

# Holiday Job Seekers Find Success

The Black Voice News

INLAND EMPIRE

**Word from many retailers: 'Don't call us...we'll call you'**

By Chris Levister

When childhood friends Faron, Temika and Izaak lost their jobs at a neighborhood postal center in December 2008 they didn't sit back and wait for help. Instead they flooded the job market with resumes, performed a lot of computer mouse moves and burned up plenty of shoe leather looking for work.

Picking up a few extra dollars by working in the mall during the holidays didn't pan out so the trio turned back to what they knew - the shipping business. Now thanks to persistence and growing online holiday shopping projections, they have something in common: They have jobs moving the mountain...the mountain of holiday packages that is - expected to flood the conveyor belts of mega shippers FedEx and UPS starting the middle of November.



**Mega shippers UPS and FEDX gear up for what promises to be a dismal holiday season. With unemployment nearing record highs holiday job seekers are flocking to temp job bellwethers like shipping, catering and entertainment.**

According to a survey by America Online and eBay, more people are likely to shop with their computer mouse this holiday season, spending larger percentages of their holiday budgets online than ever before.

"Those packages have got to get from the retailer's warehouse into the hands of big and little elves and Santa's in tact and on time," said Faron a college student who in the past worked holidays at the U.S. Post Office's regional depot in Redlands.

"On my resume I put 'experienced shipper, big strong arms, knack for conquering chaos, paper cuts no problem', referring to the traditional rite of passage - paper cuts incurred during the breakneck hustle of wrestling boxes onto conveyor belts at the height of the holiday season."

A year of bankruptcies, and store closings and expectations for a second straight dismal holiday season have big retailers treading cautiously on the seasonal hiring front. According to the latest survey from outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas, retailers are likely to add fewer than 400,000 temp jobs during the holiday

season, barely more than half the number the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported were added in 2007.

Securing one of the dwindling number of jobs will be a lot tougher than it was during the era of crowded malls and high employment. Back then, scoring a Christmas time job required little more than showing an eagerness to work and legible handwriting on the application. But with 15 million people out of work, including roughly 1.8 million with retail experience, stores have a big worker pool to choose from.

"With a deep and talented labor pool, retailer and other employers undoubtedly feel they can afford to be selective. Job seekers will have to bring their A-Game," says Challenger, Gray, CEO John Challenger. That means being flexible in your choice of hours, with a willingness to work overtime, among other things.

Challenger notes, holiday job seekers might find better success in other areas like shipping, catering and entertainment.

Caters and entertainers are lining up to cash in on Americans pent up urge to let

loose and party, says Jamie a software engineer and part time Dee-jay. "I've been lining up 'jams' for office parties since June."

Many employers who once pulled out the stops on holiday parties are cutting back on holiday entertainment and being picky about eating into profits.

"Expect to see more potlucks and elegant catered small group events," said Lance Gilbert an unemployed chef whose new ethnic catering business is booming in the early run up to the holidays.

"Businesses want good food and elegance for less. With the downturn employers are in short saying 'don't call us - we'll call you'. It's a tough job market for sure but there are plenty of niche jobs. Simply put, says Gilbert, you've got to reinvent yourself. Take a risk. I never thought serving up my grandmother's southern recipes would get me through economic hard times," he said

"When one door closes another door opens. You've just got to be ready to walk in."

## PRICES

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pers in their stores."

Shoppers like Liz Garcia, an out of work bookkeeper, welcome the competition. "When you don't have a job, how you shop changes. You look for bargains. Every penny counts." Garcia used to buy only brand names. No more. "I'm buying more store brands and items with manufacturer's discounts - that's double savings." She's also using coupons. "I used to snicker at people who clipped coupons. Now I'm one of them."

At Target new mom Willie Mae Gibson found a deal on diapers. "Rambo - Pampers on sale," she said texting her neighbor after hoisting three packs of diapers into her cart. Gordon says thanks to the Internet, shoppers are more savvy and aware of where the best deals are.

"The Internet has forever changed the way people shop. The competition is ferocious because there's loads of good choices now," said Gibson. "You can go online and look up store ads. In fact she said a friend e-mailed her the tip on sale priced diapers. "I've got a jobless husband,

two teens, a toddler and a new baby at home."

Economists say the heated competition is being fueled in part by the steep decline in commodity prices following a year of sticker shock increases. The price of corn for example is down more than 50 percent since July 2008 on the Chicago Board of Trade. Such declines have helped drive down the grocery consumer price index, which measures what shoppers pay at stores. Over the past 12 months overall consumer prices have fallen 1.5 percent, according to new data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Not everyone is price shopping. "We only buy turkey once a year, so I've never really looked at the prices," said Dan O'Connell of San Bernardino who was picking up a turkey with his wife, Nancy. "I think with all the prices so similar, you'll end up seeing brand loyalty. People will just go where they normally go."

82-year-old Betty Fiske of Highland, who was picking up a 12-pound Butterball turkey said she didn't shop around for the best price and wasn't planning on changing anything from last year.

welcome relief for families who are looking to save money as they cope with stagnant incomes, job loss and economic uncertainty said Amos, a mechanic holding several bags of toilet paper he purchased from a discount store in his Fontana neighborhood.

"I plan to buy food for Thanksgiving dinner at Stater's but I'll get my paper goods, toiletries, and produce from the \$1.00 store. You can pay .99 cents for Bounty paper towels compared to spending \$1.99 a roll at say Ralph's. It's not like toilet paper will expire or spoil."

"I think it's a good thing, the competition" said Sue Renny. Renny who plans to buy her Thanksgiving turkey and fixings at Cardenas, a growing chain of Hispanic food markets.

In January the chain headquartered in Pomona moved into a shuttered Alberson's market on 40th Street in San Bernardino.

"The place stayed vacant for a long time, now you can't find parking around here anymore," said Eva Lee, a dental assistant who works in the shopping complex. "The store is always packed. Cardenas is shaking things up for the big guys," she said. For us little guys, it's a good thing."

## MHD

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spoke in support of the project citing that it will bring jobs, "good white and blue collar jobs," to an area that is in need of employment. Sykes was joined by other community leaders and commended for his leadership.

Dr. Monte Perez, President of the Riverside Community College, Moreno Valley campus, also supports the development saying that the campus, "spells opportunity for Riverside and Moreno Valley students," the majority of whom are minorities. The RCC Moreno Valley campus has the largest Allied Health program in the region with a 100% job placement rate. The development, he told commissioners, would not only help the college

build on its current program, but will allow them to expand and open new programs in policy, research, training, and education.

Representing Moreno Valley physicians, Dr. Bakhtiar Ahmad remarked that Moreno Valley has no community hospital since Kaiser bought the old Moreno Valley Community Hospital, but as physicians, "we are committed to serving them." He sees the campus and its hospital as continuing that legacy of service.

Like others who spoke in support of the project, Jamil Dada, National Workforce Development chair and March Air Museum president, focused on jobs and what the project represents to a community suffering from double-digit unemployment. "This should be about we the people, we the education leaders, we the spiritual leaders, we

the medical professionals. This is for our parents and our children. And in the future this will make a difference between life and death," he said.

During public comment most speakers voiced support of the project. Moreno Valley resident Daryl Terrell spoke passionately about the project describing it as a "beacon of hope" for a community living in a sea of foreclosures and battling gridlock traffic to get to jobs, for those who have them. He said, "we don't mind traffic that creates jobs for a change," in reference to the commissioner's questions about traffic mitigation issues in the project's Environmental Impact Report.

"The March Healthcare Development is giving this community a reason to hope again," Terrell said.



Photo by Ted Nevills  
Commissioners Melendrez, Yarbrough, Stewart, Batey, and Busch vote unanimously to approve the MHD project. (Commissioner Supervisor Marion Ashley participated via telephone).



Photo by Ted Nevills  
Members of Cross Word Christian Church filled the audience to hear the vote.

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