

News

Job fair attracts more than 90 Valley teens

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ALICIA ARMSTRONG, 17, fills out an application for Sonoma Market during the inaugural Sonoma Teen Job and Career Fair held last Wednesday. Bill Hoban/Index-Tribune

Applying

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Calling it an "unprecedented success," Osias Encarnacion, event coordinator for the inaugural Sonoma Teen Job and Career Fair, is planning a bigger event next year.

"This event was put together in under five weeks, and there wasn't enough time to notify all the local businesses. I'm planning on a much larger event next year complete with keynote speakers and plenty of notification time for local businesses," he said.

More than 90 Sonoma Valley teens attended the event; with 18 local businesses and nonprofits in attendance.

"It was great to see the cultural mix of teens who attended the event," local athletic instructor Anastasia Encarnacion of Agua Caliente Aquatic Center said. She was impressed with the professionalism and level of enthusiasm of the teen attendees. "It's not going to be easy to recommend the top candidates from all the wonderful teens who I met that afternoon," she said.

The event focused on both summer jobs and long-term career opportunities within the various industries represented. The Sonoma Market booth, which donated food and drinks for the teen

attendees, was busy throughout the event; as teens filled out job applications and discussed job opportunities with the local staff.

Sheana Davis, owner/operator of The Epicurean Connection, recently filled her two summer job positions, but in the spirit of Sonoma cooperation, attended the event to represent five other caterers in Sonoma Valley.

She asked the teens to send in their résumé by Friday when she will forward them to the hiring managers for the different catering companies. During the hurricane relief operations in New Orleans, Davis ran a restaurant job placement center; assisting young adults hit by the hurricane to write résumés and apply for local restaurant jobs.

The participating businesses and nonprofits included Mary's Pizza Shack, Social Advocates for Youth, Sonoma Ecology Center, Saddles at MacArthur Place, Maya Restaurant, Sonoma Developmental Center, Valley of the Moon Teen Center, Operation Youth, Sonoma Valley High School Career Center, Creekside High School, The Epicurean Connection, Sonoma Market, Sonoma Valley Hospital, Hanna Boys Center, Agua Caliente Aquatic Center, Sonoma Valley Bank, Stand By Me Mentoring Alliance and Baksheesh.

"Several local businesses gave me an earful for not providing enough notice about the job fair," said Osias Encarnacion, who is also the board president of the Valley of the Moon Teen Center and participating member of the Sonoma Valley Youth Employment Coalition.

National and state agencies such as the California Conservation Corps were also very interested in attending.

Encarnacion said he was touched with the overwhelming response from local business and nonprofit in support of teen jobs and career opportunities. "It's wonderful to provide an opportunity for local businesses and teens to interact and make connections," he said.

The Valley of the Moon Teen Center is open from 3 to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, with extended hours for scheduled events. A complete list of programs and services can be found on the Web site at www.vomteencenter.org.

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