

News

Job fair offers pleasantries, opportunities



Danita Davis of Worcester talks to a potential employer at Friday's job fair on Worcester Common. (T&G Staff/DAN GOULD)

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WORCESTER — Friday's job fair on the Worcester Common offered a perk unemployed people can surely appreciate: a free lunch.

Organizers prepared more than 600 hot dogs for job seekers who attended the event, held at the steps of City Hall.

It may be small consolation to someone desperate for a job, but the lunch and the outdoor setting helped contribute to a friendly and comfortable environment for stressed job seekers, organizers said.

"It allows for the conversations to go easier," said John McCarthy, business service representative for Workforce Central Career Center, one of the sponsors of the job fair. "It puts a smile on people's faces."

More than 40 employers met with job seekers, trying to find candidates for a range of jobs from truck drivers to customer service representatives to retail clerks. The businesses included Dollar

Tree, Honey Farms, FedEx, UPS, Macy's, Wegmans, Big Y, Frito-Lay, MAPFRE Insurance, General Dynamics Electric Boat, and many more.

"We're always looking for quality people," said John Saladin, district manager for Aaron's, a furniture and household goods retailer with stores in Worcester. "We look for sales people, accounts people, customer-oriented people."

Carrie Mota, senior recruiter for MAPFRE Insurance in Webster, was searching for candidates for customer service jobs.

"We do highly look for call center experience and computer skills," she said. "Insurance is not required."

Job seekers walked from table to table, chatting with recruiters and filling out applications. Some came with years of experience, others were newer to the workforce.

Dave Wells of Shrewsbury has been unemployed for more than a year after working in the "slowly dying" field of semiconductor equipment repair. "Right now, I'll take just about anything that's a second shift," he said.

Danita Davis of Worcester was laid off from Salter College a few months ago and is looking for an office job. She's open to changing fields but said the hardest part about job searching today is that most employers want her to fill out applications online rather than in person.

"If they don't get back to you, you get frustrated," she said. Eight percent of the Worcester area workforce is unemployed, according to state figures, higher than the 7.2 percent unemployed statewide.