

GUARDIAN

Conference to benefit job seekers

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Those facing obstacles keeping them from getting a job because of their criminal background and other issues will benefit from attending the Re-Entry Partnership Conference.

The conference, designed to assist people with various barriers to employment, will be held from 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Monday through May 13 online and also in person at the Library Partnership Resource Center, 912 NE 16 Ave., UF TREEO Center, 3600 SW 63 Blvd. behind Kanapaha Botanical Gardens and at Forest Pines Community Center, 2027 NE 25th St.

To register, visit www.aclib.us/reentry. Registration for in-person spots will be open until seats are filled. Registration to participate virtually is open until Thursday to allow organizers to send emails and information to anyone who registers online.

The Re-entry Partnership Community Job and Resource Fair will have employers on site willing to hire eligible applicants with background issues and other barriers to employment. In addition, there will be representatives from local agencies to assist with things like housing, legal issues, restoration of rights, education opportunities and more. The job fair will be held from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. May 24 at GNV Commons, formerly known as Lot 10 at 100 SW First Ave. in downtown Gainesville on the corner of Southwest First Avenue and Southwest Second Street.

The conference will offer a host of employability workshops with trained facilitators who will motivate and equip participants with skills to help them succeed. Because of COVID-19 guidelines, facilitators will not be able to help participants one-on-one. Skills participants will receive include creating an email account and resumes, interviewing skills, job search tips, educational opportunities, goal setting, making a career plan, how to achieve goals, job retention skills, how to fill-out a job application, how to start a small business and other assistance.

Conference speakers will include: Laurie Brown, coordinator of community outreach UF professional and workshop development; James Schindler, coordinator career and job

placement at SF College; Trisha Roy, mentor at SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives); and Harold Gertner, adult education career placement, learning specialist and Brighter Futures project coordinator at Santa Fe College.

Headquarters librarian Linda Cue, along with Rachel Cook, public relations and marketing manager at the Library District, offered tips.

Participants are encouraged to bring to the job fair several copies of their resume, dress in professional attire - men should wear slacks or dress pants, shirts, comfortable shoes, not sneakers, and women should wear skirts, dresses, dress slacks, shirts, blouses, comfortable shoes, no stiletto heels, and understated hair styles and makeup.

A clothing closet is available at the Library Partnership Resource Center on Mondays from 2-4 p.m. and Thursdays from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. People interested in scheduling a mock interview should contact Library Partnership Resource Center Manager Cherie Kelly at 352-334-0160.

At the job fair, some employers will hire on the spot, and have done so at past job fairs. Other employers prefer to receive resumes and schedule appointments later.

Cue said job seekers need to be honest about their work history and answer questions clearly and honestly.

“Be on time or early,” said Cue. “Come ready and confident.”

Kelly recommended job seekers not be shy about talking to the employers and to take the opportunity to tell their story, be truthful and ready to discuss their skills and goals.

“Coming prepared increases confidence,” said Kelly, who noted the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce reports employers are eager to hire, and there are jobs available in such areas as the service and warehouse industries.

Cook said a good attitude is important and recommended being mindful of body language and posture.

“We hope even if they don’t land a job offer, they will be inspired and motivated to continue their job search with some new tools to help along the way,” Cook said. “One of the benefits of attending the conference is the networking opportunities.”