



Man, staff help people who were jailed find jobs

Written by

Karen Maserjian Shan
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

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Employment specialist Ernest Henry has found jobs for 13 people since October.

That's quite an accomplishment in this economy. It's even more of one when you consider that each of the newly employed has had run-ins with the law.

"It's not finding the jobs; it's not finding employers who would be willing to hire you. It's about your personality and how you connect with people and how you can sell the idea to them," said Henry, who works on behalf of Dutchess ReEntry through his employer, The Osborne Association in Poughkeepsie, which provides services for incarcerated people and their families.

"I have found that there were common grounds between people who are in prison and people who are not in prison," Henry said. "We all have the same wants and needs."

The federal Department of Labor reports there were 3.1 million wage and salary jobs in employment services in 2008. On the whole, those working in the industry are

younger than in others, with 41 percent under age 35 as compared with 35 percent of all workers.

Employees of placement and temporary help agencies typically include employment interviewers, administrative support workers and managers. A standard work week is common.

Henry began work as an employment specialist in July after The Osborne Associates took on the Dutchess ReEntry program that works to help re-establish formerly incarcerated individuals successfully into local society.

Henry, who worked as an assistant to Osborne's program director in Beacon, trained for his position by completing a three-day course on employment strategies for job seekers with criminal histories. He also spent a week working under employee specialists at Osborne's Brooklyn site, which had an a workforce-development program in place.

Advertisement

An advertisement for SkinIt, a company that sells skins for mobile devices. The ad features a smartphone and a laptop with custom skins. A large "15% OFF" badge is prominently displayed. Text in the ad includes "Make it Yours™", "Browse thousands of designs for over 3,000 devices.", and "Get 15% off with code: SAVE15". A "Browse Designs" button is visible at the bottom left, and the "skinIt" logo is at the bottom right.

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Through it all, he learned how to talk with job candidates and prospective employers, plus to deal with emotional and mental barriers, as well as the kinds of companies most likely to hire people with a criminal past.

"Basically, when you get down to the nitty-gritty, the only thing that you're doing is connecting the needs of people," Henry said. "This employer needs a good employee; this employee needs a good job so that he can support his lifestyle."

To that end, Henry put together a six-week Soft Skills program in which up to 15 job candidates attend two-hour sessions once a week on skills assessment, résumé writing, job searching, interviewing and job security.

The federal Department of Labor says that the employment services industry is expected to grow 19 percent between 2008 and 2018, compared with the 11 percent growth projected for all industries combined. Temporary help agencies, the largest sector in the industry, are expected to do well, as are employment placement agencies since many employers increasingly prefer having outside agencies perform preliminary screening of candidates.

Intern Luis Nobondo, 29, of Newburgh works with Henry and helps job candidates write résumés and do job searches. After all, he said, it's his business to help neighbors in need.

"I draw from them what they're good at — their skills, their talents, their interests — and incorporate that into a personalized résumé for them," said Nobondo, who's working toward his bachelor's degree in sociology from the State University of New York at New Paltz.

Henry said helping others find a job requires a strong desire to make a difference, as well as the ability to relate to people and their needs.

"We cover the basics," Henry said. "You can't play the game if you don't know the rules."

The "On the Job" feature appears the first Tuesday of every month. To suggest a job, email biznews@poughkeepsiejournal.com or call 845-437-4836. Karen Maserjian Shan is a freelance writer. Reach her at mkshan@optonline.net.

Ernest Henry

Age: 49

Advertisement

An advertisement for SkinIt, a service that offers custom skins for mobile devices. The ad features a smartphone and a laptop, both with custom floral and abstract designs. A large "15% OFF" tag is prominently displayed in the upper right corner. Text in the ad reads: "Make it Yours™", "Browse thousands of designs for over 3,000 devices.", and "Get 15% off with code: SAVE15". A "Browse Designs" button is located at the bottom left, and the "skinIt" logo is at the bottom right.

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Title: Employee specialist
Education: Bachelor of Science degree in organizational management, Nyack College; master's degree in urban ministry, New York Theological Seminary
Training: Workforce Professionals Training Institute, on-the-job

On the job
Job: Employment services
Education-training: Qualifications depend on the occupations the employment agency specializes in placing. Most managers have college degrees; an undergraduate degree in personnel management or a related field is the best.
Earnings: In 2008, earnings among nonsupervisory workers were \$15 per hour and \$504 per week.
— Source: U.S. Department of Labor

Advertisement

Make it Yours™
Browse thousands of designs for over 3,000 devices.
Get 15% off with code: SAVE15

15% OFF

Browse Designs

skinIt

The advertisement features a central image of a laptop with a floral skin, a smartphone with a patterned skin, and a tablet with a dog skin. A 15% off tag is positioned in the upper right. The text "Make it Yours™" is at the top, followed by promotional text and a code. The "skinIt" logo is at the bottom right, and a "Browse Designs" button is at the bottom left.

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