**Hope for seniors struggling in the job market**

**SOURCEWISE SPECIALIZES IN HELPING LOW-INCOME SENIORS FIND WORK**

Published in the November 18, 2016 issue of Gilroy Dispatch.

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*View the original article:* this article was not published online.

Though the economy is improving, unemployment is still prevalent. If you are 55 or older, the prospect of finding a job can be quite challenging, but there is hope.

San Martin resident Dolly Poso, 55, experienced first-hand just how difficult securing a job can be for older workers. “I had been looking, but I was competing with 20 year olds,” Poso said, adding, “I’d find myself in this room with five other Barbie dolls, and think they’re not going to hire me.”

After a four-month search and six in-person interviews, Poso remained unemployed. “What was the most hurtful, actually, was I didn’t even get a call back saying we don’t want you.” That all changed when she met an older couple that experienced the same difficulty securing employment. They suggested she give Sourcewise Senior Employment Services a try. “I thought, what a great idea, I need the help, I’m calling,” said Poso.

After contacting the Morgan Hill branch, Poso was referred to the Sourcewise San Jose headquarters, where she enrolled in the program. It’s there that she met Sourcewise Senior Employment and Meals on Wheels director Henri Villalovoz, who explained that the Sourcewise program is a part of the Senior Community Service Employment Program, a community service and work-based job-training program for older Americans, authorized by Title V of the Older Americans Act.

The program provides training for low-income, unemployed seniors, and a transition path to unsubsidized employment (work that provides the worker earnings directly from the employer). “You help people, so when you go home in the evenings, you always feel fulfilled, “Villalovoz said. Both South County Sourcewise offices support Santa Clara County’s low-income, unemployed seniors by providing personalized career counseling and two types of job training.

The first is a 30-day, 22-session, home care classroom course taught by a registered nurse, a CPR instructor, and a certified first aid technician.

Upon completion of the class the attendees receive CPR and first aid certificates from the state, in addition to a Sourcewise certificate of completion. Villalovoz said that home care companies are very interested in recruiting Sourcewise graduates. “We have at least an 85 percent placement rate,” Villalovoz said.

The second option, and the one Poso chose, is an on-the-job training program with Host Training Agencies, which provides workers to 20 or more community-based organizations including Heart of Silicon Valley for Seniors, Second Harvest Food Bank, and work2future Foundation.

Sourcewise’s agreement with these organizations provides supervised on-the-job training and mentoring to the Sourcewise trainees.

Trainees work 16 hours per week at the host agency for minimum wage, which is paid by Sourcewise. This provides them the opportunity to reenter the workforce and refresh their job skills, while continuing to search for full-time employment.

“That’s part of the program, to keep active and continue looking, and keep your resume updated, and keep sharpening your skills, and try and learn anywhere you can,” Poso said.

“They gain their confidence and some contemporary job skills,” Villalovoz said, adding that it “hopefully leads the individual to gain the skills that will afford them an unsubsidized job. That’s my ultimate goal, to get them a job.”

It worked out that way for Poso.

“It gave me hope, because I felt just kind of like defeated. I was thinking, I don’t stand a chance.”

One week after signing up with Sourcewise, Poso was sent to the Gilroy office of Silicon Valley Independent Living Center (SVILC), where she works four hours a day, four days a week assisting her boss, Marysue DiTullio, 67, satellite services coordinator of SVILC.

Di Tullio is also a past participant in the Sourcewise on-the-job training program.

Nine years ago, after being laid off from her administrative assistant position, Di Tullio discovered Sourcewise through a small advertisement in the *Penny Saver* magazine.

Soon after she signed up for the program, Di Tullio was sent to the San Jose office of SVILC where she worked as an on-the-job trainee for a little over a year before being offered a full-time position with the organization she’d grow to love.

“This was a new filed completely, and the more I got to know about it, and what we did, I felt that it was very meaningful work, and something I wanted to continue to do,” Di Tullio said.

Di Tullio was sent to Gilroy to head up SVILC’s office seven years ago. “It really worked out, just answering that ad,” she said. “I think that Sourcewise is a really, really, good source, because they really give you an opportunity, and I think if you make it, if you have the skills and you continue to hone your skills, or to really focus in on what you’re good at, you can [succeed].”

Villalovoz believes that for unemployed seniors who feel there’s no place in the workforce for them at this stage of their lives, Sourcewise Senior Employment Services restores their confidence and provides hope that securing a job is still an option. “We’re all option counselors, we’re going to give them all these options and have them make their wise decision according to their needs,” Villalovoz said. “Everyone needs to know about Sourcewise,” Poso said.

“God willing, we’re all going to become seniors, I’ve already made it, but nobody prepares you for that little threshold, you just get kind of shot out there, and suddenly nobody wants you.”

*For more information about Sourcewise Senior Employment Services, call (408) 350-3221, or visit: mysourcewise.com/.*