

Thousands arrive for local job fair

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By Aisha I. Jefferson

The doors opened and thousands flooded in.

About 5,000 job seekers from across metro Atlanta converged upon the Georgia International Convention Center in College Park for the 13th Congressional District's Job Fair Friday.

"I didn't expect the turnout to be like this," Stone Mountain resident Mary Peterking said as she waited in line outside the center. The turnout was so large that job seekers had to take turns entering the hall where potential employers were set up.

Milwaukee resident Avis Goins flew in Thursday night for the event and said she hopes to have luck with at least one of the more than 125 businesses that were present.

"I have about 50 (resumes) - I'm prepared," said Goins, who currently works for U.S. Cellular. Goins said she is a phlebotomist and will be looking for jobs in both the medical and customer service fields. She said Georgia's warm weather is her primary reason for relocating.

The job fair also offered 30-minute workshops such as "Writing an Effective Resume," "Image Building and Dressing for Success," and "Successful Interviewing & Networking Skills."

Some of the employers that were present included FedEx, AirTran, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the U.S. Postal Service, Delta Air Lines and several city and county governments.

Marcia Henry, an employment marketing representative with the Georgia Department of Labor, said job fairs can be very effective and said Friday's event was one of the largest in the metro area.

"I would say a great percentage of our clients gain networking skills at job fairs," said Henry, who also is a certified resume writer and gave resume and cover letter tips to job seekers.

Job fairs also help generate a large pool of candidates for various Home Depot store locations, said Deb Erickson, a human resource manager with Home Depot.

"It's a great tool for us," she said. She said many job seekers could visit their Web site to find information on various available positions.

Thirteenth District U.S. Congressman David Scott, D-Jonesboro, who sponsored the event, said he is very pleased with the job fair's turnout and plans to make it an annual event. Scott said many of the job seekers live in Clayton and Henry counties, and he believes it will add to the vitality of various communities.

"At the core of our economy is jobs and employment, when you have people who are working, they are able to take care of themselves and contribute to the community," he said.

The Georgia Department of Labor preliminary March figures showed Henry County has a labor force of 82,381, with 3,616 unemployed. According to the finalized figures for February 2005, Henry had 3,749 unemployed workers from a labor force of 82,071.

During March, Clayton County had a labor force of 137,072, with 7,934 unemployed. In February, Clayton County had a labor force of 136,822, with 8,410 unemployed.

Rex resident Sabrina Marshall, 25, hopes to join Clayton County's working class once again. Marshall, who has been unemployed since March, has attended a few jobs fairs and said Friday's was among the best.

"It was very organized," she said. "There are a lot of companies here that I haven't seen at the other job fairs."