

# Jobs Fair will cater to workers 45 and older

By Doug Funke  
STAFF WRITER

Older job seekers sometimes need a helping hand getting back into the workforce.

That's why Operation ABLE and the Southeast Michigan Older Worker Coordinating Committee have teamed to co-sponsor the eighth annual Ability is Ageless Jobs Fair Wednesday, May 4 at the Plaza Hotel in Southfield.

"It's absolutely, 100 percent geared for people 45 or older," said Kate Birmbrey White, corporate services manager for Operation Able, a non-profit employment/training organization in Southfield.

"Our main goal is to help the unemployed, but we don't want to restrain people who want to upgrade in any way, shape or form," White said.

There is no charge. Job seekers should come appropriately dressed with at least 20 resumes. Upwards of 70 employers are expected to attend.

No advance appointments are accepted. Job seekers may visit with whomever they desire.

"As a ballpark figure, I would say 20 percent of the people will get an interview or inquiry call after the fair," White said. "Probably half of those people will be made some kind of offer. Whether they accept is another whole ball of wax."

More than 2,000 job seekers are expected to visit the fair between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Pay ranges from minimum wage to executive level. White said jobs are available across the board, full time, part time, permanent and temporary.

"We have computer programmer/analyst (jobs), lots of clerical from very basic to administrative assistant work . . . lots of sales and customer service and in health care from medical biller to occupational therapist," White said.

One major benefit in providing a job fair for older workers only is to help them relax in what can be a stressful situation.

"I think they're very comfortable among their peers," White said. "There's no competition from younger workers. They don't feel like they're stealing jobs from their kids or grandkids. It's a special day just for them."

"The fair is only for those at least 45 years of age. Clearly, if employers didn't want them, they wouldn't be there. By their presence, they clearly value older workers," White said.

Manpower, a temporary service agency in Southfield, is a corporate sponsor of the fair.

"We talk to people, collect resumes and call people in later," said Alicia Tetzlaff, a Manpower recruiting specialist. "We're recruiting for everything . . . clerical, technical, skilled trades."

"They (older workers) tend to have a lot of knowledge, a lot of skill," she said. "They tend to be a lot more reliable."

Radio Shack, an electronics retailer with regional offices in Livonia, will be looking for sales people, said Mark Clarke, regional sales manager.

"One thing about the older workers — they're very disciplined and have a high level of integrity," he said. "They're probably good or better than anyone at human relations."

"McDonald's has done a good job of hiring older workers," Clarke continued. "We want to do the same."

Compunet, based in Farmington Hills, has openings for programmers, program analysts and technical data processors, said Camille Elliott, recruiting manager for professional services.

"We do many different job fairs," she said. "I don't think we choose for age requirements. We look at it as a means of getting qualified people in. We're looking for someone with good skills. Age is not a barrier."



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## Frankel from page 1F

Frankel's housing product now starts at \$215,000 and goes up to \$500,000. He generally builds 25 to 30 units annually, but expects to double that this year with the opening of Village Square.

The Frankel Organization employs 14 on a permanent basis. Two other key players are Mark Frick, who heads up construction operations, and Laurie Frankel, Herman's daughter who is in charge of sales and marketing.

"The reality is they're being trained to take over the entire operation," Herman said. "I'm not involved in the routine of day to day operations. I'm involved in product development. I do all (contract) acceptances."

What makes the organization tick? "Honesty and integrity are the first two words that come to mind," said Laurie Frankel. "Our homeowners really trust us and we give them reason to."

"It's visibility, accessibility and responsibility," Frick said. "That describes our philosophy of serving the customer."

"We all have piloted numbers," Laurie said. "I live in a Frankel community. We're very visible. Our office is here."

"We consider ourselves to be in the service business," Herman said. "I don't think most builders think that way. We may provide a product, but ultimately, it's a service, to meet the need of a homeowner."

The Spotlight Business Excellence Award was established to recognize overall achievement for design, marketing, customer service and business success.

Among Frankel's guiding business principles: finance from your own resources and don't grow too big.

"I've always been interested in security," he said. "We don't do more than we can afford. This is a dangerous business if you leverage."

I've never had a drive for bigness. You give up too much. You give up control and usually quality."

Robert R. Jones, a West Bloomfield residential builder, president of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan and a former National Spotlight Business Excellence Award winner himself, worked for Frankel for 18 years.

"He never once failed to share with me, teach me and help me learn the industry," Jones said. "He conducts his business with complete integrity and is a superb businessman."

Alan Strickstein, vice president of National Lumber Co. in Warren, nominated Frankel's organization for the award. Strickstein is both a supplier to Frankel and a buyer of a Frankel house.

"Their developments are really second to none as far as total development, from the architectural aspect to layout of the property," Strickstein said. "They don't leave any loose ends. They're honest with people they deal with."

Patrick M. Carmichael, a judge in the competition, complimented Frankel through a letter after the selection process.

"Your Spotlight Award entry was nothing short of a text book on how to run a successful building operation," Carmichael wrote.

Frankel, a former BASM president, was the local association's builder of the year in 1987. He enjoys sailing with wife, Barbara, and piloting an airplane. And computers.

Frankel isn't fussy about references.

"Ring any doorbell on any house we've ever built," he said. "I don't know how many builders can say they've been in the business over 40 years and never been in court with one of their customers."

## Alliance from page 1F

Another committee we have is workforce development . . . to increase the size, diversity and quality of the skilled labor pool. We sponsor a student chapter at Lawrence Tech, EMU, U-M to kind of promote the industry to students.

What do you see as the role of government in construction activity?

Landry: Economic development commissions are in states, in capitals, to bring business and maintaining existing business. They provide opportunities for us and others.

At times, government has to get involved in the infrastructure to allow business to enter an area. You can see highway bypasses developed to help business. Fees are paid back to the state by economic activity that occurs.

At times, you have to spend money to make money.

It depends on how you look at it. There's roles everyone has to play. By working together, you can better shape the future.

What are key issues facing your industry?

Landry: Construction has always been a high-volume, low-margin industry. One person is considered a good profit for a year.

The push has been to manage business effectiveness and not assume unnecessary risk. A lot of it is common sense, getting back to the basics.

Total quality management makes sense. People don't go to work and say, "I'll do a mediocre job today." But management sometimes accepts that. A lot is to get focus back so everyone is motivated to give quality . . . to talk with instead of at each other.

What is your outlook for the rest of the year?

Landry: We've been in a depressed market where the opportunity for building is not like it once was. But the economy seems to be expanding. The second half of the year, we think there will be more work out there.

U-M is in the midst of a \$210 million (building) program. Wayne State has a half dozen or so projects they've identified. Somerset North is talking about a \$100 million new facility.

Our own firm has identified over \$1 billion of projects in the planning stages in the metro area. Buildings can be planned, but if they're not funded, they won't be built.

If the economy stays the way it is and financing is available and there's no catastrophes we're aware of, then . . . I think we're going to have a good market at the end of the year. I guess contractors are eternal optimists. On a scale of one to 10, I see us at six now moving to eight later this year.

What about your company, specifically?

Landry: The type of building we do is really diverse. Each year it's different, it changes. Now, about 40 percent of the work we do is renovations.

What we find in the '90s is we're doing a lot of educational facilities, K-12 and universities, and health-care facilities. In the late '80s, we did a lot of office before it became saturated.

We do about \$125 million of business in a year. We have about 100 people on salary. Our payroll approximate probably \$4 million a year.