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Work your job search like a job...............................p4
More questions to ask after the interview.............p6
It's not about the money.............................................p8
Rebuild Illinois creates more jobs.........................p10
STEM UP brings STEM careers to young adults.....p12

COVER PHOTO BY STACIE LEWIS
Left to right: Elisha Boyd, Complete DOT Physicals; Laterika Paxton, The Beauty Box; Tammy Lackland, Extreme Gymnastics; Bennie Smith Jr, Suite 704; and Shatriya Smith, Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center, are business owners serving as mentors to students in the STEM UP program.

The Youth Service Bureau is a licensed Child Welfare agency serving at-risk youth and their families for over 40 years.

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Questions? Contact Michelle Davis at 217-529-8300, ext. 225 or md@ysbi.com

The Greater Springfield Job Fair

With more than 50 participating employers, the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce’s job fair is back in a big way. A list of the participating employers can be found on the Event Calendar for The Chamber at www.gscc.org.

Whether you’re looking to advance within your current industry or start a new career, there are plenty of options available. Job opportunities range from full-time to seasonal opportunities and cover a wide array of industries and positions. There is no cost to job-seekers to attend. Plan to attend the Greater Springfield Job Fair on Tuesday, April 5 from 4-6 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Springfield Convention Center.

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-Darlene A Knett
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Senior Vice President, Retail & Regional Manager
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People search for new jobs for many reasons: to relocate, earn more money, change careers or just to see if the grass is greener somewhere else. Regardless of the reason, most applicants agree that searching for a job is difficult. In fact, it can be the absolute worst. Online applications disappear, recruiters ghost you after the phone interview and low-ball offers add frustration to a job search. But by trying a few new approaches, remaining focused on your goals and being intentional with how you spend your time, I am confident you can move beyond the “apply and pray” mentality to land your dream job ... or at least your better-than-the-last-one job.

**First, the basics**
Your resume should be packed full of key words related to the job(s) you’re seeking, as well as action words (delivered, implemented, achieved, led) and numbers (improved sales by 20%, cut expenses by 12%, reduced turnover by 50%). A compelling summary or objective statement helps clarify what you’re seeking and adds personality (Business-savvy and results-oriented retail store manager with extensive recruiting experience seeks human resources position.). List relevant or interesting extracurriculars including volunteer work, articles or blogs, courses you’ve taken or even hobbies. And don’t forget to proofread, proofread, proofread. Silly typos and grammatical errors are an easy way for a recruiter or hiring manager to assume you’re sloppy with poor attention to detail.

**Level up on LinkedIn**
Many office workers and anyone with more than entry-level experience will benefit by using LinkedIn. Your profile should include a professional headshot and every section completed: About, Experience, Education, Skills and more. With your new and improved profile, you can quickly “Easy Apply” for openings.

If you want to take it to the next level, LinkedIn is a powerful way to start conversations with...
people who work where you dream of working. You can search for companies on LinkedIn, then view and filter people who work there and send connection requests. If you can find someone who might be the hiring manager for a position you’re interested in, connect with them and choose the “add a note” option. (You have an impressive background; my experience is also in this field and I’m interested in positions at your company. Do you know who I could reach out to?)

Building new connections in your field and asking them for introductions is a great way to level up your use of LinkedIn. Find and connect with people who inspire you, or who could introduce you to hiring managers. Ask them for help, for introductions or invite them out to coffee. Comment, like and share their posts. Add posts of your own that demonstrate knowledge and experience in your field.

**Use time intentionally**

Passive job seekers spend time browsing openings on Indeed and hitting “apply” while sitting on the sofa at night watching Netflix. Occasionally – as in you have a greater chance of getting struck by lightning – this strategy works. But serious job seekers allocate time to key activities that will improve their chances of success. Set a schedule and stick to it, as if finding a new job was your job. Here’s a sample to get you started:

**Monday, Wednesday and Friday**

One hour resume and profile improvement and keyword tailoring

One hour of LinkedIn active networking (post, comment, share, connect with new people)

One hour job search via job sites or virtual career fairs

**Tuesday and Thursday**

One hour lunch/coffee in-person or attend a networking event or hiring event

One hour interview preparation: practice responses to sample interview questions and write a few thoughtful questions you’ll ask in the interview

One hour sending thank-you notes to those who responded, interviewed or met with you

One hour reaching out to former colleagues/references who might know about openings

Adjust these approaches to fit your schedule and the goals of your job search. Ultimately, a strong resume, proactive networking, in-person connections and a consistent schedule will make your search more rewarding and improve your chances of successes. Good luck!

Kelly Gust is the CEO of HR Full Circle, a Springfield-based consulting firm that provides talent management and human resources consulting to organizations of all sizes and stages. She also serves as president of Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois.

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More questions to ask after the interview

Job applicants spend most of their time researching questions their interviewer might ask and coming up with suitable answers. Which makes sense, given that most of the interview is spent answering questions. However, it’s just as important to come up with a few questions of your own to ask after the interview is over. Clever questions can both help you learn if the position is right for you and show your interviewer you’re the right person for the job. Here are a few questions that are always great to ask.

What are your (or the company’s) goals for this year?
Ideally, you want your interviewer’s goals to line up with your own. If they’re going to be your manager or co-worker, your goals should be on the same track. You can also follow up this question by mentioning how you can help them fulfill those goals, proving yourself a valuable hire before you even step foot in the workplace. You can also ask this question as it applies to the company as a whole.

What is the most difficult part of the job?
For your own knowledge, you should know the toughest parts of the job up front. In addition, asking this question shows that you aren’t afraid to step up to a challenge. You can follow your interviewer’s answer up with detailing how you’ll be able to handle those types of difficulties.

What will the first 30 days on the job look like?
This question helps prepare you for what might happen if you get a job offer. Employers like to see forward-thinking questions, and it’s better for you to have some idea of what the early days of the job might look like. That way you won’t be lost your first day on the job.

How do you measure success?
Different companies and managers have varying ways of evaluating employee success. Some have yearly evaluations, whereas others check in more frequently to track employee goals. One company might value customer surveys, while another could be more interested in looking at hourly productivity. You want to make sure that the company’s evaluation style goes well with how you work.

Hopefully you feel a bit more prepared to ask questions at the end of your interview.

This article first appeared in the Feb. 8 edition of Job Journey. Read more at blog.expresspros.com.
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There has been a shift in workforce dynamics since the pandemic shook life up a couple years ago. Job seekers have a renewed sense of confidence – they know their priorities and the value they bring to the table. Surveys conducted in 2021 show that those actively seeking employment are looking for competitive pay, raises that keep pace with inflation, flexibility to work remotely and a robust benefits package. In fact, benefits are more important now than ever.

When it comes to hiring new talent and keeping current employees satisfied, “It’s not just about the money – it’s about the complete employee experience,” explained Jenny Thayer, chief human resources officer at Horace Mann. She said that Horace Mann is probably no different from other employers “when it comes to what the pandemic has forced us to look at in regard to the employee experience.”

Katie Rutledge, chief human resources officer for Springfield Clinic said, “No doubt that the past couple of years have changed how we recruit talent, and there have been shifts in the way people approach employment.” She said recruits are looking for competitive pay, a good benefits package with a low insurance premium, along with flexibility in respect to hours and the opportunity to work remotely.

The main benefit people are asking for is flexibility – they like the option to work a hybrid schedule, remarked Thayer. Remote work is a major trend among job seekers as people are no longer bound by
location. She said it is considered a benefit both to those actively seeking employment and to those currently employed.

A survey of Horace Mann staff indicated that many valued the flexibility their work-from-home experience gave them. As a result, in 2021, Horace Mann announced the hybrid-model of work that allows approximately 70% of employees the option to work remotely. Thayer said there are positions that are 100% remote, and the company creates ways to ensure that those employees feel a connection to the organization.

Rutledge said Springfield Clinic likes to be flexible when and where it is possible to do so without compromising patient care – the No. 1 priority. Some work roles lend themselves to more flexible arrangements than others. Rutledge said she knows job sharing is appreciated by working parents, but flexibility may depend on the office. “This is where we have meaningful conversations with applicants and current employees so that we know what they need and we can clearly communicate the work arrangements,” she said.

A differentiation is made between those who are actively seeking employment and those who are currently employed, because even content employees are willing to leave a position for more pay or better benefits in this current market. Rutledge said Springfield Clinic has an overall low turnover rate that the company is proud of, and that is a reflection of their employee value proposition that includes competitive pay, benefits and an employee referral program that comes with a monetary reward. Rutledge said this program is promoted frequently.

Another dimension of attracting and keeping quality talent, especially for the millennial generation, is corporate social responsibility. Thayer said at Horace Mann, “we strive to be a good citizen,” but the company has taken social responsibility a step further by matching employee contributions and allowing employees to personalize the positive impact they make by directing their contribution to their community of choice.

Local companies have adapted to the need for keeping people safe by holding virtual interviews and virtual new employee orientations. Springfield-area businesses have proven their ability to adapt and continue to attract quality talent, even while meeting the requirements of the workforce that has been forever changed by the common experience of a pandemic. Perhaps people had a chance to gain a new perspective on life while working from home, and for many, there is now more balance in the work-life equation.

Holly Whisler is the associate editor for Springfield Business Journal.
Rebuild Illinois creates more jobs

IDOT sees influx of work due to infrastructure investments

ASPIRE | Pamela Savage

The Rebuild Illinois Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act passed earlier this year, and plans to invest over $44 million into Illinois infrastructure and job creation over the next six years. But what does this mean, practically speaking, for workers and job seekers here in central Illinois? I spoke with the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Secretary of Transportation, Omer Osman, to find out more about IDOT’s plans for Illinois’ infrastructure.

We keep hearing about the Great Resignation, and about employers not being able to find reliable workers. How has the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) been affected by the pandemic?

Early on during the pandemic, the governor and the federal government deemed transportation an essential service, so IDOT kept our employees, and we kept them busy. During the early days of the pandemic, we knew essential workers were delivering necessary personal protective equipment and goods all over the state, so we doubled up on road and bridge inspections because we needed trucks to have safe roads and bridges. We kept rest areas open for truck drivers and sanitized them frequently.

We typically see turnover in our employees at the end of the year, due to people reaching retirement age. For this reason, our job is to make sure we are hiring young people, and we are in a good position to do so now with the influx of funding.

What sorts of projects is IDOT working on in the near future?

Thanks to the Rebuild Illinois Act and the infusion of federal funding, our annual program is doubled. Prior to 2019, our program received about $1.6 billion (per year). In 2022, our program is close to $3.3 billion, and with the expectation of more federal funding coming, we are close to a $4 billion program.

This is great for Illinois, because we are rich in infrastructure. Illinois is third in the nation for land miles of interstate, and we have multiple rivers and bridges. Some of Illinois’ 26,000 bridges have met or exceeded their expected life expectancy, so our first goal is to fix these and to make them safe for the next 10 to 15 years.

Does IDOT have training programs or apprenticeship opportunities?

We train our employees to make sure they are well-rounded in every facet of civil engineering. We don’t want new hires to feel pigeon-holed in one type of work, so we rotate our employees through several types of jobs to make sure they get really good experience. After 24-36 months of these rotations, we help the employee determine the best fit for them and for the Department.

IDOT also funds the Highway Career Construction Training Program (HCCTP) in 12 community colleges across Illinois. HCCTP provides training and exposure for young men and women in highway construction-related skills, such as mathematics for the trades, job site readiness, carpentry, concrete flatwork, blueprint reading orientation, first aid/AED/CPR, introduction to tools, forklift operation, OSHA 10 certification and more. Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield participates in the HCCTP.

Lastly, we encourage college juniors, seniors and graduate students in all disciplines to apply through the governor’s office for the Michael J. Curry Summer Internship Program, which gives students an opportunity to work in one of the agencies under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Governor (including IDOT) on a full-time basis for 10 weeks during the summer.

What advice would you give to current job seekers considering IDOT, and what are your pressing vacancies?

We have about 5,000 jobs within the Department, and we hire in three major areas: highway maintainers, civil engineers and technical managers. All of our openings are easily found on the IDOT website, and there are over 100 job openings as we speak today. We have IDOT offices in five regions, which host a total of nine highway districts from Schaumberg to Carbondale. There are positions open in all nine districts, and in the IDOT Central Office on Dirksen Parkway in Springfield.

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer in Springfield.
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State senator Doris Turner, D-Springfield, and Gina Lathan, president of the Route History museum and souvenir shop, 737 Cook St., have a keen interest in helping young people of color learn about the history of Springfield, as well as explore possible careers. Their interests have led to a new program administered through the Route History Institute, a nonprofit arm of the museum, called STEM UP.

STEM UP allows young adults the opportunity to learn about careers in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math. Many of the program participants are minorities, ranging in age from 17-24, who get to learn from business owners they might relate to because many of them are also minorities. Armed with real-life work experience and training in financial literacy, fiscal responsibility and the all-important soft skills such as proper workplace behaviors, the participants — called youth workers — advance personally and professionally in the program.

Through an application process with the Route History Institute, the participants are selected and matched with an employer in Springfield or Decatur where they work, earn money and learn about a career.

Currently, 25 people are enrolled in the program. They meet every Friday morning for professional development sessions where speakers and trainers focus on STEM careers and team-building.

The STEM UP program was made possible through Turner’s role as a state senator. She was instrumental in pushing for an appropriation in the state budget that designated $500,000 for a grant program through the Illinois Department of Human Services. The grant was targeted predominantly for Black youth between the ages of 17-24, who are considered to be low income due to being unemployed or underemployed.

Turner proudly states, “I am honored to provide a path for young people of color to learn and earn a career in these fields. The next generation of STEM leaders will have a home in Springfield where they can grow and prosper.”

Lathan wrote the grant and is now the program director of STEM UP. With her work as the director of Route History,
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which focuses on Springfield history of African Americans, she has melded the work of the museum with the program.

An event at the museum called Ignite 40, held in October 2021, focused on 40 Black-owned businesses that were burned in the Springfield Race Riot of 1908. Ignite 40 and STEM UP joined together and devised a plan to develop 30-second commercials for current Black-owned businesses in Springfield and Decatur. Six youth workers in the program are now learning about technology and videography, which are both considered STEM careers.

Lathan says, "We want to ignite 40 new businesses. The youth workers are learning about history and careers at the same time."

STEM UP is a new and unique program that advances the interest in STEM careers while working with young people to develop the necessary skills to be successful in a career. Lathan says, "The hope is that the youth workers will someday own their own businesses and stay in our city."

Cinda Ackerman Klickna applauds efforts to help people find careers and know Springfield’s unique history.
Lincoln Land Community College

Calling Healthcare Professionals!

In need of a change of pace? Interested in training the next generation? Lincoln Land Community College is looking for qualified part-time instructors to teach for our Allied Health and Nursing programs for the Fall 2022 semester. Learn more and apply online at https://llcc.peopleadmin.com.

Central Sterilizing Service Technician – Instructors needed for evening classes at our main campus in Springfield. Applicants must be certified through the Certification Board for Central Processing (CBSPC) or the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materials Management (IAHCSMM) and have 2 years of current central sterilizing experience.

Certified Nursing Assistant – Instructors needed for our Springfield, Jacksonville, and Taylorville locations for both classroom and clinical instruction. Applicants need a current Illinois license as a registered nurse, a current Healthcare Provider CPR card, and must have either a Provisional Vocational Teaching Certificate plus Evacuation Certificate OR have completed the CNA Instructor/Train the Trainer Course.

Neurodiagnostic Technology – Instructors needed to teach at St. John’s Hospital in Springfield. Includes classroom and lab instruction along with clinical supervision of students in the hospital setting. Qualified candidates must be a graduate of a CAAHEP accredited ND/T associate degree program, or equivalent; documentation of at least one-year clinical employment experience in the discipline; a current BLS/CPR certification; and a current registration in electroencephalography with ABRET – Neurodiagnostic Credentialing and Accreditation.

Calling all Chefs, Bakers, and Hospitality Professionals!

Are you passionate about the Hospitality Industry? Is your mission to develop future leaders in this dynamic business? Lincoln Land Community College is looking for part-time instructors to teach Baking, Culinary, and Hospitality classes at our main campus in Springfield, for the Culinary Arts program. For position requirements, further information on all adjunct opportunities, and to apply online, please visit our website at https://llcc.peopleadmin.com.

Calling all Mechanics, Carpenters, Electricians, and Welders!

Love working in your trade? Interested in training the next generation? Teaching can be a great opportunity to use your expertise and knowledge to give back to the industry that provided you with a rewarding career. Lincoln Land Community College is looking for experienced professionals to teach face to face classes for the disciplines listed below for the upcoming Fall 2022 semester. Learn more and apply online at https://llcc.peopleadmin.com.

Automotive Technology – Springfield campus, daytime classes

Construction Occupations – Springfield & Taylorville, day & evenings classes

Electrical Maintenance – Springfield campus, day & evenings classes

Industrial Trade and Manufacturing – Springfield campus, day & evenings classes

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Lincoln Land Community College is looking for qualified part-time instructors to teach face to face classes for the disciplines listed below for the upcoming Fall 2022 semester at our main campus located in Springfield and our Outreach Centers located in Taylorville, Litchfield, Jacksonville, and Beardstown. A master’s degree with at least 18 graduate hours in coursework directly related to the discipline is required for most. Prior teaching experience is preferred but not required. Learn more and apply online at https://llcc.peopleadmin.com.

Anatomy & Physiology – All locations for both day and evening classes

Biology – All locations for both day and evening classes

Communication (Public Speaking) – All locations for both day and evening classes

Engineering Graphics – Springfield campus for daytime classes

English – All Outreach Center locations for daytime classes

German – Springfield campus for both day and evening classes

History – All locations for both day and evening classes

Integrated Media Design (Digital Media/Graphic Design) – Springfield campus for both day and evening classes

Italian – Springfield campus for both day and evening classes

Microbiology – All locations for both day and evening classes

Music Appreciation & Music in America – All Outreach Center locations for daytime classes

Political Science (American Government) – All locations for daytime classes

Psychology – All locations for both day and evening classes

Sociology – All locations for daytime classes

Lincoln Land Community College does not discriminate against any student, employee, prospective employee or any other person on the basis of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, political affiliation, or any other protected status in its programs and activities. More information may be found at http://www.llcc.edu/equal-opportunity. Inquiries may be directed to the Equal Opportunity Compliance Officer at EOEO@llcc.edu. Lincoln Land Community College is a drug-free workplace.
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