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JOB CLUB HELPS CONNECT THOSE LOOKING FOR WORK

On a recent January morning where the temperature hovered around 20 degrees, about a dozen people were gathered around a conference table at the SuperJobs Center to brainstorm, network and share ideas for finding jobs.

Most of them were professionals who had lost their job in 2009, victims of the Great Recession, as the current economic downturn has come to be known. They included two accountants, a purchasing agent, human resource staffer, a mechanical engineer and a truck driver.

Kathy Nienaber, a Business Services consultant at the Super Jobs Center, the one-stop that connects job seekers and employers in Hamilton County and Cincinnati, has led this Job Club since it began in mid-November. Many of the participants have found themselves downsized and without work for the first time in their adult lives. All are looking for help to land back on their feet.

“These are people who are good workers, have a long history of being employed, and are frustrated with the job search,” Nienaber says. Each week, the Job Club focuses on a single topic, such as networking, how to avoid cover letter mistakes and how to conduct a good interview.

Dave Kappesser, of Madisonville, has worked for the past 17 years in sales and business development. He was laid off last fall. In a previous career, he taught at parochial schools, and thanks to support from his church, St. Anthony’s, he recently obtained a Master’s in Religious Studies. He’d love to get back into teaching, but jobs are scarce now. Even the substitute teaching pools are huge, he says.

“Job Club gives me a sense of accountability,” he says. “I network with others. I review activities I’ve done before, and pull out resources that I need.” He’s willing to take temporary positions in white collar work, but hopes to ultimately work in pastoral ministry or as a religious education coordinator.

Wren Hanson, of College Hill, worked for 17 years in purchasing when she was laid off in May 2009. “There are a lot of unemployed in the same field,” she says, so her competition is stiff. She’s doing all the right things, though: She networks through a professional group of purchasing agents, and keeps her Linked-In profile active. For her, the Job Club is useful.

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“You’re in a group of people with diversified backgrounds and experience,” she says. “That’s one of the best things – we can share information to help each other.”

Eric Varland of Delhi recently lost his job as a long-distance truck driver, a career he had had for 12 years. Before that, he worked for almost 30 years in residential construction. He finds Job Club a practical way to search for a new job.

“I have gone to numerous job search groups, resource centers and job seminars and frankly the SuperJobs Job Club is the only one I found that has any practical or productive value,” he says. “I’ve learned more in only two meetings than in a month’s worth of all the others.”

Nienaber is an active coach for the group. Not only does she come prepared for the weekly topic, she hands out job leads that come to the SuperJobs Center. And she e-mails her Job Clubbers to let them know of openings that might fit their skills. The leads that day ranged from entry-level work for a security company to managerial positions at Macy’s. Several grabbed the sheets to share with their church members and others.

Krishna Chapatwala, a Business Services representative at SuperJobs who works with companies in the energy fields, talked to the group that day about four courses in green technology now being taught at Cincinnati State. SuperJobs has teamed up with Cincinnati State to direct eligible job seekers into the programs and then to help them find jobs in those fields after certification.

Job Club participants eagerly took down her information. After all, you never know when a lead will end up in a new job, and new beginning.

For more information on Job Club, contact Kathy Nienaber at 513-731-9800, ext. 376, or knienaber @superjobs.com.

The Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board is a nonprofit organization serving the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County in workforce development. SWORWIB is comprised of leaders from business, education, labor, and government, with the majority of its board members representing the business sector. SWORWIB sets the vision, policy direction, and performance expectations for the regional workforce development system, including the SuperJobs Center at 1916 Central Parkway and all satellite locations. The purpose of the WIB’s workforce system is to provide an educated and qualified workforce that meets the current and future needs of employers, with the vision of becoming the model workforce development system by satisfying its mission to create and develop a comprehensive workforce development system that engages the entire community towards ever increasing levels of self-sufficiency.

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