

Spring Truly Sprung with Hope at the Job Seekers' Garden Club's Transition to Position Career Conference

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The March 27th Job Seekers' Garden Club (JSGC) event was a veritable "Garden of Eden" for those seeking both knowledge and connections regarding the path to satisfying employment opportunities.

The Center for Specialized Services at 11828 Lackland Road was the site for the six-hour 'Matching Passion to Purpose' extravaganza, co-hosted by RockIt Careers.

It was fitting that the first person introduced to the nearly packed house was JSGC Founder and Executive Director, Bob Kolf. His contributions to the organization cannot be overstated. Since planting a seed in March 2020, the networking group he started gradually germinated into a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that has sprouted to well over 5,300 members.



Job Seekers' Garden Club Founder and Executive Director, Bob Kolf

Kolf was followed by an introduction of the non-profit's Executive Board members: Brian Young (CEO), Mitchell Mandel (President), Lexie Dendrinelis (Vice-President and event emcee), Ed Schmid (Treasurer), and Kay Kalra (Secretary). Also introduced, was the group's ten newly inducted ambassadors.

During the event, Sarah Snyder of SC Consultings provided event photography and Wendy Fitter, of Unleashed Music & Event Planning, kept the energy high with music during the day's breaks and lunch.

The conference's keynote speaker was Tri Pham, from Dale Carnegie of Missouri, who presented on *Translating Your Life's Purpose to a Job*. During his talk, he involved the audience with various activities, sparking many interesting conversations about creating a compelling vision for your career, using conversation to build a lasting impression, staying motivated during difficult periods of your life, and what makes a "successful person."



Attendees of the day-long Transition to Position Career Conference

Pham offered his own piece of advice: "Things can change very quickly. Don't give up!" Referencing his experience after losing his job in 2020 and heading back to Nebraska before being offered a job at Dale Carnegie in St. Louis just three months later. He is currently a Certified Senior Trainer there.

Following Pham's presentation, job seeker, Sally Matiszik, said that she was pleasantly surprised about how important skills and attitude are in defining success. "That's reassuring as a job seeker; especially with my pivot from being a restaurant owner for seven years to a return to B2B sales. I had asked myself, 'If I were not doing this job right here, right now, would it still be what I wanted to do today?' That question got me back into job seeking."

Also referencing Pham's talk, JSGC Ambassador, Joshua Maloney had this to say, "His presentation was a good overview of most aspects of job seeking. This was a good road map because positivity breeds success."

Maloney found his current position as Director of Sales and Growth with Guardex Home Maintenance and Repair through Job Seekers' Garden Club just a few weeks ago. "I became a group ambassador to be an example for other people. The group is so inviting and welcoming! It felt right to keep being with people who understand how frustrating the job search can be."



Buffy Peecher, JSGC member and Tri Pham, keynote speaker

During an intermission between main speakers, Janet R. Martin, who recently suffered a job layoff, shared her story, beginning with a moving musical rendition of "I'm a Song," written by her friend, Robby Wilson, bass guitarist for the country music band, Lonestar.

If that wasn't enough, Janet revealed how she survived and came out of a severely abusive marriage, reading several parts of her emotionally-charged chapter entitled 'God's Grace' in the book, *Breaking the Silence*. Her story of resilience and overcoming trauma served as an inspiration to everyone in attendance.



Joseph Mintzer of Insperity talking with Rick Ritthamel, Job Seeker Garden Club Ambassador



Presenter, Frank Alaniz

Shortly after Martin's inspirational story, Frank Alaniz, Workforce Consultant in AI and an "All Around Nice Guy," took the stage, presenting *The Power of AI in a Purpose-Driven Job Search*. He opened his talk by informing everyone that "AI will not replace you. A person who is using AI will."

From there, he went on to give useful advice on how to change job search strategies to beat the AI bots and algorithms in LinkedIn and applicant tracking systems.

Alaniz concluded his discussion by saying, "If you understand the process, you can be successful in the process." He also added that despite all the crucial steps to overcoming AI, "Networking will always be the best way to get a job."



Recruiter, Sophie Osterman from ATB Technologies, and Eraj Ansari, job seeker

After another networking break, Brian Young, of RockIt Careers, spoke on *Communicating Your Purpose Through Your Cover Letter and Resume*. During his presentation, he emphasized the importance of understanding what the company is looking for in candidates and showing how, as a candidate, you match their needs. He also discussed the pros and cons of each style of resume, what should be included in each section of a resume, and designing a resume for the human eye versus the applicant tracking system.

After going through all the details on resume writing, Young turned to the topic of writing cover letters. He explained that a good letter appeals to emotions, shows your uniqueness, and has a hook that makes readers want to learn more. He also mentioned that they should be personalized to the job and company itself, noting the value you would add to that company without being too lengthy.

"I was so excited to see the list of speakers; especially having one from Dale Carnegie," Matiszik added. "I was just blown away with the presentations! And it was so affordable with a charge of just \$10 that included a great catered lunch! If it wasn't for the Job Seekers' Garden Club where he (Pham) spoke, it would have been so expensive!"

Added to that, experienced leadership trainer Eva Henry announced she's offering 12 free workshops in person and virtual: "Networking can be difficult. It was for me. But everybody in this room is fighting for what's best for you!"

Other recruiters at the event included Jeanna Smith of Challenge Unlimited; Leah Harris of Unleashing Potential; Jeff Strasburg of MERS/Goodwill; Alicia Goetten of New York Life Insurance Company; David Halfmann of Executive Financial Group; Ragan Andrew of Adrift Tours & Travel; Mandy Kendall of Northwestern Mutual; Cheri Zink of Zink Enterprises, LLC; and Kenda Curativo, Director of Career Development and Work Incentive Practitioner at the Center for Specialized Services.

At the day's conclusion, Dendrinelis offered a quote from Thomas Edison. It was intended for the many job seekers in attendance: "Our greatest weakness is giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."