



Spring Career Fair Offered Plenty of 'Win-Win' Match Ups

By Laura Byrnes

Look up the word “serendipity” in the dictionary, and you may find a photo of Jason Mooney next to the definition.

Serendipity – or the accidental discovery of something pleasant, valuable or useful – aptly describes the 17-year-old’s encounter with Al Jones who oversees management of AutoZone’s four stores in Citrus County.

The two met in late March during the sixth annual Citrus County Spring Career Fair, sponsored by CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and held at the College of Central Florida’s campus in Lecanto.

Jason, who graduates this month and has been homeschooled since the seventh grade, said the career fair was something of a “field trip” for him, something his dad urged him to attend. Little did he dream it might end up in employment following graduation.

That’s where Jones comes in.

“He never had a job, didn’t know the steps to getting a job,” Al told me. “But he’s obviously a bright, well-spoken young man.” That’s when he introduced Jason to Brian Conard, area manager for CareerSource CLM’s youth services provider, Eckerd Workforce Development.

Brian took Jason under his wing, ensuring he registered for services specifically designed for older youth – those 16 to 24 years old. Conard said Jason can end up with a professional customer service and sales certification. When he turns 18, also this month, that certification can help pave the way for paid work experience through CareerSource CLM or direct hire.

Chatting together, Al smiled and announced: “I’ve already said I’ll take him. It’s a win-win.”

It’s certainly a win-win for us, because helping employers find the qualified, skilled talent they need to grow and sustain their business, and by extension helping career seekers find good, gainful employment, is what we’re all about.

And it was certainly a win-win for Jason, who was one of nearly 100 job seekers who attended the fair.

“For this job, if I can take it all the way, I will – manager, whatever he throws at me,” he said.

Asked what he thought of his first career fair, Jason said, “It’s great. It’s perfect for everybody no matter what the job is, no matter who the person is. Everyone is in one place, it’s the perfect environment.”

Regions Banks’ Angela Jones, no relation to Al Jones, said her company participated in the career fair earlier in the week in Ocala as well.

“It’s a great opportunity to network and bring in the community,” she said adding that Regions is recruiting bank tellers, team leaders and branch managers. Jones said that one strong possibility is Julia Merchant of Citrus Hills.

Julia has only been on the job hunt for two weeks, since her company moved her position to Minnesota. Merchant, who has lived in Florida 15 years, prefers to remain in the Sunshine State.



A current MBA candidate at Johns Hopkins University, Julia describes herself as “pretty diverse” and is looking for professional-level office administration and project management positions. She has already met with the team at CareerSource CLM’s affiliate Talent Center and is enthusiastic about the experience and her prospects.

“You can’t just sit at home sending out applications online. You need that human connection,” she said, adding that you also need to “go to career fairs, do everything you can to network, register with Employ Florida and just get out there. There’s a lot to be said for pounding the pavement.”

All told, 21 local employers took part in the annual recruiting event. Frank Calascione, Citrus County business development manager, said it drew a “good mix of employers and good turnout of job seekers.”

Calascione noted that there were “on-the-spot hires” and multiple employers sent candidates out to the our handy mobile resource unit to apply online for positions.

Don’t worry if you weren’t able to participate, we typically hold a Citrus County Fall Career Fair, as well. Plus there are plenty of other, fee-free ways we can help meet your recruiting needs, such as hiring events exclusive to your business.

To learn more, call Frank Calascione at 352-249-3278, ext. 4206 or Jordan Steelfox at 352-249-3278, ext. 3206.