

# AUSTIN WEEKLY news

## West Side nonprofit hosts job, life fair

*Above and Beyond paired with staffing firm Apple One during the one-day event*

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A job and resource fair, held Nov. 18 at Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center, 2942 W. Lake St. in Garfield Park, allowed community members the opportunity to receive job-search advice and interview skills. | William Camargo/Staff



By **Michael Romain**  
Editor

Gail S. Bussie, 57, arrived in front of the Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center, 2942 W. Lake St. in Garfield Park on Nov. 17 — one day before a job and

resource fair the nonprofit was set to host.

"I showed up yesterday like this," said Bussie, who was dressed in a black power suit. "I was the first in line, but it was the wrong day. I offered to spend the night."

Bussie was among more than a dozen people who flocked to Above and Beyond to receive job training skills and go through mock interviews offered by the Chicago staffing firm Apple One.

Siri Hibbler, Above and Beyond's director of housing and job readiness, said the Nov. 18 event was designed to introduce the nonprofit's free services, which include substance abuse treatment, housing readiness and skills development, to the general public.

For Bussie, a trained medical transcriptionist before her career was disrupted by automation, the event was a chance for her to build her confidence in what, for job-seekers of all backgrounds and experiences, is proving to be something of a brave, new world.

"I've been out of the workplace for too long," said Bussie. "I'm here for something part-time or full-time. I want a real job and I need an employer who will recognize that I'm here for the long haul. Here [at Above and Beyond], I know I'm in the right place.

"I came here with such angst, like, 'Oh, a job interview! I have to sell myself to somebody? But they're making me realize that I don't have to sell me to somebody. Employers need to get to know us. All I can be is me."

Dionne Thompson, 49, said he came to the Nov. 18 job and resource fair in order to find a job in the formal economy. He currently works construction jobs with his brother, he said; work for which he's paid cash. He also does other odds and ends like motivational speaking and personal training, he said.

"I want to get paid checks, so I can do income taxes and all that," Thompson said, adding that he's been incarcerated "almost all of my life."

"It's hard trying to get [formal work], because people always going for the background and sometimes they go off of how you look," he said. "Sometimes people don't have the money or the clothes to look presentable, but [Above and Beyond] gives you the clothes and everything else for free. It's up to you to give the job a chance and to give your chance a chance."

Shaevon Adams, a staffing agent for Apple One said that the firm helps staff four clients in the community, with most of those jobs in the areas of customer service. Adams said that the jobs, which are mostly entry-level positions, are more accessible than many people may first think.

"I think a lot of people are underwhelmed, because when they approach us they don't feel like they're qualified and are shocked to realize that they are," said Adams. "Age isn't a thing for us. The typical candidate we're looking for is someone with a good personality, a great smile and a never say die attitude. They're going to show up early and stay late, because that's who they are."

Adams said that West Side residents comprise roughly 20 percent of the people employed through Apple One — the largest privately-held, woman-and-minority-owned workforce management company the country, according to its website. The company is looking to increase that number to 40 percent, she said.

Hibbler said that Above and Beyond plans on partnering with Apple One to host job and resource fairs at the nonprofit's West Side location in the near future.

"Representatives from Apple One will visit the classes often throughout the remainder of the year and 2017 to share information on interviewing skills, resume development and more," she said in a statement.

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