



NEXT STEP

The Wilder Job Club's Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2007-08 Issue

AMHERST H.
WILDER
FOUNDATION

ESTABLISHED 1906

Here for good.

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Upcoming Events

- Late February: The Wilder Job Club will release a short video on job interviewing for ex-offenders.
- Tuesday, March 4th: CareerBuilder Job Fair at Minneapolis Convention Center from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.
- Wednesday, March 26th: Diversity Job Fair at the St. Paul RiverCentre from 9:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

EMPLOYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT JOB CLUB PRESENTATIONS

Employers from all over the Twin Cities are coming to the Wilder Foundation Job Club for its weekly Community Employment Connection (C.E.C.). Past sessions have included businesses in the construction, manufacturing, customer service, and employment agency industries, to name a few.

The sessions offer individuals who are transitioning from prison to the workforce the chance to have a real life employer perspective on interviewing, work practices, and the hiring process. C.E.C. sessions really benefit participants

by giving them the inside scoop on what companies want to see in a job applicant, from the attitude and appearance down to the hard skills that are most respected and sought after. The employers also offer excellent insights on industry trends and the future of their field.

Employers love to have an opportunity to connect directly with skilled job seekers. With so much of the hiring process becoming automated using the internet and other tools, employers find it refreshing to be able to speak directly and at length on what is needed

for a position. Many employers have found qualified individuals in the audience, whether they are looking for someone who can drive a truck or a person to increase their sales. An added benefit for employers is knowing they have helped people who are transitioning back into the workforce from prison.

When: Wednesdays at 10:00 A.M.

How to Present: Contact Chris Fotsch at (651) 288-0324 or send an email to CLF1@wilder.org.

C.E.C. presentations are *free of charge* but must be scheduled in advance.

REENTRYWORKS PROJECT EXTENDED

The ReEntryWorks project, originally intended to finish in January, has been extended to the spring of 2008. The Wilder Job Club has surpassed its goal of enrolling four hundred recently released felons in the program over the past year. Each participant signs up to be in a national research study performed by the Joyce Foundation of Chicago and the New York research organization MDRC. The study randomly

assigns participants to either a transitional job at Goodwill/Easter Seals or a job search assistance program at the Wilder Job Club. The Wilder Job Club and Goodwill/Easter Seals partnership has been an outstanding example to the four other sites participating in the study due to its high enrollment numbers.

Eligibility: Males over 18 years of age who have been released from a Minnesota Department of Corrections facility within the last 90 days and are not on work release.

Where: The Wilder Job Club, 1600 University Avenue, Suite #219, St. Paul.

When: 8:30 A.M. Monday through Thursday.

Contact: Chris Fotsch at (651) 288-0324.

An Ex-Offender Discovers His Talent

“Don’t be afraid to utilize all the resources available. That’s why they’re there, to help us get back on our feet. It worked for me.”

When Joe was released from prison over a year ago, he had limited work experience and few resources. He was searching for a job in the difficult time around the holidays, when fewer companies are hiring and cold temperatures can make just waiting for the bus a trial. Someone at the halfway house where he was staying told him about Job Club, and he decided to go as soon as he could.

At Job Club, Joe took advantage of a variety of resources. Job Club counselor Hakim As-Siddiq helped him locate relevant job leads, connect with funding for his drivers license renewal, develop his interview skills, and professionally fill out job applications. “They didn’t try to

just keep you in Job Club,” he says, “Hakim, he would tell you about other resources that maybe weren’t Wilder Foundation related because he genuinely cares about helping everyone out there.” Hakim recommended that he apply to a certain telemarketing



company, and Joe was asked to interview. He used his C.O.P.E. statement, the method of representing his conviction to an employer that he learned in Job Club, and was thrilled when he was hired.

He expected the job to be temporary work to tide him over until he could get a construction job in the summer, but he, and his supervisors, soon discovered that he was a skilled telemarketer. He was promoted after only three weeks to a position that required business attire. Job Club counselors assisted him with a resource to purchase business clothes, and he was an immediate success. In his company, which has offices across the nation, no one has ever done better. This year he was recognized by his company for having the most sales of any employee. He will be receiving health benefits for the first time, and this year has paid taxes for the second time ever.

Joe, thanks to Job Club and his own hard work, is doing better than he ever expected. What’s next? “The sky’s the limit,” he says.

WILDER FOUNDATION’S CENTRAL OFFICES MOVE

The Wilder Foundation’s main offices are beginning the New Year with a brand new space. As of January 2008, the Wilder Foundation has relocated its main office. The “new” Wilder Center is located at the southwest corner of Lexington Parkway North and University Avenue at 451 Lexington Parkway North, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104. Our main phone number is 651-280-2000.

The new center has been designed and built to meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Standards, the highest rating for a “green building.” Our building will promote a healthier work environment for employees and participants alike, while reducing operating costs through energy efficiency and implementing other practical innovations. Once settled in, we will be announcing our “Open House” and we’ll be excited to invite you to experience our new building first hand.

SPRUCE TREE CENTRE’S JOB CLUB EXPANDS

For all the employers and participants who come to our Job Club, we’re still here! Although Wilder’s central location has moved, the Job Club remains at Spruce Tree Centre– 1600 University Avenue, on the southwest corner of Snelling and University avenues in St. Paul.

We are thrilled that our space has expanded to meet the increased volume of participants. We will be moving staff offices to an adjoining room, enlarging our resource area with additional seating and tables. The extra space will have more helpful tools and information for participants. Moving the staff offices will allow for a greater degree of privacy for intakes and a space for mock interviewing. In addition, we now have a space for participants in the ReEntryWorks project to complete the intake and random assignment process without interruption.

We’re currently in the “remodeling stage” at Job Club. Once we have finished, please stop by to visit.

Trends in Recession and Employment

Talk of recession settled in with the falling snow this winter. The housing crisis led to lower consumer confidence and a slow holiday season this year. Many of the major retailers reported sales well under expectations, despite massive discounts and deals.

Government reports have predicted a period of slow growth, but no recession for the US economy. The Congressional Budget Office has predicted in a recent report that the economy should remain slow for 2008 but pick up in 2009 and continue to strengthen.

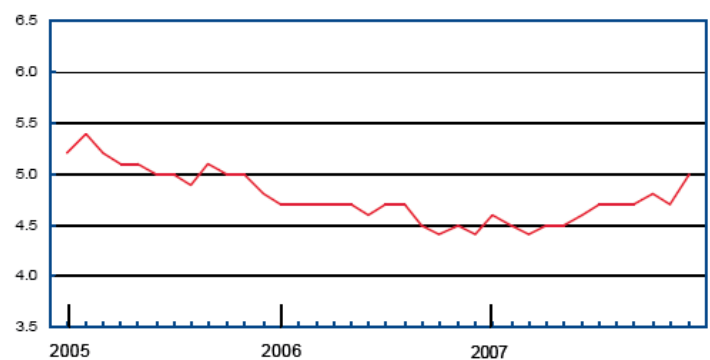
The implications for individuals re-entering the workforce this year are not positive. Higher gasoline prices and heating costs this winter have made things more difficult for businesses as well as job seekers. Of particular importance for people transitioning from prison into society are the employment prospects for the next couple of years. So far, unemployment rates have increased significantly to about five percent and are expected to increase until 2010.

The hardest hit industries from the housing crisis are financial institutions and housing itself, neither one of which employs many ex-offenders. However, if a

recession expands into other industries, it is likely that people coming out of prison will find fewer available positions. For the time being, a number of industries are still growing steadily and should provide new jobs throughout the coming year.

Figures and projections are from the US Congressional Budget Office, available online at <http://www.cbo.gov>. Image is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, available online at <http://www.bls.gov>.

Chart 1. Unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, January 2005 – December 2007



TRAINING FOR RE-ENTRY: STILLWATER PRISON'S WELDING PROGRAM

The state prison in Stillwater has rehabilitated inmates since 1914, and today provides dozens of programs designed to educate and aid the individuals incarcerated there. One of the most challenging is the welding program, which offers six month, twelve month and eighteen month certificates. Admission to the program requires a high school diploma or GED and very high test scores in math. Applicants can wait for months for a chance to enter the program, as only eighteen students can study in the program at one time.

There are a variety of resources for the entering student, from instructional videos to current text-

books and computer programs. Written tests must be passed in order for practical training to start. However, most of the learning in this program is hands-on and takes place on the shop floor. Students must use a variety of machines to weld stainless steel, aluminum, mild steel and pipes. Pieces are submitted for grading, and the instructor's eye for quality and efficiency is demanding.

Employers rave about the program and the quality of prison-trained welders in general. Several have donated welding equipment and expertise to keep the program relevant and up to date. Demand for skilled welders is exceptionally

high in the job market today, and every day more welders retire. The welders in the Stillwater prison's program have the advantage of up to eighteen months of hands-on training, thirty hours a week, with a dedicated instructor. A recent partnership with the prison's manufacturing wing, MINNCOR Industries, has allowed graduates of the welding program to put their skills to work in a fast-paced and quality-focused manufacturing environment.

For more information on the Stillwater welding program, contact Patricia Pawlak, Education Director of the Stillwater prison, at 651-779-2766.



AMHERST H.
WILDER
FOUNDATION

EXCEL Employment Services
451 Lexington Parkway North
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is a nonprofit health and human services organization that has served the greater Saint Paul, Minnesota, area since 1906. We operate dozens of programs that help children succeed in school, older adults remain independent, troubled youth create healthy futures, and individuals and families maintain long-term housing and employment.

The Wilder Job Club Serves:

People who have been released from prison, *not* jail or workhouse
Must be under some kind of Department of Corrections supervision

The Wilder Job Club Provides:

Daily topic presentations relating to job search and interviewing
Information on talking about convictions to employers
Daily job leads
Access to computers, phones, fax, and Internet
Help creating individualized resumes
Assistance with work related needs

Job Club is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
Intakes of new participants take place between 9:00 and 9:30

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