



NEWS RELEASE

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Education Goals Can Brighten 2009

The start of a new year is usually a time of hope and expectation, but the current economic downturn is making it hard for many people to feel good about what 2009 will bring. The rise in unemployment has people especially concerned about their jobs. Setting goals can help people overcome feelings of helplessness and fear, said Gilbert Hake, manager of Missouri's Career Center Services.

"People who are serious about finding better jobs —or just being more secure in the ones they have — need to take a good look at where they are, decide where they want to be and create some strategic goals to take them from Point A to Point B," Hake said.

Most people, he added, will need to include education goals in their plan for career advancement. That might mean getting a GED, obtaining more training or going back to school for higher education.

Dave Lankford, vice president of education for the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said getting that education can be a safeguard against unemployment.

"The more education and experience a person brings to the job, the more valuable he or she is to an employer, especially in a recession," he said.

Data from the Census American Community Survey shows that the more education workers have, the less susceptible they are to unemployment. In Missouri in 2007, the unemployment rate for workers with less than a high school diploma was 11.26 percent; it was 6.21 percent for high school graduates; 5.02 percent for those with some college or an associate's degree; and just 2.04 percent for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Here are five tips to help job-hunters and job-changers succeed in 2009 and beyond:

- 1) **Make the commitment.** Continuing one's education requires time and money — commitments that can seem formidable at first, said Kathryn Love, a spokesperson for the Missouri Department of Higher Education. "But the hardships of getting an education cannot compare with the hardships of not having one, such as losing a job or being stuck in a dismal career. The rewards are worth the sacrifices."
- 2) **Learn where the jobs are.** "With a tough economy and rising unemployment, it is especially important to base your career decisions on what jobs are in demand by employers," said Mike Waltman, a spokesman for the Division of Workforce Development. While some industries are laying off workers by the droves, others are clamoring for skilled workers. A good resource is the "Missouri's Hot Jobs"

report, available at www.MissouriConnections.org. The job search features on MissouriCareerSource.com also provide a great way to find hiring employers.

- 3) **Work with a coach.** “Goal-setting can be greatly enhanced by using some simple career assessment tools, such as interest and skills tests, and working with a career counselor,” said Diana Voelker, manager of two St. Louis-area career centers. “Missouri’s Career Centers are one place where you can find trained workforce specialists to advise you as you develop a career plan. Best of all, most of the career center services are free.” Missourians can find contact information and directions to their nearest Career Center on the Missouri Division of Workforce Development site, www.workforce.mo.gov, or by calling 1-888-728-JOBS (5627).
- 4) **Explore education options.** Whether in need of a GED, specialized training or a higher degree, Missourians have more education options than in the past, Hake said. Adults who are considering going back to school can search institutions, programs and degrees and learn about such options as distance learning at the Department of Higher Education Web site, www.dhe.mo.gov. Adults in need of basic skills can take advantage of the free Adult Education and Literacy Programs. These adult learning centers offer GED preparation and individualized instruction in basic reading, writing and math skills, plus help with interview and résumé-writing skills. More information is available on the Career Education section of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Web site, www.dese.mo.gov.
- 5) **Explore resources.** “There are a lot of dollars out there if prospective students meet eligibility requirements and make application deadlines,” said Kelli Reed, a financial aid associate with the Department of Higher Education. She suggested adults speak to financial aid officers at their targeted schools and check out the Department of Higher Education Web site, where they will find information on such need-based programs as Access Missouri and the Marguerite Ross Barnett Memorial Scholarship, both of which are open to nontraditional students.

“These five steps can help Missourians prepare for a better life,” Hake said, noting that education is key to opportunity and advancement. “There are lots of resources out there to help. People who want to succeed need to make a plan this year and stick with it.”

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More information is available at http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Neal Harrison.