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A work force to be reckoned with

Township employment event draws hundreds

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October 9, 2009

By **ERIKA ENIGK** For The Sun

Hundreds turned out for a job fair put on by DuPage Township on Wednesday.

Held at the Levy Center, the fair featured 30 employers. It was the second job fair the township has put on this year, according to William Mayer, township supervisor.

The township routinely helps residents with mortgage payments, utility bills and other needs, Mayer said. Since many of those seeking help have suffered a recent job loss, township personnel decided to do something to help people get back on their feet.

"We're trying to figure out how to get people through this crisis," he said. "We're just trying to put a little dent in the problem."

Bolingbrook resident Marguerite Soto is one resident who has sought help. Thanks to the township's assistance, she has not fallen behind on her mortgage or utility payments, despite having lost her job as a mortgage processor in July. She came to Wednesday's job fair hoping to end her long period of unemployment.

Even if a company doesn't have an opening for the exact position a person is looking for, coming to a job fair can be a useful networking event, Soto said. She came away with two good job leads.

"You don't know who's here who knows somebody else," she said. "You have to put yourself out there."

Drew Hartmann, an agent for Randstad, a staffing service with several offices in the area including one in Bolingbrook, said he was seeking candidates mainly for industrial positions for 20 to 30 clients. However, those with different experience were still encouraged to send resumes, as one of Randstad's other offices may have different types of jobs available.

While the job market is showing signs of improvement, there are still many candidates out there seeking work, Hartmann said.

"We'll post an ad and have 200 responses within the first few hours," he said.

In order to give clients the best candidates possible, Randstad offers resume help as well as training programs to help job seekers brush up on their skills.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security was represented at the job fair as well. Jim Collins, the veterans representative at the department's Bolingbrook office, said he was there seeking candidates for state jobs as well as to offer resources to those who are looking for work.

"People think of us as the unemployment office," he said. "In reality, we're the employment office."

He encouraged job seekers to look at various job search Web sites and offered information about outreach programs and support geared toward veterans. He also mentioned that veterans have preference for state jobs and that other benefits are available for the children of veterans.

The township is also there to assist job seekers, according to Linda Youngs, the township's housing and career development counselor. For example, many job seekers have not regularly used a computer and are confused by online applications, and the township can offer them help to overcome that obstacle, she said.

Soto said she believes anyone in need of help should be willing to ask for it, whether it be in job hunting or financial assistance, as she sought. Though some may be too embarrassed or proud to ask, these tough situations are the reason the resources exist.

"If it wasn't for the township's assistance, I don't know what I would have done," she said. "Don't be afraid. Just reach out."

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