

CORD

---Collaborative Organizations Responding to Dislocation

May 1, 2010

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Rob Phelps practices his culinary skills in the food lab at BTC's Central Campus.

ROB PHELPS BUILDS IMPRESSIVE RESUME

When Rob Phelps lost his job as a Replacement Operator at Lear Manufacturing in 2008, where he worked for 13 years, he was shocked, depressed, and asked 'why me?' Despite an excellent work record and being a good employee, he soon realized the job market was extremely tight with few possibilities, and despite his outstanding employment background and history, he couldn't sit on his hands and wait, so he became a 'tweener' (those who enroll between the start of the program and the next academic class) in Blackhawk Technical College's (BTC) Culinary Arts program.

He has learned and progressed very quickly. His current background not only includes the skills he's learning to become an excellent chef—he's honing related skills through supportive classes such as supervision, accounting, human relations, and similar courses. And he's also involved in many other activities which will 'beef up' his resume and employment possibilities. "BTC has been a real good fit for me," Rob said. "I've been involved in the Epicurean Club, am a Student Government representative, and have been involved in intercollegiate competitive events," he said. He was also invited and joined the Phi Theta Kappa honor society, for those carrying an overall Grade Point Average of 3.5 or better.

One of the most recent events was competing in the Wisconsin Restaurant Association's (WRA) Food Expo in Milwaukee, where his BTC team of five (with one alternate) took second among the eight teams competing. Rob and his team had to create a salad, appetizer, entrée, and dessert. Rob's section was in the appetizer category, which consisted of a poached sea scallop, vegetable fu yung, and a sea bass sausage, in addition to two complementing sauces. They were judged not only on the taste and presentation, but other factors like sanitation, skills, teamwork, communication and similar attributes. "We were very close to being first, but second place isn't too bad," Rob said.

However, Rob and his team decided second wasn't good enough—they followed up by capturing a first place at the Reinhart Food Show in mid-April, also in Milwaukee.

The extracurricular activities have helped Rob to network with those in his field, creating increased opportunities for future employment. Being featured on the front page of the *Janesville Gazette* in early March as they were preparing for competition didn't hurt either. "I had no idea we would be 'front page news' when they came out and interviewed us and took photos," Rob explained. He was also featured in a *New York Times* article last year.

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IF YOU HAVE AN INTERVIEW—BE ENTHUSIASTIC!

Most hiring managers agree—enthusiasm separates the winners from the losers. It can even be more important than experience. Other factors that can make a big difference:

- **Offer an appropriate greeting.** Stand straight, look them in the eye, and give a firm handshake while smiling. Thank them for interviewing you.
- **Show that you are interested in their company.** See if you can get a tour before or after the interview. Talk about their product or service. Go online to find out about them.
- **Dress appropriately.** For office jobs, a sport jacket or modest dress would suffice. For construction or other labor type jobs, clean field-type wear would be alright. If you're not sure, call them and ask.
- **Tell the manager that you want the job.** Don't be timid—let them know you're interested, a fast learner and will work hard for them.
- **Show respect for the manager/interviewer's position.** Address them as Mr. or Ms. unless they tell you different. Don't sit until you're invited to do so. Be sure to look them in the eye.
- **Have a reason for wanting to work for them.** Tell them why they matter to you.
- **Tell them why you can do it for them.** If they say you don't have a certain skill, don't give in. Tell them you always deliver more than what's expected and that you'll become one of their best workers.

And be sure to arrive early—never late! If something happens—call!!!

ROB PHELPS EXCELS (continued from page 1)

Actually, prior to enrolling in the Culinary Arts program Rob got started in his training venture by completing the LETC's Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) program at the Job Center, an industry-led training, assessment, and certification system focused on core skills and knowledge needed by the nation's production and supply chain logistics workers. There were four certifications he achieved—quality, safety, manufacturing processes, and maintenance—all areas with application to other occupational fields, including his real passion—the culinary field.

Rob has been assisted by taking advantage of dislocated worker and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) funding. He said his computer skills were very limited when he began the MSSC program, but that program and the Culinary Program have helped him hone those skills. "Computer skills are critical, even in a program like Culinary Arts," he explained.

Even though he has another year before completing his associate degree, Rob feels like he's already a chef. He has completed an externship by working at an area restaurant, and while his future plans and goals may eventually include owning and operating his own restaurant, he's keeping his options open. "My only regret is that I didn't do this 20 years ago," he said. He feels as an older student (as with many older students), he is more focused and results-driven. "I want to excel in this field, so every day I try to learn as much as possible so I can apply it when I need it in my new occupation," he said. "The opportunity is there, as well as the help and support to succeed. Use it to your full advantage to reach your goals."

"Talk about their product or service. Go online to find out about them!"

"The opportunity is there, as well as the help and support to succeed. Use it to your full advantage to reach your goals."

---Rob Phelps

SOFT SKILLS CRITICAL FOR LANDING THAT JOB

You've heard the term before—'soft skills.' But what does that mean? In short, these are skills that are not job- or technical-specific (such as welding or math skills), but skills that nearly every employer will be seeking (such as communication or organizational skills).

Most job-seekers possess these soft skills, but even those that don't have much experience at certain ones can improve those skills through training. Better yet, if you know a certain employer values certain soft skills more than others, you can adapt your resume and cover letter to those skills. For example, if you know that phone/communication skills will be critical for a job you're seeking, they can be emphasized in your cover letter, resume and even during your interview.

So what types of soft skills are the most common ones sought by employers? Following are several of the most common/important (not prioritized):

- **Computer/Technical Literacy.** Very few jobs do not require some basic skills of both hardware and software. This is a skill that can be learned.
- **Leadership/Management Skills.** This can also be learned, although any experience you can show here is to your benefit (did you lead a Scout or 4-H group or organize a church group in holding a fundraiser? These should not be forgotten).
- **Communications Skills (written, verbal, listening).** This one is mentioned most often by employers. It is critical in a successful business.
- **Multicultural/Diversity Skills.** You must be able to show an awareness and sensitivity to other cultures and individuals.
- **Research/Analytic Skills.** Show you're able to determine a proper course of action, include others' opinions and perspectives, and look at the key issues that need to be identified and problems solved.
- **Adaptability.** Show that you are flexible, can handle several tasks at a time, and handle work changes or assignments.
- **Teamwork.** Show that you can work with others. Few jobs involve working in isolation, so functioning effectively with others is critical.
- **Organizing.** If you can plan, design, develop and implement tasks and programs in a timely manner, be sure to show examples.
- **Reasoning/Solving Problems.** Show how you can use your creativity, experiences and analytical skills with available information and/or resources.

These soft skills do not even address the values you need such as honesty, work ethic, dependability, etc. So be sure to balance these soft skills with personal values and technical/job skills to reveal a well-balanced individual who can help the company/organization.



Soft skills such as simply communicating effectively via the phone are critical in many businesses.

CHECK OUT THESE OPPORTUNITIES

There are several **Dislocated Worker** workshops that may be of interest to you (even if you are not in the WIA program—these are open to all). Call the Rock County Job Center for information or to schedule a session—Julie Funk at (608) 741-3462 or Carol Kohl at (608) 741-3418.

All Classes listed here are in Classroom C at the Rock County Job Center.

Dislocated Worker Orientation	Mon., May 3, 9-11 a.m., Rm. D/E
Resume 201	Mon., May 3, 9-11 a.m., Rm. C
Choice, Change & Adjustment	Mon., May 3, 9-11:30 a.m., Rm. B
Resume 101	Mon., May 3, 1-3 p.m., Rm. C
Resume 102	Tue., May 4, 2-4 p.m., Annex
Future Trak/WIA Pre-Assessment	Tues., May 4, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Rm. C
Work Search Using jobcenterofwisconsin.com	Wed., May 5, 2-4 pm, Annex
Choice, Change & Adjustment	Wed., May 5, 9-11:30 a.m., Rm. B
Java & Jobs	Fri., May 7, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Annex
Success Skills Training III	Fri., May 7, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Rm. B
Career Assessment & Planning 201	Fri., May 7, 1-3:30 p.m., Rm. B
Things to Do When the Paycheck Stops	Mon., May 10, 9-10 a.m., Rm. I
Interview 201	Mon., May 10, 9-11 a.m., Rm. C
Choice, Change & Adjustment	Mon., May 10, 1-3:30 p.m., Rm. B
Resume 101	Mon., May 10, 1-3 p.m., Rm. C
Interviewing 101	Tue., May 11, 10 a.m.-noon, Annex
WISCareers	Tue., May 11, 9-11 a.m., Rm. A
Good Eating on a Budget	Tue., May 11, 10:30-11:30 am, Rm B
Interview 101	Wed., May 12, 1-3 p.m., Rm. B
Java & Jobs	Fri., May 14, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Annex
Success Skills Training I	Fri., May 14, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Rm. B
FutureTrac Workshop	Mon., May 17, 1-4 p.m., Rm. J
Resume 201	Mon., May 17, 9-11 a.m., Rm. C
Resume 101	Mon., May 17, 1-3 p.m., Rm. C
Work Search Using Monster.com	Wed., May 19, 10 am-noon, Annex
Interview 101	Wed., May 19, 1-3 p.m., Rm. B
Dislocated Worker Orientation	Thu., May 20, 2-4 p.m., Rm. K
Java & Jobs	Fri., May 21, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Annex
Success Skills Training II	Fri., May 21, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Rm. B
Interview 201	Mon., May 24, 9-11 a.m., Rm. C
Choice, Change & Adjustment 101	Mon., May 24, 9-11:30 a.m., Rm. B
Resume 101	Mon., May 24, 1-3 p.m., Rm. C
Career Assessment & Planning 201	Tue., May 25, 9-11:30 a.m., Rm. B
Choice, Change & Adjustment	Wed., May 26, 9-11:30 a.m., Rm. B
Interview 101	Wed., May 26, 1-3 p.m., Rm. B
FutureTrac Workshop	Thu., May 27, 9 a.m.-noon, Rm. J
Educational Options	Thu., May 27, 2-3 p.m., Rm. B
Java & Jobs	Fri., May 28, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Annex
Success Skills Training III	Fri., May 28, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Rm. B
Memorial Day—Job Center Closed	Mon., May 31

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

“The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes.”

---Tony Blair

The CORD Newsletter is designed to provide helpful information and tips to area dislocated workers. Have comments or ideas for stories?

Contact the editor:

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