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Job Fair a Hit for Employers, Job Candidates

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More than 30 employers converged on the N.C. National Guard Armory in Southern Pines Wednesday with the same goal: employ Moore.

For the first time in three years, the local business community has enough employment opportunities to organize a job fair. The Employ Moore Job Fair kicked off with a ribbon cutting at 9:45 a.m. and ran until 3 p.m.

All 33 companies at the fair Wednesday were hiring. More than 400 job seekers showed up with resumes in hand in hopes of finding employment.

"This job fair is critical," said Chamber of Commerce President Patrick Coughlin. "The local businesses are ready to grow. Now it's a matter of finding the right employees."

"Everybody is ready to put the recession behind them."

Inside the Armory, job hunters walked between the tables to talk with employers and apply for a variety of jobs. There were more than 150 jobs open, though few employers planned on hiring on the spot.

Alice Thomas, a representative for First Health, said, "It's a huge turnout. We're really pleased to see that with the current economy."



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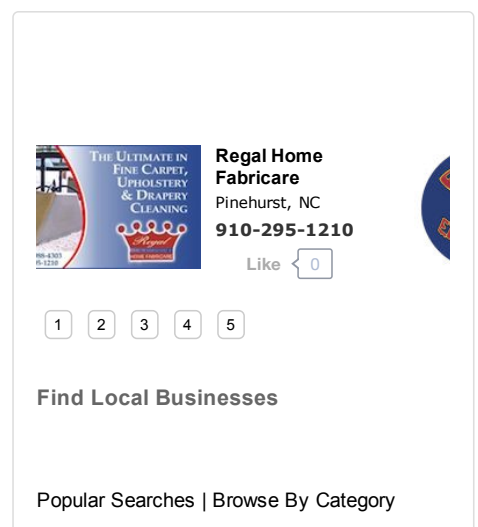
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Nicky Vandyke, one of the hopeful employees, was impressed by the job fair. A builder and welder, Vandyke hoped to find an opportunity at the job fair.

"The employers are more than willing to speak with the community about what they're trying to achieve," Vandyke said. "I just wish there were more employers here."

Vandyke attended the SCC Career Academy on May 10. He believes in the current economy people should try to make themselves as competitive as possible by furthering their education. The career academy offered assistance writing resumes and practicing mock interviews. The career academy assisted 40 community members. The academy also provided vouchers for buying professional dress as another tool for interviews and job hunting.

Jenny Troyer was involved with the SCC Career Academy and planning the job fair.

"People don't know how to present themselves, Tryoer said. "Some of my students have come back through dressed up."

Academy attendee Shelia McLaughlin said, "The academy is very helpful. There was a lot of info about networking and getting online." McLaughlin handed out her new resume at the job fair.

Bill Mitchell attended not to look for a job but to offer support and advice. Mitchell has found three jobs. He credits his success to networking and joins Sandhills Job Seekers' Frank Quaile giving lectures to job seekers.

"The number one pitfall? Not expanding your network far enough," Mitchell said. "Just ask: Do you happen to know someone hiring?"

Quaile recommends "persistence" as the number one key to job hunting. "Don't spend more than two hours per day online job hunting. That's just depressing."

Both Quaile and Mitchell stressed the importance of an "elevator speech" to highlight your accomplishments and start the conversation with an employer.

Chip Ashman, Pinehurst Resort and Country Club representative, was looking for confidence. "I want them to look me in the eye and shake my hand," said Ashman. "Be aggressive to apply."

The potential employers were looking for a variety of skill sets and experience levels. Some offered on-the-job training while other jobs required previous experience.

"We can train anybody, but it'd be nice to have someone walk through the door with experience," said Greg Thompson of Powerboss.

Sandhills Heating and Refrigeration representative Brad Hainley was impressed by the turnout. He prefers job fairs to placing an ad because of the chance to meet the applicants.

Originally offering three positions, Hainley hired two people on the spot.

Many applicants left with hope.

"Eventually I will find a job," said job seeker Antonia Reed. "Today was very informative."

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