



Talent Center delivers top candidates for businesses looking for professionals

Four years ago next month, we held an open house for a keystone initiative designed to pave the way for a new level of job placement services.

The Talent Center, a joint venture between CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and the College of Central Florida, had quietly been operating at CF's Ocala campus since earlier in the summer but officially launched during the college's annual Club Rush Day.

Obviously, much has changed since then. But what hasn't changed is our partnership with CF, our core mission and the amazing caliber of job candidates.

Our partnership with CF grew from a renewed drive by the college to provide comprehensive placement services for their graduates along with our Board of Director's call for special services assisting professional and

skilled talent and our region's businesses that need that talent.

Talent Center offers fee-free staff assistance, resources and services to postsecondary students and recent grads -- whether they attend CF, Marion Technical College, the University of Florida or any other such institution -- as well as professional-level job candidates and businesses seeking highly-skilled technical talent regardless of where they live, work or attend school in our three counties.

Andrea Abrams, Talent Center manager, said she'd like "to let candidates and businesses know that we work with their needs in an individualized manner. Our approach is never templated in nature and we enjoy collaborating as a team to meet whatever the goal is."

During the past program year, which ended June 30, at least 91 candidates obtained employment through the Talent Center which was



Kim Strauch, Talent Center recruiter, working with job candidate Stephanie Philpot.



Andrea Abrams, Talent Center manager, working with a candidate.

also instrumental in coordinating several internships and On-the-Job Training opportunities. All services are available virtually by phone, email, Live Chat and online during COVID-related office closures.

Elizabeth James, a go-getter with a Master's degree, began working with Abrams last December. Abrams focused on finding the right career opportunity for James, a former security analyst for a small local firm, and preparing her to interview with ReliaQuest in Tampa -- a process that involved interviews by phone, video conferencing and in person.

James was hired in February and now works out of the company's Las Vegas office. She recently reached out to Abrams for help preparing for her first employee review.

"She loves what she does and sees a bright future with the company," Abrams told me. "The quote (from her) that sticks out the most is that she looked for a job for a year and got nowhere, but shortly after working with Talent Center, she was able to connect to a meaningful opportunity and get the job."

In 2019-2020, Talent Center staff also worked with 649 postsecondary students in our region -- pre-COVID-19 this was done in the classroom; since then they have supplied customized PowerPoint decks and have been offering feedback/work sessions via Zoom, phone or email. That includes students in the Professional Nursing and LPN programs, Elementary Education, Medical Administration, Information Technology and Engineering.

Efforts to help students put hire education in their higher education include sessions on managing their digital footprint, soft skills, interview strategies, developing physical and electronic portfolios and targeted resume development.

Nancy Webb-Abshier, CF business and technology professor, Faculty Fellow and chair of the Bachelor of Applied Science Program, recently expressed appreciation for ways the Talent Center "made a difference" for her Internship students.

"I cannot thank you enough for all of your help," she wrote, noting that the targeted resume workshop "has been the most impactful assignment for this group."

Webb-Abshier said one of those students, "so excited" to have been hired, told her his "targeted resume was a deciding factor in obtaining an interview and getting his job"

Candidate services include career counseling and coaching, job leads and referrals, resume assistance and interview preparation, skills and aptitude assessments, resources and other employability services as well as invitations to job fairs and hiring events.

Talent Center staff also work directly with employers to help them recruit, train and retain vetted professional and highly-skilled technical talent.

For more information about the Talent Center call 352-840-5762 or 844-364-9859.

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