

Modified approach to job search brings opportunities for seniors

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Senior Living Correspondent

Searching for a job in a difficult economic climate can be a jarring experience at any age. For the nation's 78 million boomers, the first of whom will be turning 65 next year, the challenge is especially acute.

More than 2.2 million of the 14.9 million people currently unemployed are age 55 or older, according to the Department of Labor.

Workers over age 55 were unemployed for longer periods than any other age group, on average more than 35 weeks.

A mid-career job search, however, may be an opportune time to evaluate a career and make a difference in many of the challenges facing society today, according to industry experts.

Encore careers are those that combine personal fulfillment with social impact and continued income, according to Career Ventures, a think tank that studies baby boomers, work and social purpose.

"People are saying 'I'm not done yet' — neither emotionally nor financially," said Civic Ventures vice president Marci Alboher, a journalist who created the *New York Times*' "Shifting Careers" blog and column, and author of "One Person/Multiple Careers: A New Model for Work/Life Success."

Making a difference

Although the current job market may be tight, Alboher said economists



SECOND-CAREER SEARCH: Those in retirement age face challenges when competing with a younger market. However, an adjustment in job-seeking strategy can help.

anticipate that, based on projected population growth and current labor force participation rates, there will be an increased need for individuals in social-sector positions.

Career Ventures supports the trend through several initiatives including a website, www.encore.org, which contains resources on establishing encore careers, fellowships, awards for employers who encourage the trend, and a program that awards grants to colleges to help boomer retraining for encore careers.

The organization also awards the Purpose Prize, a \$100,000 prize to social innovators over age 60 who create new methods for solving social issues.

Juan-Pablo Fernandez, founder and CEO of Houston-based Parents' Alliance, a nonprofit that provides low-income Hispanic parents with the training to make a difference in their children's

educations, received the award in 2007.

A trained engineer, entrepreneur, photographer and publisher and former president of the Mexican Institute of Greater Houston, Fernandez saw a need for a grassroots program that enables parents to be catalysts for change instead of passive bystanders in the battle to reduce high school dropout rates.

Although founded in Houston, the Parents' Alliance partners with schools to serve communities in Dallas and San Antonio and has helped thousands of parents increase their education levels through classes that include computer training, language education and life skills.

An indirect benefit of familiarity with the American education system is greater civic involvement. Many of the schools that partner with the Alliance have found greater par-

ent participation rates in school activities.

"It is all about empowerment, about giving others the impulse to get started," Fernandez said. "We now have a grassroots program that teaches computer technology at the lowest possible level."

Raising the education level for Hispanic parents not only enables them to help their children succeed in school, but it also has the added benefit of creating a better educated work force, Fernandez said.

"Hispanics are the majority in most school districts in Texas, that by the way, is the fifth poorest state in the nation," Fernandez said.

The work he is doing now has been a journey of self discovery.

"When you reach 'retirement' age, you are no longer motivated by performance and metrics that show how well you have done. By this time your main concern is how much good you have done to others, how much impact you have had in the lives of others," Fernandez said.

"Days now go so much faster that there is a sense of urgency to do something important, even if you don't make a dime. When you are able to talk to people who have not had the same opportunities as you, and you come to see that what you are doing is making a difference in their lives, then you know that what you are doing is the right thing. You discover yourself."

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COURTESY OF AUTUMNGROVE COTTAGE

OFFERING A STEADY HAND: AutumnGrove Cottage supports those affected by Alzheimer's or dementia.

Baby boomers face new age with Alzheimer's

About 14 million, or roughly 18 percent of the United States' 79 million baby boomers can expect to develop Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia in their lifetime.

By 2011, the oldest baby boomer will turn 65 years old; this puts these boomers at a higher risk for developing the disease.

Age is the single biggest risk factor for the disease: The likelihood of developing Alzheimer's doubles every five years after age 65.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, women are nearly twice as likely as men to develop Alzheimer's disease (17 percent versus 9 percent).

Although it may appear being female is a risk factor, more women will develop Alzheimer's because on average, women live longer than men, thereby having more time to develop the disease.

The first symptom of Alzheimer's may be mild for-

getfulness.

As the condition progresses, it begins to interfere with the person's life as they forget how to brush their teeth, change their clothes, or recognize once-familiar people. They become confused and agitated and eventually require constant care.

Fear of knowing is a big hindrance to seeing a physician, though early diagnosis can help alleviate anxiety, get proper medications, plan for the future and get the support needed to help families cope with the disease.

If you or someone you know would like more information about Alzheimer's/dementia care, call 281-220-0882 or visit the community's website at www.autumngrovecottage.com.

AutumnGrove Cottage will be hosting community events that are free to the public.

Check the website or call for more information.



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