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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

POLK COUNTY'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE CONTINUES TO DROP

Bartow, Florida, November 22, 2011- The unemployment rate in Polk County was 11.3 percent in October 2011. In spite of the Lakeland-Winter Haven metro area losing 1,300 jobs due to professional and business services in October 2011, Polk County's unemployment had a decrease of 1.4 percentage points from the rate the county posted in the same month last year. This rate was 1.2 percentage points higher than the state rate of 10.1 percent and 2.8 percentage points above the national rate of 8.5 percent. Out of a labor force of 271,195, there were 30,511 unemployed Polk County residents.

Three of the ten major industry groups gained employment over the year. These were trade, transportation, and utilities (+800 jobs); education and health services (+400 jobs); and leisure and hospitality (+200 jobs). Total nonagricultural employment in the Lakeland-Winter Haven metro area was 192,100. Total nonagricultural employment decreased by 0.7 percent over the year, compared to a statewide increase of 1.3 percent.

The reports continue to show modest growth in Polk County. Stacy Campbell-Domineck, President & CEO of *Polk Works* said, "Our community still faces challenges in our economic recovery yet *Polk Works* is encouraged as our unemployment numbers continue to decline. We are diligently working on initiatives to continue this trend including a community summer youth employment program that will put our youth (ages 18-21) to work who face the highest unemployment rates."

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Polk Works is a private, non-profit administrator of workforce funds. Our mission is to be the innovative leader to ensure and sustain a quality workforce for today and the future. For more information, go to www.polkworks.org. *Polk Works* offers equal opportunity programs, auxiliary aids and services that are available upon request to individuals with disabilities Member: Employ Florida.