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Job fairs take time to plan

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Finding a job nowadays often takes months for many people. Sometimes it takes almost as long to organize the job fairs that seem to have grown in number during the economic downturn.

James Abron Jr., the manager at Augusta Career Center, said Thursday's job fair at the Georgia Department of Labor Augusta Career Center took months to plan and line up companies to participate.

"We want to make sure that we bring a variety of employers. We want to have employers that have multiple openings because we know that we're going to get a large crowd," he said.

It's also important to find a location with ample parking that is accessible to job-seekers, he said.

Abron's goal is to have one job fair in each of the eight counties represented by the Augusta Career Center. Last month, the center held a job fair in Columbia County.

His marketing representatives work with employers on a regular basis, so when it's time to hold a job fair, they simply call them and ask them to participate.

"They're happy to participate because to them, it's a win-win situation. They have an opportunity to look at some good, qualified applicants to fill the positions they have. It works out well for them," Abron said.

Timi Fletcher, the operations manager for the Augusta Industrial division of MAU Workforce Solutions, said Wednesday's job fair at Aiken Electric Cooperative Inc. took weeks to put together.

They expected a large crowd because MAU doesn't have job fairs in Aiken often and it also advertised the names of the employers, Fletcher said.

"You tend to draw more people if you advertise with your clients' names," she said.

Getina Cato arrived one hour before Thursday's Career Center job fair to set up her table with information about the open positions at Cintas Corp, a uniform and facility services company on Laney-Walker Boulevard. She was hiring for a maintenance supervisor and two service sales representatives. There were 1,300 people that came through the fair.

She's looking for applicants with qualifications and experience. Sometimes people don't dress professionally, but it's a great opportunity to find what you're looking for, she said.

"It gives me an opportunity to see candidates, so I can talk to them and explain what Cintas is. Any time you get at least one candidate, it's definitely worth the visit to the career fair," Cato said.

Sandra Yochum, the human resources consultant for Asset Management Analysis Group in Aiken, was looking to hire for 10-12 technical positions, such as engineering and IT, at Thursday's job fair. She said these events are useful to companies.

"We find some people that have the skills that we're looking for, and then there are others that are looking for opportunities that we just don't offer at this time," Yochum said. "We don't know if we're going to be able to fill all of our positions today, but we're glad to be here."
