

Williams, Sharon D.

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To: Williams, Sharon D.
Subject: Job Fair Summary

Job Fair Summary

On May 17, 2012, I reviewed the state of my district with my colleagues on the city commission. Although Gainesville ranks #1 in many quality of life polls, the residents in district one have the fifth largest gap in income disparity, 25% of its children live in poverty and according to data gleaned from Floridaworks database, its zip codes of 32601, 32609, and 32641 have unemployment of 4,327, 4,897 and 4,254 residents, respectively. We had documented well over 13,000 residents in District One zip codes alone. We unanimously voted to host a citywide job fair in an effort to counter these issues.

Our Job Fair Taskforce, The Affirmative Action Committee and numerous partners organized the event for September 11, 2012, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center in East Gainesville. We attracted over forty vendors who screened and interviewed over 1200 job seekers. We received reports of participants getting jobs at the fair, the next days following and even months later. When I campaigned for office, unemployment in our area hovered at 8%. Subsequent to the fair we had a radical decline in our jobless rate to 5.6% while the state was at 7.7%, also a decline. Prosperity was on the move for our citizens. But surveys of our vendors and job fair participants taught us a few valuable lessons which we strived to implement the next time.

Surveys revealed that Job Seekers had many positive comments but the notable concerns were "no potential for hiring on site", "no real dialogue with employers-most said go online", "limited time to engage in conversation", "need a copy machine for job seekers and employers", "visual map of where companies were located on the floor" ... Surveys from employers revealed that there were many positive comments but the notable concerns and recommendations were "attendees having to wait in a long line outside of facility", "booths not placed next to electrical outlets as requested", "unable to offer positions so employers felt useless", "applicants did not seem serious and were unprepared", "sound system was not able to be heard", "no designated parking and assistance for vendors", and "lunch and water should be provided at the booth"... Of the responders to a Survey Monkey at the conclusion of last year's fair 60% hired 2012 job fair participants and 60% would consider hiring an ex-offender. We heard from vendors one on one that our participants were not only unprepared but not dressed appropriately and not possessing the necessary computer skills for any job in the market today.

The Job Fair Taskforce 2013 set out to correct all or most of the concerns and recommendations. We pressed our comfort zones beyond our limits and we were able to provide designated parking with assistance for vendors, we booked the MLK Center the night before and set up the stations in the manner necessary for electrical outlets, a copy machine and copying services were provided in gratuity (many thanks to B & B Office Systems and Greg Gantt), there were two registration tables and several outside line monitors with clip boards who sent 10 to 20 participants into the fair at a time (many thanks to Jackie Johnson-Hart and her volunteer team), vendors were met with a package of essential documents for the day including a lunch order form (thanks to Candasy Tolbert and Sue

Debose for their extraordinary efforts in this regard), I can't name everyone but I must thank my mother, Annie Doris Roberson and her volunteer team for setting up the Clothes Closet and managing to dress participants in business attire which actually earned at least one participant that I know of a job onsite. Capt. Lonnie Scott who led the taskforce and the food team the entire day deserves a great debt of gratitude.

The Gainesville Job Fair 2013 had over fifty-eight vendors and nearly one thousand participants this year. There were testimonials of people getting jobs onsite, interviews being scheduled onsite and for the coming days, ex-offenders getting job offers and interviews for jobs, many one on one conversation with the vendors on the smooth and successful organization of the day and so much positive energy throughout the day. In conclusion, my district zip codes in 2012 had over 13,000 jobless citizens, In 2013 we had 4,400. We clothed over 140 people in professional attire. We fed both the fifty-eight vendors and the one thousand participants. On a personal note, I was awed by the comradery observed of the managers and administrators in the lunch serving line creating plates of food for the vendors and participants. Their's was a seemingly ministry of service. Many thanks to Commissioners Chase and Bottcher for dropping by to lend their support.

Sent from my iPad