

Career Resource Event

(Woodbury, NJ) – On December 16, 2009, area businesses came together with county social services and educational institutions to offer a day-long Career Resource event designed to help residents improve their job options and search for employment.

“There are career resources and information available in the county and by bringing them together in one place along with our area employers we hoped to provide some convenience in these difficult economic times,” said Freeholder Director Stephen M. Sweeney.

Hosted at Gloucester County College (GCC), 36 employers and 18 support agencies participated in the event. There were 11 one-hour workshops offered between 9am – 3pm, most of which were filled with 20 or more resident participants. Many residents took full advantage of the workshops and participated in several throughout the day.

The workshops covered topics from resume writing, networking, and financial planning to interviewing and job hunting, providing both information and tactics for achieving career goals. Resources and guidance on support services such as childcare, utility bills, health-care insurance, and unemployment benefits to aid struggling individuals and families was also available.

In addition to the workshops, there was an Exhibitor portion where residents discussed job opportunities directly with area employers and took advantage of education and career counseling. Area businesses were accepting resumes for current and future positions. Counselors from GCC and Rowan University were on hand to discuss educational prospects and requirements for obtaining a high school diploma and completing two- and four-year degrees, in addition to offering financial aid options.

Participating employers included: Comcast, Conoco Phillips, US Census, Colonial Life, ARBONNE, Advanced Drainage Systems, Bayada Nurses, Pathfinder LLC, Underwood Memorial Hospital, DrugStore.Com, PSEG, ServePro of Woodbury-Deptford, Philadelphia Business Journal, TD Bank, US Customs and Border Protection, LaBrea Bakery, PNC Bank, Car-Tel Communications, Mass Mutual Insurance Co., RAI Inc, CDI Group, Inc., Emerson Personnel Group, Sav-A-Lot Food Stores, FAA William J Hughes Tech Center Office of Civil Rights, and the Philadelphia Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Bellia Products, Adventure Aquarium, Market America, H&R Block-Deptford, RF7, Envision Consultants, Brooks Personnel, South Jersey Federal Credit Union, NuStar, Rain For Rent, Primerica Financial, US Dept. of Veteran Affairs, Home Helpers.

Partners participating in the event included the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Gloucester County Economic Development, the Workforce Investment Board, Gloucester County College and several other county departments and the New

Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Rowan University; and Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce, Underwood Memorial Hospital.

Additional sponsors who took part in the program were The American Red Cross, United Way of Gloucester County, Sun National Bank, and People for People.

“We had three dozen employers looking to hire immediately or in the near future. There were also many workshops presented by experts in their fields,” said Freeholder Brigandi, the liaison to the Department of Economic Development.

A post-event survey was sent to all of the participating employers, and the vast majority responded that the event was productive for them and that they would return to participate in a future event. We are now in the process of planning another event for March 17.

For more information about the December 2009 event, or to inquire about the planned March 17th Career Resource Event, please call 856-384-6963.

Stimulus

More than \$1,000,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds were used in 2009 to assist Gloucester County residents in need of workplace training and re-training, literacy education and summer job placement. The use of these funds, known nationwide as the economic stimulus program, provided a very busy and productive summer workforce experience for our county's "at-risk" summer youth. These monies also allowed dislocated workers and low-income residents to receive training services in an expedited fashion. .

"Now that we have made use of the federal stimulus funds allocated to Gloucester County, we can actually see the tangible effects of this program on our workforce training efforts," said Freeholder Director Stephen M. Sweeney.

The WIB and the County's One-Stop Career Center used the funding to serve and re-train approximately 145 dislocated workers, 25 low-income residents, 150 "at-risk" youth.

Dislocated workers with advanced skill sets were provided with one-on-one counseling support, skill upgrade opportunities, and tuition waiver incentives. Residents in need of literacy training were placed with the Workforce Learning Link located at the One-Stop Center and at Gloucester County College, a service that normally generates an average rotating waiting list of 250 residents. Occupational training was provided through established contracts between the county and public and private vocational schools, energized during the summer months with the additional stimulus funds. Low-income adults, specifically those eligible for food stamps and government assistance, were targeted for individualized services. In all, more than \$514,000 in ARRA funds was allocated for these efforts to stimulate workforce training with such established programs as apprenticeship, occupational skills training and adult education.

With the use of ARRA funds, the summer youth program was expanded. Gloucester County inked shared service agreements with the Gloucester County Institute of Technology (GCIT) and Rutgers University's Cooperative Extension Service to operate an enhanced summer work experience for at-risk youth. Eight programs were conducted through GCIT while an entrepreneurial operation was conducted by Rutgers.

"The students who worked on these projects learned skills and gained a sense of pride from the benefits the community received as a result of their labor," said Freeholder Joseph A. Brigandi, Jr. Brigandi is the liaison to both Education and the Department of Economic Development.

Youth participating in the Welding and Steel Fabrication discipline helped to repair four county dump trucks and build two storage racks for the welding shop, resulting in a savings of \$12,000 in county tax dollars. The Theater Arts discipline conducted at Rowan University involved behind-the-scenes prep work at the university's theaters and an inventory project at GCIT's theater.

Maintenance and landscaping skills were honed by youth who painted curbs, planted shrubs and maintained lawns at Gloucester County College, Bankbridge Developmental Center, and GCIT. Future cosmetologists were taught basic salon industry skills and provided services to senior citizens based at the Shady Lane nursing home and clients of the Center for Family Services. Youth gained hands-on construction experience by installing sheetrock in a home being built by Habitat for Humanity for a Clayton family.

Building maintenance participants installed projectors in GCIT classrooms. A playground paint project at Bethel Mill Park and a playground assembly project at Red Bank Park were the responsibilities of youth involved in the Painting Discipline.

The culinary arts were taught to 27 youth who prepared 140 lunches daily for the summer youth participants.

Seeds to Success, an enterprise operated by Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service, staffed 28 at-risk youth at farm stands in Glassboro, Paulsboro, and Woodbury. On-the-job training took place three days a week; classroom training filled out the weekday program. The participants walked away with a resume and the experience of the day-to-day operations of a business.

“The federal stimulus program was a benefit to our local economy and education system. This aspect of ARRA gave our youth needed training and jobs, and the county and our communities received funding on many levels that will continue to spur economic development,” said Freeholder Joseph A. Brigandi, Jr.

More than \$287,000 in ARRA money funded the youth summer program, keeping at-risk youth involved and focused in educational programs designed to chart the course for their future, Frattali said.

“We can look at 2009 as a banner year for our summer youth program, thanks to the infusion of these economic stimulus funds,” said Dr. Charles Ivory, chairman of the WIB Youth Council committee. “When you can help close to 150 teens establish a path for success as adults, your program is a success.”