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Jobs aplenty to be found at Employer Expo

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star

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Looking for a new career but don't know where to start? Then mark your calendar for May 13, when more than 70 area businesses and organizations that are looking to hire will be participating in [The Employer Expo](#) in Winchester.

Event organizer Vanessa Santiago, deputy director of the Winchester Economic Development Department, said over 700 attendees were at last year's expo, making it the biggest hiring event in the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

"It has the most diverse employers and it's the one that is most well attended," Santiago said. "We'll have white collar jobs and blue collar jobs — a little bit of everything."

Participating employers this year will represent a wide gamut of opportunities, ranging from public service jobs such as teaching and policing to private sector positions with retail, manufacturing and sales-oriented companies.

"We have staffing agencies, we have local government, we have manufacturing, we have administrative, we have construction work," Santiago said.

While previous expos have allowed businesses to conduct interviews on the spot, Santiago said the annual event has grown too large to do that anymore.

"What a lot of employers are doing is accepting resumes and information [from aspiring applicants] so that they can follow up," Santiago said.

For attendees who don't have a computer at home to submit job applications to potential employers, Santiago said: "We're going to have four computers there and volunteers that can help people apply for jobs on the spot. I really would like for people to utilize that."

Additionally, Spanish translators will be on hand to help anyone who needs it. There is no fee for the service.

Job seekers who attend The Employer Expo won't have any difficulty discovering the types of positions available because, when they arrive at [Shenandoah University's James R. Wilkins Jr. Athletics and Events Center](#), they will be given a packet of information that includes a complete list of exhibitors, the jobs they are offering, whether they are looking for full-time or part-time help, whether they would consider hiring people with criminal records, how they want applicants to apply and more.

Santiago said the expo will also offer mock job interviews so aspiring employees can prepare themselves for when they sit down with prospective employers.

"They can get their communication skills refined before they go," she said.

Attendees should dress professionally in order to make a good first impression with their potential new bosses, but that doesn't necessarily mean they need to don tailored suits, blazers, blouses or fancy shoes.

"You can look professional in jeans and a shirt," Santiago said. "But don't come with pajamas and Crocs."

Job seekers are encouraged to bring along a pen and a notepad to keep track of potential leads, as well as a bottle of water and a snack because they could be there for hours.

It's also important to bring along a resumé, Santiago said. For people who don't have one, or those who want to update and improve their existing resúmes, the [Virginia Works](#) office in Winchester is offering free resumé reviews and tips prior to the expo. To take advantage of the service, call 540-678-7079, email winchester@virginiaworks.gov or visit the Virginia Works office at 609 Cedar Creek Grade.

Winchester residents who don't have transportation to the expo are advised to book a ride through the city's WinReady bus service. People will be dropped off at Shenandoah University's main campus and taken to the expo in a shuttle. WinReady rides cost \$1.50 each way and you can learn more about the service at <https://bit.ly/42ksjyM>.

Santiago said she's looking forward to the Employer Expo, which will be held 1-5 p.m. May 13 at Shenandoah University's James R. Wilkins Jr. Athletics and Events Center.

"I love the energy every year," Santiago said. "I love seeing so many people coming in, and so many people leaving after making so many good connections. And I love it afterwards when I hear about the positions that the employers were able to fill afterwards."

For more information, visit liveloveshenandoah.com/employer-expo.

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