

West Valley View

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LaidOffCamp returns to W. Valley

Jan. 7 event to help people gain confidence and find jobs

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IF YOU GO

We've all heard not to judge a book by its cover. Well, we shouldn't judge an event by its title, either.

LaidOffCamp SW Valley is much more than it might seem, and yes, the official title has the first three words running together.

"It's not just for the laid off," said Jan Whalen, who will be one of the presenters at the six-hour event Jan. 7 on the campus of **Estrella Mountain Community College**, 3000 N. Dysart Road in Avondale. "It's for those who want to be prepared in case it happens."

"It's for those laid off, underemployed or thinking of a change," said Jeff Swenson, another presenter at the free event.

One look at some of the presentation topics -the Truth About Stress, Surviving Financial Hardships and What Workforce Connections Can Do For You - is testament to the diversity of individuals this camp can serve.

"We have 18 different speakers and 20 sessions," said Sammi Curless, Avondale's economic development specialist, who is working as the event coordinator.

The event will run from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and features free breakfast, snack and lunch as well, Curless said.

This will mark the second LaidOffCamp SW Valley. The first was held Aug. 13.

"The first camp filled up real quickly," Curless said. It was limited to 150 attendees. This time, they raised the number to 200 and as of Dec. 29, 79 spots were still available.

"It's a neat collection of entities working together to help out citizens," said Swenson, who runs the Southwest Valley office of Maricopa County **Community College's** Small Business Development Centers on the EMCC campus.

A lot of folks

Besides representatives from EMCC and both the Buckeye Valley and Southwest Valley chambers of commerce, the camp is also organized by individuals from the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park and Tolleson.

LaidOffCamp is "a national movement that started in the San Francisco area," Curless said. "They are all over major, metro cities across the country."

The main goal of any LaidOffCamp is to help people find work, whether full-time, part-time,

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freelance or volunteer. And the camps themselves are run by, and presented by, volunteers.

"A lot of folks are passionate about wanting to help job seekers or those who were laid off," Curless said.

"I like the concept and I like helping people and I feel I have something of value I can contribute," said Whalen, who has spent 25 years as a presentation coach as well as penning the book *Rock Solid Confidence*.

"I'm more than willing to give up a Saturday to be a part of it," Swenson said.

All participants will first meet for breakfast and introductions in the **Community Room** at **Estrella Hall**, which is near the southeast end of the campus, and then everyone will walk over to five classrooms in Mariposa Hall, which is on the west end of the campus. All 20 presentations will take place in Mariposa Hall, with five running simultaneously, so participants can pick and choose which presentations best fit their needs.

"We have presentations on everything from how to use your network effectively to how to start your own business," Curless said. "How to work with a recruiter, how to handle stress, how to use technology and how it plays a part in job searches, how to handle financial stress, interview skills."

There are a few new presentations for the second LaidOffCamp SW Valley and they focus on helping veterans, Curless said.

LaidOffCamp SW Valley will also feature a resource center where attendees can have their resume reviewed, get information on benefits for veterans and find out about the Maricopa Skill Center and its career programs. EMCC's career exploration program, KUDER, will also be available to utilize.



Presentations for all

However, the gist of the day will be the 20 presentations. One of the sessions for veterans, dubbed "Rock Solid Confidence for Veterans," is being presented by Whalen.

"Fifty percent of the confidence we have comes from preparation and knowing who you are and what you'll give," Whalen said.

She will focus on helping the LaidOffCamp participants answer this question: What makes you unique?

"That is what I'm presenting in both of my presentations," she said. "We're focused on 'What do you bring to the table?'"

Swenson will give "a repeat performance on how to start a business," he said.

During the first LaidOffCamp SW Valley, he was told not to expect a big turnout for his presentation, and then, "the room was packed," Swenson recalled.

So his presentation returns for those who were unable to get in the first time and those new to the event, he said.

The business expert believes the success of small businesses is what will eventually turn the economy in the right direction, he said.

The biggest issue facing entrepreneurs is finding the capital needed to be successful, Swenson said. If you're not in a financially secure position, opening your own business is not the right option, he said.

Every presentation will help the attendees in some way, which makes Swenson just happy to be a part of it.

"A lot of people don't really know how to go out and find a job," he said. "[LaidOffCamp] is a great environment, very low key with casual attire. It is all about what we can do to help the attendees."

To reserve a spot, visit laidoffcampswvalleyjan2012.eventbrite.com.

For information, call Curless at 623-333-1412.

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