

Tips for stay-at-home moms rejoining the workforce

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

If you are like most people, you likely underestimate your skills as they relate to the world of work. If you have never worked outside the home or have been out of the workforce for a year or more, chances are you will need to prepare in advance for your return to employment. Discovering your skills is critical to employment, however, many do not know the true expanse of their skills set. A great place to begin is at the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO).

CAPECO works with WorkSource Oregon to provide job seekers the support needed to get the job. They offer many classes: Career Exploration and Identification of Employment Skills, Creating an Effective Resume and Cover Letter, Intro to Computers, Job Interview Preparation, and Pre-employment/work readiness in conjunction with the WorkSource Center. You can get more information online at www.capeco-works.org/employment or by calling 541-276-1926 or 800-752-1139.

WorkSource posts job listings



from employers in the area and often screens job candidates prior to sending them out to interview. WorkSource is your one-stop for gaining employment; they offer much more than just an application for unemployment benefits. To find centers across the state, visit worksourceoregon.org/home/worksourcecenters; there are three in Umatilla County.

Most employers are willing to train employees in the technical skills needed for the positions they have. They have a harder time finding employees who arrive on time, have good work ethic, are consistent and dependable team players and do not make excuses.

Any parent returning to work needs to develop a routine that allows you to meet the needs of

your child while remaining a dependable employee. This may mean ensuring back-up child care in case your regular child care is unavailable. Most employers understand that children get sick and accidents happen. But too many such instances will brand you as an undependable employee. It is better to plan for such things in advance than risk losing your job.

Many individuals look to the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for protection. You should be aware that FMLA protection only is available to employees after 180 days of employment with the same employer and typically requires documentation from a doctor if the duration of a child's illness goes beyond five days.

Your first step in the job search is to create a resume; almost all employers will request this from perspective employees. This one-page document (more if you have considerable experience) is your first chance to make a good impression. Again, CAPECO and WorkSource can help you accomplish this task. If you are more self-directed, check www.gcflearnfree.org/resumewriting for guidance in creating the resume that gets you noticed. Keep it short and to the point and above all be honest regarding your experience and skills. The same is true for interviewing – honesty is the best policy. Maybe you may lack some technical skills but are a fast learner and dependable; be open about your lack of experience but show you are willing to learn.

Interviewing is something most job hunters dread, but truly not



Strategies

something to fear. Prepare for interviews by learning what it is employers are looking for. Again, CAPECO and WorkSource are excellent resources; their staff can assist you in becoming comfortable talking about yourself through classes and mock interviews. Like many other things, interviewing is a skill that can be mastered with practice. As with the resume, honesty is the best policy. Don't oversell yourself, admit if you are rusty in certain skills but emphasize an eagerness to learn.

Fortunately, there are many free resources available to assist in your transition. You'll find a good one to brush up on skills or learn new ones at www.GCFLearnFree.org, a website from the GoodWill Community Foundation that offers courses and podcasts geared toward learning and career development. This site offers self-paced training in practically everything from reading and math skill improvement to technology.

Honestly, the most difficult part of returning to work for me was learning to take breaks – as a stay-at-home mom I was on duty 24/7/365 and often even had company while using the bathroom. Good luck in your transition to the world of employment!

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