

FIFTY-plus LIFESTYLE+

Working: Prime50.com Over 50 wanted

BY JOHN HUMPHREY
Special to The Star

Despite the fact that they are generally valued for their knowledge, experience, loyalty and dependability, the perception is that employees 50 and older are not as likely as younger workers to keep current on new developments in their field.

This belief can act as a roadblock to older workers looking to change jobs or get back into the workforce in 2005. However, by utilizing modern technology, an employment agency is attempting to help older workers keep those weekly or bi-weekly paycheques coming in.

Prime50 is hoping to serve as a catalyst for change in the workplace by dispelling the myths and false perceptions of the 50-and-over age group. The only known service of its kind, Prime 50 utilizes its website at prime50.com to create employment opportunities for the 50-and-over age group in addition to providing them with a variety of career services that will give them the tools to enhance their marketability in finding a job.

Prime 50 area general manager Doug Webb joined the company last fall because its objectives were similar to those of his own.

"I decided to join because I could certainly relate to and empathize with both the goals of the company and the people they serve," relates Webb. "I had to close my own wholesale business a year and a half ago, and I was out looking for a job myself."

The 57-year-old Webb's territory with Prime 50 encompasses not only Windsor and Essex County, but stretches out to Kent County as well.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about workers who are 50 and over," Webb contends.

There are beliefs that these older workers don't possess the computer skills, project the dynamic image wanted by companies, and won't stay on the job long.

Webb adds that other pre-conceived notions about older workers include

the beliefs that they will make younger managers uncomfortable, don't have an MBA, are overqualified and will take more sick days off.

Although Webb is still in the midst of compiling a significant client list that he can market to employers, he claims there is no shortage of workers who can utilize his company's services.

"There are many former Big Three employees locally, and a lot of them have lost their jobs due to downsizing or outsourcing or they have taken early retirement buyouts and have retired in their early 50s," Webb says. "After a year or two of retirement, many of these people are getting the urge to go back to work and are looking for a reason to get up in the morning."

Workers interested in full time, part time, temporary or contract work, can post a resume or search job postings but must first register to become a Prime 50 member. Existing job seeking members can log in to search jobs, edit or post resumes. Employers looking for workers pay a fee to browse Prime 50's lineup of experienced workers.



Doug Webb

While there currently is no charge for job applicants to utilize Prime 50's Internet services, Webb says there will be a fee down the road for persons who have used his company's services to secure a job. "It will be an affordable one-time fee only."

Webb adds that his company provides professional assistance with resume writing and will be eventually offering local workshops and seminars in how to improve workers' skills. Other services will include career counseling, coaching and image consulting.

"We are here to help older workers," Webb says. "We are achieving this by putting your experience to work."

Reford Sanford, shown melting silver to pour into a mold to make a ring, teaches the jewelry class at the Center for Seniors. Everything that is made is sold to raise money for more equipment. Insert shows some of the finished jewelry pieces.

- A.J. Britton
Special to The Star



Seniors centre for young at heart

"Join the senior centre? Not me, that's for old people." How many times have you heard that comment - perhaps even said it yourself?

It's funny how throughout life, the word senior reflects honour and respect until it is associated with age. When you're in high school and college, being a senior means you have been there for a while and know the ropes. If you're the senior partner in a business, you definitely are something special! When you're the senior official in a club or for an event, you are the one responsible for the final decisions and have been selected because you have the skills and abilities to handle this responsibility.

So why such a negative connotation around the word when it applies to people over 60?

If you visit any seniors' centre in the province you will find that it is a centre of activity, creative opportunities, friendship and just plain fun. Having a wide range of programs, activities and services from which to choose is largely because the population served spans two generations - from ages 50 to 100.

Centres for Seniors Windsor is no different. At its two locations, there the recreational activities that one usually associates with a seniors' centre such as dancing, tai chi, exercise classes and yoga. But there are opportunities for following creative pursuits that you maybe never dreamed of before retirement.

At the McEwan Avenue Centre classes are offered in lap-

idary (stone polishing) and silversmithing where you can learn to make jewelry.

Perhaps you have always wanted to exercise your creative talents through oil painting? There are classes at both centres to help you realize your dream.

A Travel Club that plans to organize trips to world-wide destinations has just been formed. Opening soon at the McEwan Avenue Centre is a woodworking shop where the hobbyist who enjoys working with wood, or the neophyte who would like to learn, can produce unique wood projects.

Because learning is a lifelong interest with many people, informational seminars by guest speakers, on topics of interest to the over-50 crowd, are scheduled throughout the year. The McEwan Avenue Centre has a large resource centre including a number of computers with Internet access for surfing the Net or keeping in touch with children and grandchildren living hundreds of miles away.

What do you think? Are seniors' centres "just for old people," or do they provide exciting opportunities for people with strong spirits, young hearts, active minds?

Ellen Hope is executive director at Centres for Seniors Windsor.



BY ELLEN HOPE

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