



The SWAG Family Resource Center will offer resume help on the first day of its conference.

Southwest Advocacy Group Conference To Promote Free Job Training, Certification

By Matthew Arrojas

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The Southwest Advocacy Group will offer a free employability conference from Monday through Friday at the SWAG Family Resource Center to help any Gainesville resident who is unemployed or underemployed find jobs in the southwest area.

Then, on May 1, SWAG will host a free job and resource fair at the Tower Road Library. Residents can apply the tools learned during the conference while they meet and interview with employers.

Amanda Elliott, the manager of the SWAG Family Resource Center, said that this will be the first time SWAG offers free certification training classes to help improve participants' resumes. These classes will teach skills like CPR, food handling and customer service, but she hopes participants will walk away with more than just a certificate.

“We want them to improve their skills, but we also want them to be confident, so that when they go to the job fair they bring that presence and they have no concerns about walking up to that person at the table,” she said.

SWAG EMPLOYABILITY CONFERENCE AND JOB FAIR

Employability Conference: April 16 - 20
SWAG Family Resource Center

Job Fair: May 1
Tower Road Library

75 **BUS ROUTE**
All the employers present at the job fair will be located along the 75 bus route. The Family Resource Center is also accessible from this bus line.

25 **EMPLOYERS**
According to the SWAG Director of Community Relations Patty Carroll, there will be about 25 employers at the job fair on May 1st.

17.5 **CONFERENCE HOURS**
From April 16th to the 20th, there will be a combined 17.5 hours of conference. Friday, CPR certification day, is the longest day, with classes running from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

1st **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
This is the first year that SWAG is hosting a formal employability conference. This will also be the inaugural job fair at the Tower Road Library.

\$0 **COST**
Both the conference and the job fair will be free to attend. Even the certification courses, which can sometimes be as much as \$85, will be free, although space is limited.

Infographic made using
CANVA
(Matthew Arrojas/WUFT News)

Information courtesy of SWAG Family Resource Center Manager Amanda Elliott or Director of Community Relations Patty Carroll

Information courtesy of the Southwest Advocacy Group Family Resource Center.

While the SWAG Family Resource Center has offered resume help and interview practice in the past, this is the first time the center will offer a series of workshops for the community, and all of it will be free, Elliott said.

GatorCPR will teach the CPR and first aid class — courses that typically cost \$85 per person, according to the GatorCPR. Elliott said that the high-cost of some of these classes is just one of the obstacles in the way of people trying to enter the workforce.

“If you don’t have a job, how are you going to pay to go to a CPR or first aid class?” she said. “A lot of the time there are those barriers, so we want to reduce the barriers so that when people complete the conference, they have actually increased their employability.”

The SWAG Family Resource Center will be offering three certificate training programs.

For those interested in entering the service industry, there will be a Red Carpet Customer Service workshop on Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon.

The day after, the Safestaff Food Handler workshop and certification will take place from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., according to the Family Resource Center.

On Friday, the last workshop will be the CPR and first aid certification class. This class will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and lunch will be provided, according to the agenda for the event.

SWAG co-chair Dorothy Benson said these workshops are a chance for those looking for jobs to impress possible employers with certifications most other people don’t have.

“I think that the training and certification really shows the employers that this is somebody who’s going to go above and beyond to do what they need to do to make themselves the best employee fit,” she said.

Patty Carroll, the director of community relations for SWAG, recommends that people register for the certification training classes ahead of time, as there is a cap of 20 participants for each class. Those who are interested can register in person at the Family Resource Center or by calling the center at 352-505-6823.

Besides certification workshops, SWAG will be hosting its own workshops put together by its volunteers, Elliott said.

The Family Resource Center will host resume day on Monday. Starting at 9 a.m., a speaker will instruct participants on what makes a good resume. After a 30-minute lecture, participants will write their own resume with the help of volunteers, Elliott said.

Participants can also print copies of their resume and receive a copy saved to a USB for them to keep in case they need to make changes to it later.

On Tuesday, SWAG will host a similar event to improve interviewing skills. After a brief lecture, participants will be split into groups of three to four people. Then, volunteers will ask each member of the group a series of common interview questions. Elliott said this is a good way for people to learn — not just through practice, but observation.

“The Employability Conference is really going to help make a difference because that’s going to help build the confidence level of the individuals taking part in the mock interviews and resume building,” Carroll said.

During the job fair held at the Tower Road Library from 2-6 p.m., prospective job-seekers will be able to meet with about 25 employers and take part in other resources, Elliott said.

There will be job opportunities in the service and retail industries, she said, as well as some positions that are above entry-level. SWAG has not yet finalized its list of participating employers.

All employers at the job fair will be located along bus route 75. Elliott said this is the primary bus route that services the southwest Gainesville area, so it was important to her to find employers along the route to ensure everyone attending the fair will have transportation to their job if they need it.

She added that attendance at the Employability Conference is not required to attend the job fair. Everyone is welcome.

Child care services will be provided during the job fair so that parents can bring their children and still be able to interview and meet with employers, Elliott said.