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Dearborn job fair highlights educational opportunities

Josee Valcourt / The Detroit News

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DEARBORN -- Job hunters made their way to Dearborn today for a career fair organized to help Metro Detroiters who have been caught in the wave of job losses roiling the area.

About 20 exhibitors set up booths at the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center for the day-long event billed "Opportunity Fair 2007." Exhibitors included employers and educational institutions targeting people who might be interested in going back to school.

The event runs until 9 p.m., but workshops covering finances, interviewing and other topics end at 8 p.m.

Sheryl A. Coyne, general sales manager for Detroit's WVMV-FM Radio, 98.7 Smooth Jazz, one of the fair's sponsors, said the first-time event was created to provide people in southeast Michigan with the information they need to adjust to today's difficult economic climate.

Southeast Michigan has been hard hit as major employers including Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and DaimlerChrysler AG's Chrysler Group cut their work forces to better compete in the U.S. auto industry.

"This gives (job hunters) an opportunity to understand what their options are," Coyne said.

Other event sponsors include the United Auto Workers, General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co. and Troy-based financial management firm Plummer McInerney.

By noon, Plummer McInerney had scheduled appointments with about 20 people who were among those who trickled into the job fair this morning.

"There's a huge wave of this loyal, local work force that is being displaced and facing life changing choices," said Plummer McInerney Vice President Mike McInerney.

Among those who visited the Plummer McInerney booth were former Ford workers who recently accepted buyout offers and are no longer employed by the automaker. They wanted to learn more about financial tips they could use to maximize their retirement funds and buyout packages, McInerney said.

Tavares Moore, 28, collected a small stack of informational sheets from a handful of exhibitors. As he jotted down pertinent information on an application for Focus: Hope, said he planned to

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stay at the job fair for as long as it took to talk to all potential employers. Other exhibitors included TCF Bank, the University of Detroit Mercy Law School and the U.S. Army.

Moore, a substitute teacher from Detroit, said he was looking for a new career, something preferably in the computer software or business management fields.

Gary Barnes, 28, and a part-time assembly worker for Chrysler said he was on the prowl for full-time work that provides better job security.

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