Labor Day was created to honor the achievements of American workers. That might seem like a cruel joke to the 14 million Americans looking for work right now. So, where did the jobs go?

Our Rebecca Jarvis goes looking for answers in our "Sunday Morning" Cover Story:

Here's a rare bit of good news on this Labor Day weekend: A new assembly line, filled with workers, coming alive at a U.S. automaker.

At the General Motors Orion plant just north of Detroit, they're cranking out a new sub-compact: the Chevy Sonic.

"It's beautiful, and the plant's ready to roll," said Gerald Johnson, GM's manufacturing manager.

"Who is going to buy these products?" asked Jarvis.

"Everybody!" said Johnson.

The Sonic will be the only sub-compact built in America. But making it here instead of Mexico or Asia, where wages are much lower, required driving some hard bargains with the UAW. New hires start at about $16 an hour, half the usual salary.

"You've got to be competitive and you've got to be cost-conscious," said Johnson.

That means employing lots of robots, 25 percent fewer workers, and using only half the space of previous assembly lines.

That's what it takes to do business these days: This is not your father's Oldsmobile plant.

"They are trained on multiple jobs," Johnson said. "They do rotation every day, so that they continue to maintain their skills in multiple jobs."
It's a gamble that GM hopes will continue its recovery from bankruptcy.

"Once you've been through winter, you have a great appreciation for spring and summer," Johnson said.

"And that's where you are right now, in spring and summer?" Jarvis asked.

"I think we're in spring," he replied.

But across the country, this summer has felt more like an economic ice storm. From the stock market, to that unending debt debate, to the downgrade of the nation's credit rating.

"We're worried a lot about deficits and debt. We should be worried. That's a significant, long-term problem," said Harry Holzer, an economics professor at Georgetown University in Washington.

"But we have a major short-term problem with unemployment at this level, and it's going to scar people, people who are out of work years and years."

You've heard the numbers. The unemployment rate has been stuck near the current 9.1 percent for more than two years now. 14 million of us are out of work.

Then on Friday, the Labor Department reported that, for the first time since 1945, the net change in the number of new jobs created in August was exactly ... zero.

You've also probably heard that this comes at a time of record corporate profits.

American companies have learned to do more and more with less and less.

"Everyone points to Wall Street and they say, 'Corporate America, look at it, it's got $2 trillion, why is it not spending that money on hiring?'" Jarvis asked.

"It seems to be that they can either spend the money elsewhere, and get the hiring done, which might mean going overseas, or they just prefer to do other things with the money," said Holzer. "Maybe they're more comfortable sitting on it, or investing it somewhere in the markets.

"You know, if we can convince them that there's money to be made by hiring workers, I'm sure they will be happy to do so!" Holzer laughed. "But they have to be convinced of that first."

So what about the other half of the story - small businesses? The jobs picture doesn't look good there, either.

Only four percent now of the owners out there think it's a good time to expand their business, and 70 percent say, 'No way.'" said Bill Dunkelberg, chief economist with the National Federation of Independent Business. "And the rest just don't even bother to answer the question."
Dunkelberg points to two issues: Consumers, whose confidence has plunged to the lowest level in two years, aren't spending enough to get businesses hiring; and he faults policy squabbles in Washington.

"How about some certainty about what my future looks like? What will my tax rates be? Will 'Obamacare' be found to be unconstitutional? Or if not, what is the government going to ask me to provide as a minimum package for my workers?" said Dunkelberg.

"Isn't there always, though, in a business going to be uncertainty?" asked Jarvis. "I mean, if you start a business today, you don't know who's going to be in power, who's going to be elected in two years. They could change the entire dynamic. Is there something that is exacerbating that uncertainty at this point?"

"Well, I think having everything up in the air right now seems to be making it worse," said Dunkelberg. "There are too many moving parts."

Too many moving parts ... and too few areas of job growth, particularly for workers unprepared for a leaner, meaner economy.

The number of manufacturing jobs has fallen by almost half in the last 30 years.

So, where have all the good jobs gone?

"Well, where they haven't gone, or where they are not longer, is in manufacturing, especially for very unskilled workers," said Holzer. "There are good jobs in other sectors. Certainly in healthcare and in construction, in financial services, and many other places.

"The bottom line is, there are good jobs out there in a lot of different sectors, but workers need usually a higher level of skill to get those good jobs than they did in the past."

Tiffany Serrano decided she needed to go back to class, after leaving the military and finding her training didn't translate into the civilian workforce. She has been out of work for a year.

"The job fields, organizations that I want to go into - Google, or anything with Veterans' Affairs, or even NASA if I aim high - you have to be very well-skilled and have a lot of experience," Serrano said.

(Credit: CBS)
So she came to Per Scholas, a job training program in the Bronx, N.Y. It's what's called "sectoral job training," teaching specific skills that lead to jobs in specific industries (in this case, IT, the people who fix your computer when it crashes).

"In this global economy, for our economy to remain vibrant, we need to invest in our labor force, and that requires - for us - a commitment by government, by corporations and foundations to
invest in programs like these," said Plinio Ayala, the president and CEO of Per Scholas (which means "for schools" in Latin). A non-profit, most of its funding comes from corporations and foundations - one fifth from government.

Ayala says that four out of five graduates from his program get a full-time job.

The training that we provide here really matches what employers are looking for in the skill sets that our people leave here with," Ayala said.

"When you talk to employers, do you find that they're frustrated by the type of skills the average candidate comes to them with?" asked Jarvis.

"There are thousands of IT jobs across this country that are going unfilled," Ayala replied. "And the primary reason that we hear from employers ... is the fact that they can't find qualified workers."

"I think we can do a much better job as a country of making the match between the job seeker and these job opportunities," said Jeff Weiner, the CEO of LinkedIn, the online professional networking site. He believes there are jobs out there, if only the right people can find them.

LinkedIn now has more than 120 million members. Weiner's vision is a world that connects all the dots.

"Why doesn't every American in the U.S. workforce have a profile, so that people can understand their experiences, their skill sets?" said Weiner. "And why isn't every job opportunity digitized? Just doing that alone would enable us to make matches in ways that were never before possible."

And in an economy where many workers will have to reinvent their careers, Weiner envisions a digital crystal ball.

"We can begin to predict where the opportunities are going to be," he said. "We can begin to predict what skills are going to be required to fill those opportunities."

Where Are All the Good Jobs Going?

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