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Job Seekers Meet with Area Business Reps

By: Mike Hedeem

Nearly 1,000 people looking for work flocked to the DoubleTree Inn in Henrietta for the third annual JOBSapalooza job fair. It is sponsored by the Rochester Business Alliance in an attempt to keep recent and upcoming college graduates from leaving the area once they finish school.

"We do this this particular time every year, the first week in January, because we know that a lot of kids that go to school out of town are on break and they're home," said Ellen Rosen of the Rochester Business Alliance. "They hear all the time that there's no jobs here in Rochester, there's nothing to come back for. So we want to give them a little better flavor for what is available in our economy, what kinds of things they might look for."

Thirty-two local companies specializing in a variety of fields accepted resumes from potential employees with full and part-time jobs to offer along with internships.

One of the longest lines was for Rochester's largest employer, the University of Rochester. Many in that line have either recently graduated from college or will in the spring. They say being flexible is key when looking for that first job.

"My degree is in business management so I'm looking for anything in management, human resources and marketing," explained Heather Johnson, a senior at the College at Brockport. "When I first started looking I was looking specifically, I wanted to do promotion management. But now I'm realizing I can't be so picky and I'm keeping things open."

JOBSapalooza is designed for recent college graduates and upcoming college grads, however nobody was turned away. There were people who had spent years in the workforce who had been recently downsized.

That's what brought Tom Gefell to the job fair. The 49-year-old Greece resident was laid off in August after 28 years as a photo lab technician at Kodak. Tom says his wife has taken on a second job to help make ends meet.

He says taking a career navigator class has helped with his job search.

"The job postings aren't out there so the strategy I get from the career navigator class is to target companies in your field," he said. "I've got about 10 companies on my list to target to try to get information or contact somebody within the company and try to find that there's a job coming before it's posted."

One of the employers Gefell met with says it likes hiring people with experience. But the company also has room for those just coming out of school.

"We actually look for a good mixture," said Carl Provenzano of RFS Exhibit Services. "We look for somebody that can come in and have a positive impact whether that be a recent graduate or somebody who has five, 10, 15 years experience. We have positions within our company that can accommodate both. So everybody brings a different type of skill set."

Even in these difficult economic times, business reps say there are jobs to be had. It just may take a little extra effort to find the right one.