

## Staying Optimistic in Tough Times

**Westford Eagle (MA)** - Thursday, January 5, 2012

*Author: Deborah J. Becker, [westford@wickedlocal.com](mailto:westford@wickedlocal.com)*

Tom Faria had worked as an IT systems administrator in the same job for nine and a half years when he was laid off.

The reason for his layoff was "reduction in force due to company merger," he said.

Being laid off came as a shock. In his "upper 50s," the Westford resident had been working in the industry for 30 years.

The rules of the game have changed since Faria was last job searching.

"It's not the same as applying for a job today. (Your) resume is not enough - that's why people are shell-shocked. They think you send a resume and that's all it takes. Not today," he said.

To recover from the shock, learn new tools and stay optimistic, Faria sought out the **Westford Job Seekers** Network, and began attending meetings regularly. His daughter had attended the group and subsequently got a job. Since joining the group, Faria said he has gained confidence and has had many job interviews.

### Staying in the game

It's difficult not to get discouraged with the seemingly endless job market crisis, but attending **Westford Job Seekers** weekly meetings helps those who are unemployed and on the brink of unemployment gain valuable resources and support to remain hopeful and stay active and in the game.

The group was started in 2009 by unemployed Westford resident Barbara Yates and Dina Kanabar, who worked at the J. V. Fletcher library. Yates landed a **job** in December 2009. Kanabar is now **Job Seekers Network program coordinator** and head of systems and technical services at the library.

With an interactive format that includes weekly speakers, lively discussions and activities - including the Resume Reel, where members pair off and give feedback on what they can glean from each other's resumes in 60 seconds - members prepare to deal with the realities of the **job** search. Regular meetings provide social contact to keep their spirits up.

Speaker encourages creativity and self-knowledge

Inspiring members to be creative and hopeful, Clare Harlow, a career and life coach and consultant, spoke recently at Westford Job Seekers Network on "How to get a **Job** in Any Economy."

Harlow emphasized self-inventory work: she advised people to find their unique strengths and personalize their resumes.

Many older unemployed people find that some of their skills are not needed anymore, said Harlow. She helps them discover their transferable skills.

Harlow said she finds the Westford Job Seekers group to be "very welcoming," and encourages people to attend meetings.

"It's social, and when you're out of work you need a social organization It's like LinkedIn in person, which makes it better," she said.

Attendance numbers fall

Although the Westford meetings have so much to offer and still draw substantial weekly attendance, Kanabar said numbers have fallen in Westford and in job seeker groups in nearby towns over the past year.

"Before we had attendance of 40 to 50 people. Now it has dropped to 25 to 30 people" at weekly meetings, said Kanabar.

"It could be they have given up. People say they are doing everything - going to career centers and still not getting a job. It's discouraging,

and it could be that some people have dropped out of the search. I'm hearing this from other groups as well," such as the Acton Network, she said.

This trend is reflected in state and national numbers as well (see side bar) - though the data show a downward trend in the numbers of unemployed, they also show many unemployed people who have stopped looking for work.

Yet the Westford group still attracts new members; at the Wednesday Nov. 20 meeting there were six new members. They had lost jobs in a wide range of fields, including technical writing, graphic design, marketing, banking and government - "right across the board," said Kanabar.

### Back to the drawing board

Keeping her spirits up, networking, brainstorming and sharing her marketing skills motivated Wendy Gloyd to return to Westford Job Seekers after her second layoff.

Gloyd worked for a design agency for nine years, and was laid off in 2009.

After the Eagle wrote about her in September 2010, Gloyd landed a job at a lower salary than her previous job, and worked there almost one year when she and her entire department were laid off in August.

One reason job seekers may be discouraged could be because some employers screen out unemployed applicants, said Gloyd.

"It's like a black mark against you that you're unemployed. Some **job** postings say 'unemployed need not apply' Being unemployed becomes a stigma," she said.

### Group helps keep spirits up

Volunteering and networking at the Job Seekers Network keeps Faria, Gloyd and other members connected in real time, and the social connection helps with the job search. Volunteer work can be

included on a resume.

"I try to sign myself up for networking events, because getting out of the house helps keep your spirits up. If you're just sitting at your computer all day looking at job postings it can make you feel lonely and removed from the world Job seekers groups have really helped (keep up) my skills, to have other people to brainstorm with and to feel like the tools you're using are the best they can be. Job seekers groups give an opportunity to spend time studying how best to get a job," said Gloyd.

Gloyd will be the featured speaker at the Westford Job Seekers Network meeting on Jan. 18. Her topic will be "How to Create a Website."

**Caption:** Dina Kanabar, Job Seekers Network program coordinator. COURTESY PHOTOS Tom Faria, member Job Seekers Network Wendy Gloyd, member Job Seekers Network

**Section:** News

**Page:** 1

**Record Number:** 2cd04c7a4ff3aae117b8abcf76a9e55b

Copyright, 2012, CP Media Inc. d.b.a. Community Newspaper Company. No content may be reproduced without the owner's written permission.

To bookmark this article, right-click on the link below, and copy the link location:

[Staying Optimistic in Tough Times](#)