



Job-seekers flock to new discount store

By Ashley Gebb/Appeal-Democrat

2010-02-09 14:15:19



By the dozens they lined up more than an hour before the doors opened.

Cold but eager and résumés in hand, more than 100 job seekers lined up Tuesday outside 99 Cents Only on Colusa Avenue in hopes of snagging one of 56 jobs the store is filling. Employment at the store, scheduled to open March 11, will start immediately after interviews and orientation conclude today and Thursday.

The prospect of so many new local jobs gave Yuba City resident Josh Mata, 19, a little hope in a region that has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, he said.

"Not only does this mean a whole bunch of people getting jobs here, but it means they aren't applying for other jobs I am applying for," he said.

The 99 Cents Only is hiring part-time and full-time stockers, cashiers and management, among other positions.

"We are really excited to come to the community and help your local economy," said Alicia Quezada, human resources generalist for 99 Cents Only.

Judging by the turnout, residents were pretty excited, too, she said.

"People have been coming by every week to see when we open," she said. "I've had so many qualified people to choose from, I'm overwhelmed."

The applicants were a varied mixture of young and old, men and women in different versions of interview attire, from sweats to slacks, sneakers to dress pumps and blazers to do-rags. They smiled and shivered as they waited their turn for five-minute interviews.

Mata, on the job hunt for a few months, could not believe the turnout when he arrived around 8:45 a.m.

"I left with my brother for five minutes and ended up 15 people behind," he said.

He tried to not let the wait bother him. After all, it wasn't like he had a job to get to or anything, he said, smiling.

"I've waited in longer lines for game releases," Mata said. "If I wait five or six hours to spend money, why not wait a few to make money?"

Tracy Bubb, 32, of Yuba City has a full-time job, but employment is so precarious in this economy she has been looking for something more stable for several months. A store like 99 Cents Only that is expanding and hiring instead of closing and incurring layoffs is just what she is looking for, she said.

"It's finding that job security in a very insecure workforce," she said. "Especially with the economy, I don't want to become a statistic."

As a single mother, Bubb would not want to be caught off guard should something happen to her employment situation, she said. But the search is not easy.

Tuesday's interview was her first in six months of searching. She prepared as best as possible by researching the company and readying answers for why she wants to work there and what she could bring to the business, she said.

Most of all, Bubb tries to stay cheerful, especially since 99 Cents Only is a customer service job.

"If you don't have the right attitude, how do you expect to get hired?" she said.

Phillip Belser, 63, Nancy Belser, 46, and their daughter, Destiny Kilpatrick, 18, were united in their job search, cheering each other on as they went in for interviews.

Finding a job has been difficult because the family is Seventh Day Adventist and requires time off from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday each week. After the Belsers lost their jobs in December, they've had to sacrifice expenses such as a telephone and car.

"We're like scratching just to make it right now," Phillip Belser said.

"To go from \$60,000 a year to \$15,000 a year, that's just not acceptable in today's world," his wife added.

The family relies on food stamps and help from their church, and Nancy Belser is taking classes at the One Stop and working to become a licensed vocational nurse. But in this economy, even that may be a long shot, she said.

"We didn't really understand the effects until the last two years," she said. "Now, whichever one door is open, that's the one we're gonna take."

The 99 Cents Only interview event was coordinated with help from Sutter County One Stop, which is where the store will hold interviews today from 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Contact Appeal-Democrat reporter Ashley Gebb at 749-4724 or agebb@appealdemocrat.com.

© Copyright 2010 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)