

Forty-two businesses eager to hire at Walker Spring Job Fair

by Joe Sherman Rotary Spring Job Fair chair | Posted: Wednesday, April 6, 2016 8:00 am

The Spring Job Fair April 15-16 will be held at BlueWater Lodge near Walker. It is presented by the Walker Rotary Club, Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce and Cass County Economic Development Corporation, underwritten by Bank Forward and Leech Lake Gaming Division (Northern Lights and White Oak Casinos).

Forty two diverse businesses will be sponsor booths that will be open Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.. Light refreshments will be served, and everyone is welcome to attend.

All information is listed on the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce website at www.leech-lake.com. Bluewater Lodge is located three miles south of Walker on Highway 371.

Over the past few years I've noticed that many businesses have been unable to fill their job openings, but at the same time I've heard job seekers comment that they can't find a decent job out there or can't find out what else is available in the marketplace.

One of the barriers people have mentioned is that they don't feel comfortable walking down Walker's Minnesota Avenue or knocking on doors in Akeley or Hackensack. Many people stated that if all the employers pooled together, it would be much easier and less expensive than driving around to look for a job.

Walker Rotary is known for assisting youth, particularly at the local school, with programs and financial support. The Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce helps businesses communicate with the general public. The Cass County Economic Development Corporation was a natural addition to this partnership, which will offer a one-stop job fair to meet the needs of those seeking full-time, part-time, seasonal or year-round employment, from youth to senior citizens.

Rick Rothausen, retired former Leech Lake Gaming comptroller and chief financial officer for Red Lake Gaming, will serve as one of three job skills advisors. Rothausen's 60-year working career included a paper route in grade school, a bowling pin setter in high school, many part-time jobs while attending school and several full-time positions after graduating from college.

"During much of my career, I was responsible for hiring people for the organizations where I worked. What I looked for in applicants was enthusiasm, being presentable, being able to explain why they wanted the job, having curiosity about the job and qualifications," Rothausen said.

"I encouraged applicants to look at the job as if they were working for themselves, set some goals about what they wanted from the job and take pride in how they did it. The reason ... was so they

could have a sense of accomplishment in what they were doing. I believe this to be as important as the money they are making. I encouraged them to look at this job as a step in building a career and taking control of their lives. Once that's done, you are in a strong position to overcome whatever barriers you may encounter. Also, remember that a huge percentage of success is showing up."

All businesses are located in the Walker, Hackensack and Akeley areas. Positions include sales, stocking shelves, manufacturing, shipping, restaurant service, cooks, health care, assistant management, unskilled laborers, IT, school employees, electronics, coaches, delivery, social work, bookkeeping, work crews, resort workers, drivers, custodial and many more.

All three job skills advisers have extensive backgrounds in employment and helping people find a suitable job. Applicants should bring copies of their resume or a letter that talks about themselves and what they can contribute to a job. Dress for success, since first impressions may make the difference in landing a job.

"I'm new to this area, and I see so many people who don't have jobs, like senior citizens and high school kids," said Sherren Foss, Rotary member and church and school volunteer. "Volunteering with the Rotary Reading Program and meeting people at our schools has opened my eyes to the need for a job fair. High schoolers at our church have also asked if I know anyone who is offering summer work. There is definitely a need in our local community, so these people don't have to travel clear to Brainerd or Bemidji to look for a job."

The job fair is a way for young people to meet future prospective employers and network with others. Knowing there are job opportunities here in their future may help attract and keep younger generations in our local communities.