

Expanding Opportunities



News from the Oakland Private Industry Council

in partnership with the Oakland Workforce Investment Board

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Dear Friends,

With the drop of the national jobless rate in the last few months, it is refreshing to have some positive news about the larger employment picture.

While the steady addition of jobs throughout 2011 is reason for optimism, we also know that the challenging economic times continue to negatively impact thousands of people in our community - whether they are out of work or are underemployed. California's jobless rate remains among the highest in the nation, and the city of Oakland's rate stands at 14.1%.



**Gay Plair Cobb, CEO
of the Oakland PIC**

The experience of the Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC) over the past year highlights this reality. For example, the Oakland One Stop Career Center, run jointly by the PIC and Employment Development Department (EDD), along with the two career centers operated by the PIC on behalf of the Alameda County Social Services Agency, saw increases in the number of clients registering for and using our services. **Read more on page 2.**

The PIC also was very active in the community in 2011. Our career counselors partnered with various individuals and organizations to give workshops and presentations at different venues. Last fall, this included partnering with the Oakland Housing Authority, Bay Area Black Nurses Association, and Bay Area Coalition for Employment Development as well as Congresswoman Barbara Lee. **Read more on page 2 and 3.**

As more job seekers continue to connect with us, we keep adding value to our services. For example, we've partnered with national testing organization ACT (which also provides college entrance exam services) to offer the National Career Readiness Certificate. The certificate is a nationally-recognized validation of workplace skills that are highly prized by employers. **Read more on page 4.**

Wishing you and your loved ones all the best in 2012!

**Gay Plair Cobb, Chief Executive Officer
Oakland Private Industry Council**

Career Centers Experience Increases in Visits and Registrations



The One Stop Career Center regularly hosts employer recruitment events, including this 2011 Target event.

The recent drop in the national unemployment rate is a welcome sign of employers expanding their hiring practices. Unfortunately, it's also an indication that thousands of unemployed individuals have stopped looking for work and no longer qualify for unemployment insurance.

As unemployment continues to impact thousands of local residents, the community is consistently turning to the Oakland PIC for job seeking guidance and resources.

The downtown Oakland One Stop Career Center, run jointly by the Oakland PIC and Employment Development Department, along with the two career centers operated by the PIC on behalf of the Alameda County Social Services Agency, had 9,179 new job seekers register for services in 2011, representing a 6.5% increase over 2010. Additionally, the career centers received a combined total of 66,569 visits from job seekers in 2011, an increase from 2010.

"We know that work is central to our clients' financial independence and sense of self-worth," said Gay Plair Cobb, CEO of the PIC. "Our career counselors and other workforce professionals provide state of the art

employment services to help people find their next job or discover a new career. We also help job seekers cope with self-esteem issues that may be brought on by unemployment."

The Oakland One Stop Career Center, part of the East Bay Works network of centers, provides job seekers with no-cost access to services and resources including job listings; onsite employer recruitment events; computers with internet access; phones; and professional guidance with topics including skills assessment, resume preparation, and interviewing. The Career Center is located at 1212 Broadway (1st floor). To learn more, visit www.oaklandpic.org or call **(510) 768-4400**.

PIC Staff Members Guide Clients to Turn their Talents into Careers

It's no secret that job seekers with felonies are often a tough sell to employers. They may have spotty work histories and no recent references, and may lack the soft skills that hiring managers look for. They may have to be more persistent than the average job seeker, but with programmatic support, they can eventually earn an income. For some, that means starting their own business.

As a panelist at the recent Workforce Development Summit in San Jose, Oakland PIC Senior Career Counselor Olu Oluwole shared his expertise in working with formerly incarcerated job seekers, including guiding individuals to pursue self employment. The annual Summit, sponsored by the Bay Area Coalition for Employment Development, draws hundreds of workforce development specialists from the greater Bay Area.

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PIC Senior Career Counselor Olu Oluwole has extensive experience working with reentry clients.

Oluwole, who works in the PIC's Breaking Through Barriers program, previously managed a halfway house for parolees. "Everyone has something they're good at -- something they are born to do," he told the audience at the Summit. "The problem is that they take their talents for granted. I remember a man who complained every day about how he couldn't find a job, but on the weekends, he cut hair for the rest of the residents. His marketable skill was staring him right in the face but he didn't see it."

"Another guy was a talented artist," Oluwole recalled. "I suggested he go to Fisherman's Wharf, set up his easel, and sell his drawings to the tourists. He took my advice and began to make money. He couldn't believe that someone would pay him for something he naturally did well."

PIC counselors work intensively with clients to get them job-ready, helping them obtain their right-to-work documents, interview clothing, training, and tools. Ameenah Lutfee, longtime workshop leader at PIC, takes them through a week-long crash course in job seeking.

"It's not the same job market we knew even a year ago. There is a constant shifting in this 'new normal' economy," said Lutfee. Recognizing that attitude is a big part of success, she requires that attendees check their negativity at the door. "We're here to encourage and uplift each other," she said. "People with 'poor me' attitudes don't get hired."

While counselors are assisting clients with the logistics of job placement, they are also assessing them, pointing out their strengths, which come in the form of skills, interests, and personality traits.

And what happened to the halfway house barber, who often had a line of people waiting for haircuts?

"He did well," Oluwole said. "He began charging money, and he now owns his own barbershop."

Jobs Event Draws Over 2,000 Job Seekers



Congresswoman Barbara Lee (4th from left, front row) with PIC staff and other participants in "Good Jobs Now."

The Oakland PIC was proud to be a partner in the "Good Jobs Now" Jobs Fair, hosted by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland). Held on November 10 at the Oakland Coliseum, the fair featured more than 100 employers and over 500 available job openings. More than 2,000 job seekers attended the event.

In addition to providing the opportunity to meet with hiring employers, the fair also featured job search workshops, including one-

on-one resume reviews conducted by PIC's Adult Career Services Manager Maureen Nelson and members of the East Bay Professional Experience Network, a volunteer-run association hosted by the downtown Oakland One Stop Career Center. **(continued on next page)**

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The "Good Jobs Now!" Jobs Fair was a collaboration between Congresswoman Lee and Assemblymember Sandré Swanson, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Oakland City Council President Larry Reid, the PIC, the Oakland Workforce Investment Board, the City of Oakland Enterprise Zone, the Alameda County Labor Council, and the Alameda County Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO.

"The jobs fair provided hope and support to many community members, and we are pleased to have been able to connect many local job seekers with hiring employers," said Congresswoman Lee. "The Oakland PIC was a valuable partner in the fair's success. I am grateful for the PIC's active participation in vital community events such as this one."

PIC Offers New Tool for Jobseekers and Employers

The Oakland PIC will soon offer a nationally-recognized tool that helps job seekers stand out from a crowded field of competent applicants. In addition to highlighting skills and qualifications on their resumes, job seekers will have an opportunity to demonstrate their employability by earning the National Career Readiness Certificate through the PIC.

The certificate provides an independent validation of essential workplace skills, based on successfully completing three WorkKeys assessments. Individuals are assessed in three areas: applied mathematics, locating information, and reading for information. Each assessment has about 35 questions and takes about an hour to complete. The certificate was developed by ACT, a national testing organization.

"Through the National Career Readiness Certificate, we are pleased to offer our job seeking customers added leverage in today's job market," said Gay Plair Cobb, chief executive officer of the PIC. "As importantly, employers know that job applicants who have earned the certificate are well-versed in skills that are vital for a wide range of positions."

The PIC will begin offering WorkKeys assessments, leading to the certificate, during the first quarter of 2012. The first step in preparing for the certificate is to take a KeyTrain assessment, a pre-test that determines readiness for WorkKeys. Where there are skills deficiencies in any of the three areas assessed, the KeyTrain then prescribes e-learning modules that can be taken to improve one's skills and to ensure successful performance on the WorkKeys assessment.

The PIC administers KeyTrain pre-tests and e-learning modules at the downtown Oakland One Stop Career Center on a weekly basis. Pre-registration is required, and is easily accomplished by visiting www.eastbayworks.com/oakland, creating an account, and signing up for a testing appointment. KeyTrain and WorkKeys assessments must be taken onsite at the Career Center. There is no charge for this service. To learn more, please email adacci@oaklandpic.org or call (510) 622-4348.

PIC Recruitment Events Match Job Seekers with Job Openings

The Eastmont SSA Career Center continues to connect job seekers with employment opportunities through successful onsite recruitment events. The center, which is operated by the Oakland PIC through a partnership with the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) and exclusively serves individuals who receive CalWORKs or General Assistance benefits, recently hosted several recruitment events.

Recruiting employers were APEXcare, dd's DISCOUNTS, Give Something Back, Kaiser, Landmark Protection, Securitas Security Services, Select Staffing, Walmart, and WIS International. The available positions attracted more than 550 applicants, and recruiting efforts yielded over 140 hires. Employers sought candidates for a variety of positions including general warehouse worker, customer service, accounts payable, and delivery driver.

The recruitment events provide an excellent opportunity to match qualified, pre-screened applicants with job openings. "We have been able to consistently provide employers with strong, dedicated, and job-ready candidates to fill a wide range of vacancies," said Rochelle Baxter-Green, Oakland PIC job developer and business services representative at the center.

"We are able to identify barriers to employment, if any, that our job seeking clients may have, and to resolve preexisting issues prior to recommending a client for a direct referral opportunity. As a result, employers are overwhelmingly pleased with the caliber of our job seekers as well as the services we offer at the Eastmont SSA Career Center," said Baxter-Green.

To learn more about the SSA Career Centers, visit www.oaklandpic.org/special-projects.html



Regional Sales Manager Bob Rivera, Wollborg/Michelson Personnel Service, Inc. (left) with Roger Staten, Eastmont project director, at a recent event for employers.

5 Tips for Using LinkedIn During Your Job Search

by Maureen Nelson, M.A., GCDF, CPRW

Don't overlook the role that LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) can play in your job search! Here are five tips for maximizing your use of LinkedIn.

1. Follow a company. You'll get updates on who in your network moved where. While it's interesting to see the "New Hires", more important is where they came from, as these might point toward openings at their old company. A company's "Recent Departures" list also lets you know of openings.

2. Mine new contacts for even newer ones. When someone connects with you, look through his or her list of contacts. View the profiles of those that intrigue you, and reach out to a few.

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PIC's Manager of Adult Career Services Maureen Nelson.

Personalize your message, with starters like these:

- "I see you also have *Cool Careers for Dummies* on your reading list – isn't it a great resource?"
- "I see we have eight shared connections. We must move in the same circles. Let's make it easier and link directly."
- "I see we both attended Chaminade University in Hawaii. Let's link, since we're both alumni."

LinkedIn allows people to put up so much content – including groups, reading lists, blogs, and Twitter streams – that it's easy to find a common reason to connect.

3. Connect with highly visible people. Search terms like "speaker," "author," "trainer," or "expert." These people often have thousands of connections. When you find one in your field (or a related one), search for him or her on the web to find something he or she has written, and send a thoughtful comment. If you get a good response, follow up with an invitation to connect, but don't pester the person if he or she ignores you. These well-connected types are very busy people, so make sure to respect their time.

4. Connect to "interesting" people. Search on an *unusual* interest of yours to see who else has it. You might get ideas about career direction, or a contact might give you a job lead. Imagine you're a medical assistant who likes dancing. A search on "flamenco dancer" brought up this title for one person: "Medical Doctor, Wellness Expert, International Speaker, Life Coach, Author, & Flamenco Dancer." You could reach out to say, "Wow, another person in health care who loves flamenco!" It's a long shot, but life is made up of such coincidences.

5. Leverage weak links. I once got an interview by sending a message through LinkedIn to one of my contacts, with whom I was only loosely connected. Not only was she someone I'd never personally met, but I'd turned her down for an interview! (I got a job offer elsewhere.) A year after our initial connection, I was job searching again, and noticed she was connected to someone I was targeting. It was gutsy of me to do, but I felt I had nothing to lose, so I contacted her. She *forwarded* my resume, and I got the interview.

Final Thoughts: These strategic tips should help you expand your reach on LinkedIn. But don't wait until you're a job seeker to make connections. It's important to nurture your network *before* you need it. And remember, always follow up and thank people for connecting!

Maureen Nelson is the Oakland PIC's manager of adult career services. This article is copyrighted by Quintessential Careers (<http://www.quintcareers.com>). Read the original article at http://www.quintcareers.com/LinkedIn_job-search_tips.html. Reprinted by permission.

Job Seeker Testimonials: “Thank you for helping me to pursue a new path”

Whether our job seeking clients are starting their job search or transitioning to a new position, we love to hear their stories. Here are two testimonials we recently received. (Names have been changed to protect anonymity.)

"I attended the four-day job search workshop at the Oakland PIC facilitated by **Ameenah Lutfee**. She provided the workshop in an easy and balanced manner that never felt rushed. I learned valuable tools that are really helping me in my job search. **(continued on next page)**

The information was practical and up-to-date with the current trends. I received so many great resources and I feel prepared more than ever to continue my job search efforts." - Monica

"Thanks to **Maureen Nelson** for helping me with the gargantuan task of refocusing my energy to pursue a new path and to do what it requires to manifest this change. It's not an easy thing to make an about face and change careers at this stage in the game. With your help and guidance, I have been able to refocus my energy and choose a new field of study. I value all the time you spend with me to clarify this new direction, fine tune my resume, make resources available to me, and encourage me to trudge through unknown and sometimes uncomfortable territory. Thank you for your skill, kindness, and attention." - Teresa

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