

A TOAST TO NEW BEGINNINGS

By Sue Montgomery, CPRW / IJCTC

Two-thousand-six was an interesting and at times frustrating year for all Americans. Our country continued to fight the war against terror. The economy was up by some accounts and down by others depending on what side of the political fence you chose. And skirting the job market was somewhat like trying to walk through a minefield.

In Dayton, Ohio, workers were impacted by major automotive manufacturers that cut back production and moved businesses south of the border. Key companies that were acquired. And city of Dayton milestones that relocated to other states.

The last twelve months brought clients to Résumé Plus who were nervous, depressed and very worried about what their next step should be in finding new employment. Few were excited about entering the next phase of their professional lives. Most saw only the end of their careers. But losing your job does not have to be an ending. It can be a wonderful new beginning.

There was the young man from Delphi who decided to go into healthcare. And the middle-aged General Motors ex-employee who loved to ski. He found a job in Idaho and he and his family moved to ski country. There was the school teacher who became a pharmaceutical sales representative. And the nurse who decided she would enjoy computer programming more than nursing. Some stayed in the same line of work. A manufacturing manager found a great new opportunity in Tennessee. And an ex-military man became a civilian aircraft mechanic at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

There is an adage that says *when one door closes, another opens*. Nowhere is this truer than in the employment marketplace. But to succeed, you have to make sure you are prepared to walk through that open door. Here are some things you can do to get ready.

Adopt a new attitude. Look forward; not back. Stop dwelling on what was and think about what can be. If you believe you have no hope, you will fail.

Chase your dream. Is there some kind of work you have always wanted to do? Find out how to make it happen. Perhaps you need to get specialized training.

Talk to your family. Make sure they are going to be okay with your decisions. Maybe your new job requires moving out of the area. Perhaps schedules have to be rearranged to accommodate your return to school.

Talk to your friends and associates. Have they been through the same kinds of employment changes? Do they have ideas to share with you? Do they know of companies that are hiring?

Stay physically fit. Don't get in the habit of sleeping until noon. Take a walk. Eat right.

Stay mentally healthy. Read, listen to news broadcasts and search the Internet. Keep your mind active and open to possibilities.

Take an inventory of your financial resources. Do you have enough money to cover a six-month job search? A year? If not, look for options. Can you get a short-term 401K loan? Home equity line of credit? Cash in some CDs? Borrow against your life insurance policy?

Plan the work and work the plan. Write down where you want to go in your career and then do what it takes to get there. Be fully committed. Know how much time you need to invest and where it needs to be invested. Then do it.

I was coaching an executive who had lost his job due to downsizing. Together, we developed a job search strategy. When I asked him how many hours each week he would invest in locating the next opportunity, he replied, "I should be able to put in about 20 hours a week." I then asked how many hours a week he gave to his former employer. He said, "I worked about 60 hours a week on average." Astonishing! He was willing to devote 60 hours a week to help the company but only 20 hours a week to help himself. That kind of thinking MUST be readjusted.

If you are among employees who have either lost their jobs or can hear the footsteps of the pink-slip carrier coming their way, don't panic. Take a deep breath and take charge of your life. It's a new opportunity, and with it comes a new chance to reinvent your professional life.