

Westford Library lends unemployed a hand

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[Rachel R. Briere](#).

WESTFORD -- In the 21st century, libraries have become so much more than a quiet place to check out a book. Many have become a central meeting place in the community -- the J.V. Fletcher Library in Westford included.

Last summer the historic building on the town common jumped into action. Spurred by rising unemployment in the suburbs, particularly in Westford, the Westford Job Seekers Network was created.

"The initial meeting attracted 30 people of diverse backgrounds and age," said Dina Kanabar, the head of systems and technical services at the library. "Participation and attendance is still high with attendees coming from as far as Natick and Derry, N.H.

Kanabar says when unemployment in the town spiked from 4.5 percent in September of 2008 to 8.6 percent a year later, the staff saw a need to help. There were 1,016 individual job losses in Westford as of September of 2009.

"We initiated and organized to assist those who had experienced job losses or were anticipating a career change," she said.

The weekly gathering on the third floor is open and free for everyone Wednesday afternoons from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Kanabar says the program provides a number of resources

including guest speakers who are experts on the process of searching for a new job and career development. The meeting is also a great way for people of all backgrounds and fields to network with each other and learn about effective interview techniques.

The mid-week discussions are centered around job-related topics such as "Down and Dirty Resumes," "Monster Secrets: Insider Secrets to getting a Better Job Faster," "Warming Up for the Hot Seat -- Interviews," and "Making a Good First Impression." Talks surround what is appropriate to wear on an interview and what personal information resumes should and should not include.

Last December, the program launched a show which airs on Westford's local cable access called Ask the Recruiters. A panel of employment recruiters or "head hunters" answer questions about the best practices when looking for a new career. Volunteer Barbara Yates, Wendy Gloyd and Emmanuelle Llacrosaz-Rounet assist Kanabar with deciding the programs and securing speakers. Yates was an original supporter of the network and was drawn to it because she was once unemployed. Now she is back to work.

Kanabar said participation and attendance is still very high a year later. An average of 45 people attend the meetings.

She added, "Several members have credited this networking group for landing them a new job. The library will support this critical public service as long as it's needed."

For more information on the Westford Job Seekers Network, visit www.westfordlibrary.org or call 978-692-5555.

Credit: Rachel R. Briere, rbriere@lowellsun.com

[Illustration]

Caption: Dina Kanabar, head of systems and technical services at J.V. Fletcher Library in Westford. Courtesy photo
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