Jewish people. He admits he holds suspicion and resentment toward Egypt but is hopeful for the future.

When Wahba sees people take to the streets to eliminate extremism, "then I think there is hope for an inclusive society."

Dr. Karamah Jaleel, with Louisville's Islamic community, said that for a person to have peace with other religions and still hold strong to their

beliefs, people must understand they are not the source of truth. "We can appreciate interpretations without being a threat," he said.

Resad Paya Pasic, 63, who attended the iftar with his wife, Denjita Pasic, 53, said he learned how to stay humble without letting his anger take control. He and his wife came to Louisville in 1992 for the Kentucky Derby but ended up staying after the Bosnian war broke out.

His father was killed by Serbs in the conflict. "In our case, my father was a victim of war. The Serbs were the aggressor, but I can't identify the certain aggressor," he said.

Instead of holding onto his father's death, he said he learned to let go. "If you hold onto it, your animosity deepens, it goes nowhere and it eats you up," he said.

Reporter Zahra Farah can be reached at (502) 582-4475.

Christian

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