

## New State Fair attraction: Helping Iowans find jobs

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Tanya Campbell went to the Iowa State Fair on Thursday with a purpose, and it wasn't to eat a corn dog or see the Big Boar. She went to find a job, or at least to gain some tools to land a new position.

Campbell, who lives on a farm north of Dayton, came to Central Iowa Works Day, a new event that included a town hall meeting on work force issues, a free career assessment, and a resume on a stick - a flash drive loaded with career resources.

The 9 a.m. town hall meeting was kicked off by Steve Chapman, chairman of ITA Group and chairman of the board of Central Iowa Works, a work force development initiative.



Resumes on a stick were available Thursday at the Central Iowa Works exhibit on the Grand Concourse. The stick contains a flash drive that has tips for building a successful resume.

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"Central Iowa Works is about bringing business, schools and agencies together to help people connect to find new jobs," Chapman said.

Chapman and others fielded questions and comments from the crowd of about 50 people.

One of the attendees, John Strong of West Des Moines, brought up the concerns of older adults who lack sufficient computer skills. Shannon Cofield, president of United Way of Central Iowa, suggested calling 211, an information hot line that offers free training resources. He was also told that the 55 Iowa Workforce Development offices around the state offer free digital training courses.



Katie Harrington of Kuder Inc., right, helps Diana Anderson of West Des Moines fill out a computerized career planning assessment. Anderson is looking for a job in information technology.

A harder question for the panel focused on the lack of transportation from the inner city of Des Moines to the far reaches of the suburbs.

"I grew up in the inner city," James Clark of Des Moines said. "I understand how frustrating it can be for those living there when most of the jobs are out so far and people lack good transportation."

In tents along the Grand Concourse, eight computer stations offering career assessments opened almost two hours earlier than the planned 9 a.m. Fairgoers lined up to take the free assessment by Kuder Inc., valued at \$35.

Kuder, which is in Adel, supplied the computers and staff to allow job-seekers to tap into the tool.

Wendi Olerich of West Des Moines completed the first step of the assessment and planned to go online to use more tools.

"It looks like it will be very helpful," said Olerich, who previously worked with stock traders at Principal Global Investors. "You receive several career path matches, then from there all kinds of examples for jobs.

"My first match was finance. That wasn't a surprise, but then I was provided with examples for jobs that I hadn't thought of before."

Job seekers who completed the first step of the assessment received resumes on a stick.

"We provided 400 flash drives that were then loaded with information from other agencies to help jump-start someone's career," said George Mosby, an operation and training officer with the National Guard.

Recipients have access to sample resumes and cover letters provided by Cassandra Halls and her company, 2 the Top-Career Advancement Strategies, and the other participating agencies.



Christopher Gannon/Register Photos

Steve Chapman, chairman of Central Iowa Works, a work-force development initiative, opens a town hall meeting on employment Thursday at the Iowa State Fair. He and others fielded questions from about 50 people who gathered Thursday morning at the fairgrounds.

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The activities were sponsored by 2 the Top, the Greater Des Moines Partnership, the National Guard, United Way and Des Moines Area Community College.

These agencies and others make up Central Iowa Works, a consortium launched in 2007.

"We are there to support those looking for work," said Rob Denson, president of DMACC. "Foremost we're dealing with hope by offering career planning tools and career assistance.

"We're working together, but business needs to drive this train forward. With better careers, there will be better incomes and better families."

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