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Township program helps the unemployed get on path to employment

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By **ERIKA ENIGK For The Sun**

More than 75 DuPage Township job seekers attended a job hunting "boot camp" this week in preparation for a job fair to be held Wednesday.

The boot camp, held Monday through Wednesday, was planned in response to the many residents who seek help from the township on housing matters, according to Linda Youngs, the township's housing and career development counselor. People often come to the township seeking assistance with utility bills or the like, and in questioning them, she learned that many households had at least one person who had been through a job loss.

With the boot camp, Youngs' goal was to back up the short-term assistance with something to help people get back into the workforce and back on their feet.

Today's economy has left many people out of work for the first time in their adult lives, and they have no idea how to search for and get work in today's technology-driven world, Youngs said.

"Times have changed," she said. "A lot of things are done on the computer now."

Monday's class focused on resume writing, something many tradesmen have never had to do, Youngs said. Marti Barton of Bolingbrook-based WordCrafters offered advice and guidance.

"Resume writing is an art, it's a skill and it's a technology," Barton said.

With so many people seeking work these days, it is important to stand out from the crowd, she said. A resume that is easily readable and paints an applicant's experience in the best light can be the ticket to a new job.

"When they look at your resume, they want to know what you can do for them," she said.

Barton discussed various types of resumes as well as style guidelines like font size and margins. She also gave advice regarding cover letters and references.

The second seminar, held Tuesday, was put on by library personnel and focused on job hunting resources as well as networking. For the final session, a handful of area businessmen and women came in to help participants with mock interviews.

"We tried to hit on a little bit of everything," Youngs said.

Many participants were able to put some of their new skills to use right away. Some who have spent their lives in similar professions were able to begin a dialogue about opportunities to pool their resources, Youngs said. Others were asked by one of the mock interviewers to send their resumes to him so he could forward them to people he thought might be hiring.

One man actually left Wednesday's mock interview session early to go to a real interview, telling Youngs as he exited that he couldn't wait to use what he'd learned in the seminars, she said.

The township also offers a budget counseling class. Youngs tells participants to treat their households as a business, comparing income to bills and carefully planning how to save money when there is a shortfall. Alternatively, many people come to the class and are surprised to find they have more left over at the end of the month than they'd expected, giving them the opportunity to save, Youngs said.

"It really is an eye opener," she said.