



Conference to help people re-enter workforce

By Cleveland Tinker

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An upcoming conference will educate and inform local residents about how to get back into the workforce.

The 4th annual Re-Entry Partnership Conference will again feature workshops that teach critical employability skills, resume development and entrepreneurship, as well as provide access to educational programs to help people further enhance their skills, said Cherie Kelly, ???

Sponsored by Partnership for Strong Families the Alachua County Library District and others, the conference will be held from 10 a.m.-noon April 15-18 at the Library Partnership Resource Center, 912 NE 16th Ave.

Registration for the conference is encouraged but not required, and those interested in registering have until 4 p.m. April 12 to do so by calling 352-334-0160. Walk-in participants will be welcomed.

“Our Re-Entry Conference, as well as Community Job and Resource Fair, are designed to assist anyone with barriers to employment including limited work history, criminal background, limited education or changes to their life circumstances that have led them to re-enter the workforce, such as divorce or having an empty nest,” Kelly said. “We help address ways to navigate resources to eliminate barriers to employment such as access to childcare, housing, health and transportation.”

The conference is hoping to attract 20 or more people each day, and it will be an opportunity for participants to network with agencies that may assist them in meeting their goals and addressing barriers to employment. Participants will also have access to professional clothing and a thumb drive to store their resumès. Those who complete all four days of the conference will be eligible to receive a

monthly bus pass, and those in need of community service hours through court services, work release or the Gainesville Housing Authority will receive hours for their conference and job fair attendance, Kelly said.

Besides Partnership for Strong Families and the Library District, others partnering with the conference include Satchel's Pizza, Gainesville Housing Authority, Greater Gainesville Chamber, The Florida Council, Gainesville Housing Authority, CareerSource NCFL, Alachua County Sheriff's Office and Florida Department of Corrections.

The conference and other programs at the Library Partnership Resource Center are designed to further the goals of the center, which are to provide access to services and resources to strengthen and empower families and the community, Kelly said.

"The Re-Entry Conference and Community Job and Resource Fair help provide skills, resources and opportunities to people to improve their economic situation and take better care of their families," Kelly said.

While the conference occurs once a year, the same services are offered year-round at the Library Partnership Resource Center. Services are individualized to meet the needs of the individual and their family, including resumè and job application assistance, a job board, employment related transportation assistance, educational resources and assistance and access to a variety of other community resources and partner agencies, Kelly said.

Kelly said she wants participants to take full advantage of all the things offered at the conference and community job and resource fair.

"I hope participants walk away feeling confident in their skills and abilities as they navigate the job market," Kelly said. "I hope they have a strong understanding of their goals and are able to develop a realistic plan to achieve them. More than anything, I hope participants leave the program knowing they have a community that is here to help them succeed."