

TEACH FOR CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We are raising the bar of academic excellence in urban education and seeking highly qualified teachers to lead the way. If you are a fully certified or a soon-to-be certified teacher that has the passion, commitment, and dedication to prepare children to be the leaders of tomorrow, we want to meet you.

Join us for our Teacher Center Career Event

January 14, 2004
Harold Washington Library
400 South State Street
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Our principals will be interviewing for both current and future position openings. For more information please contact the Teacher Center at teacherrecruitment@cps.k12.il.us or call (773) 553-1045. For information about teacher housing incentives, visit www.teacherhousing.cps.k12.il.us or call (773) 553-HOME.



Illinois Board of Higher Education Director of Governmental Relations

The Illinois Board of Higher Education seeks nominations and applications for the position of Director of Governmental Relations. **Qualifications for this position include:** a bachelor's degree, with master's or doctorate preferred; an in-depth working knowledge of the State's legislative process; an understanding of the State's political context and environment; and an understanding of the Board's role and responsibilities. The preferred candidate will possess and demonstrate strong presentation skills, both written and oral. For additional information on the Board and this position, see the homepage at www.lbhe.state.il.us.

Nominations and applications should include: a cover letter addressing the listed qualifications, a detailed resume, three references who can attest to the successful completion of comparable work, and a relevant writing sample. Review of applications will begin on January 12, 2004, and continue until the position is filled. Nominations and applications should be sent to:

Peggy Podlasek, Illinois Board of Higher Education
431 East Adams, 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62701

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ON THE HUNT

Older workers say flexibility is key factor

By Chuck Green
Special to the Tribune

As a vice president at a major Chicago bank, numbers were Cynthia Duncan's life. But several years ago, when the bank sold her business sector, Duncan chose to move on.

At the time, Duncan wasn't particularly concerned: After all, with her skills and experience, she assumed it would only be a matter of time before another position came along. Not so fast.

"It wasn't that easy to get another job. I deduced that employers were much more likely to take younger, inexperienced people that they could get for less money," Duncan said.

Although there are more older workers—55 and older—in the workforce today than during the boom years of the late 1990s, displaced older workers often have a hard time getting back into the workplace. Studies by the Bureau of Labor Statistics have found that job seekers 55 and older are taking about four weeks longer to find work than job hunters under 55.

Duncan, who is in her 50s, was unemployed for about two years before taking a



Photo for the Tribune by Margo Cohn

La Cretia Adams (center) uses the Pilsen One-Stop Career Center in Chicago to unearth job leads. "I've been looking for months but it seems longer," she says.

job out of her field with the University of Chicago Lab School. Although Duncan says she loved that job, she was overqualified.

"It required less experience than I had, and the pay was considerably less than what I had been making," said Duncan, who now is vice president at another Chicago bank. "But I realized that I'd probably have to take that while I was waiting to do something better, or different. Some money is better than no money."

In fact, at times it might seem as if the odds are stacked against the out-of-work older employee, said Deborah Russell, manager of Economic Security and Work for the AARP.

"In terms of looking for work, age discrimination still is very much an issue they have to deal with," she said. "The negative perception that employers have

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about the skills of older workers in terms of keeping up with technology, willingness to be flexible and whether they cost more is still at the forefront of many employers."

Grace Jenkins, executive director of Operation ABLE, a Chicago-based non-profit job counseling and training center, agrees. "From (our) experience in working with job seekers of all ages, we certainly recognize there is a different challenge faced by older workers looking for employment. The advice we give our clients begins with a focus of looking at age in a positive manner and bringing out the benefits of maturity, such as dependability, reliability and strong work ethic."

The job market is too competitive to be anything but accountable for your employment situation, Russell says.

"We can't put 100 percent of the onus on employers. I think it's important for older workers to remain competitive in today's market. Because while there aren't a lot of jobs, there are a lot of people looking for jobs," she said. "They must stay on top of their skills, keep up with what's going on in industries and what kinds of jobs are available."

According to the Bureau of Labor of Statistics, workers 55 to 64 now make up 12 percent of the workforce—up from 10.2 percent at the height of the boom three years ago. The BLS predicts the percentage of workers age 55 and older in the workforce to rise to 20 percent by 2015.

La Cretia Adams, who is over 55, is ea-

ger to join the crowd. But after several months of looking for a job, Adams, who owned a home-based business, continues to pound the pavement.

"I have always worked, but I wanted to go back out into the real work world," she said. "I needed more challenge."

But finding that job has been a separate—and unexpected—challenge. Like Duncan, Adams thought her skills would yield more immediate results.

"I find that, although I have good work ethics and am skilled at what I do, sometimes the people facing you, doing the questioning, cannot envision that what you used to do can be of value to whatever it is they're offering, or for what they think they want," she said. "Sometimes you'll look like everything they want on paper, but when you show up, it's a different story. There are roadblocks."

For instance, Adams said, she has found that "certain industries want your experience but not your age, or they feel you might break down. It's a Catch-22."

That's part of the reason Jenkins recommends "staying away from jobs you know are traditionally held by younger persons. While many stereotypes have eroded over the years, some jobs have remained in the domain of youth. Don't discourage yourself by applying for those positions."

Older job seekers also should anticipate and address potential concerns when applying or interviewing for jobs, Jenkins adds.

"Select a functional rather than a chronological format for your resume so that you stress your skills and knowledge instead of dates," she suggested.