

This year won't go down in the history books as being one of Tulsa's better years. Indeed, 2010 was hardly a stellar one for the metro area as it continued to slog along and experience a mixed bag of job layoffs and hiring announcements throughout the year. Metropolitan Tulsa received the unwanted distinction of posting the highest unemployment rate this year out of the state's three metro areas. Its jobless rate peaked at 8.1 percent in January and February, and has hovered at 7 percent or higher since May 2009. Based on the most recent jobless data available, the Tulsa area's unemployment rate edged up to 7.7 percent in October. One economic forecast points to the possibility of a 0.9 percent drop in the Tulsa area's nonfarm employment for 2010, followed by job gains next year. Likewise, drops are predicted for the area's labor force and total employment, which includes agricultural and self-employed people, according to seasonally adjusted data. Job losses this year are forecast for the area's construction, manufacturing, professional and business services, and the leisure and hospitality sectors, to name a few. Gains are forecast for natural resources and mining, education and health services, and government. When data revisions are released, however, Tulsa may turn out not to be as weak in 2010 as it looked according to the original economic data, said Russell Evans, director and research economist of the Center for Applied Economic Research with Oklahoma State University's Spears School of Business, recently at the annual Economic Outlook Conference. But that remains to be seen. Early in the year, Tulsa experienced some significant job loss and high-profile announcements about company closings and layoffs. Sizable losses have come from HSBC Finance Corp., which announced plans to close its Tulsa center and eliminate 465 jobs; Caterpillar Logistics Services Inc., where 300 were to be out of work after the company's Broken Arrow office closed; Zeledyne LLC, which cut 210 workers as it shut down a glass furnace line; and PepsiCo, which terminated 108 as it shut its Gatorade plant in Pryor. American Airlines earlier this year announced plans to transfer 200 Tulsa-based maintenance operations coordinators to Fort Worth over two years, and

Hilti USA laid off 64 people at its local North American headquarters. But even as these job losses occurred, large and small companies also were talking about expansion.

In May, executives of eight Tulsa-area employers gathered at the Tulsa Metro Chamber for a news conference to announce plans to hire 361 people this year. Those employers included Bearwood Concepts, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Geophysical Research Co., M&M Manufacturing, Psychiatric Hospital and Clinic, State Farm Insurance, U.S. Cellular and QuikTrip Corp. Last month, Bill Bartmann announced plans for his resurrected but new Tulsa-based debt-collection firm, called CFS II, which he said could expand to 200 employees within three months. Even with its higher jobless rate, Tulsa has fared well this year compared to other parts of the nation, where some metros have recorded double-digit jobless rates. The Brookings Institution in its recently released MetroMonitor, which analyzed data through the third quarter, listed Tulsa and Oklahoma City among the 20 strongest-performing metropolitan areas out of the 100 largest U.S. metros. In another list, released earlier by the Milken Institute, Tulsa dropped in the 2010 Best-Performing Cities index, which ranked the largest and smallest metro areas by how well they are creating and sustaining jobs and economic growth. Out of the 200 largest metro areas, Tulsa fell to No. 38 this year from No. 19 last year. For a more detailed look back on the Tulsa-area's business economy this year, the Tulsa World business staff once again recaps some of the highlights among individual sectors. Laurie Winslow 581-8466 laurie.winslow@tulsaworld.com

SUBHEAD: A mixed bag for the area: b

job layoffs and hirings