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Heather Boulger: Be resolute in your job search or career tinkering

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By Heather Boulger

The start of a new year always brings the excitement of change, anticipation of new beginnings and 365 days of untold possibilities!

Are you one of the 40 percent of Americans who made a resolution to make exciting changes this year? Hopefully, you are one of the 8 percent that actually kept their resolution!

But, if you are like most of us, inevitably, three weeks later, we find ourselves right back where we started. But, don't worry, because every day can be a new beginning.

If your goal for 2020 is workforce- or career-related, here are some activities that can help you succeed.

Get a new job

If you made a career-related resolution to find a job, get a promotion, or venture out on your own, here are some tips that can help. First, get your resume recruiter-ready (there are tons of websites to assist you) and write a cover letter (don't use a generic one) for each position that you're applying for.

Next, enroll in the business networking website LinkedIn, and make sure that your profile is up to date and professional. Stay in touch with your network of contacts, like family, friends,

neighbors, etc., and put yourself out there by attending events, mixers and meetups. Seventy percent of jobs come through networking.

Also, search job boards, apply for positions online and respond to all potential opportunities. There are lots of workshops offered at the MassHire Berkshire Career Center that can help you succeed with your job search.

Recruiting and hiring

With more than 1,200 Berkshire County job openings posted on Job Quest last week, local companies have a variety of options to choose from when looking for workers.

The Berkshire Career Center lists job postings, holds targeted recruitments and job fairs, and provides assistance to companies looking to recruit qualified candidates. Every year, the Berkshire Career Center assists thousands of job seekers and hundreds of businesses with their needs. For more information, call 413 499-2220 or visit MassHireBerkshireCC.com.

There are also staffing agencies that perform recruitment and selection processes for organizations that don't have the time, expertise or resources necessary to manage the employment processes, and they assist job seekers to find employment. Visit the Berkshire Eagle; 1Berkshire's Jobs Thing; Molari; BerkshireRecruiting; and BerkshireJobs for more information.

Job Shadow Day and mentoring month

Maybe you're a young person who wants to explore career opportunities in the region. Maybe your company wants to market itself to attract younger workers into your industry or occupation. Either way, Ground Hog Job Shadow Day or mentoring is for you.

Beginning on Feb. 2, and continuing throughout the school year, hundreds of students will "shadow" workplace mentors as they go through a normal day on the job. Students gain a firsthand look at the skills, knowledge and education required to succeed in a career.

Since their inception in 1997 in the Berkshires, more than 1,700 employers and 18,000 students have participated in shadowing activities. Our hope is that even if Punxsutawney Phil doesn't see his shadow on Groundhog Day, which happens to be Feb. 2, hundreds of Berkshire employers will see theirs!

Also, January is Mentoring Month, which is connecting young people to adult mentors and is central to the healthy development of young people, empowering them to reach their full potential.

The estimated cost of one high school dropout is \$467,231 to the state, and mentoring encourages a young person to stay in school and be prepared to learn. Local mentoring programs are operated by the Berkshire Workforce Board, Railroad Street Youth Project, Berkshire United Way and many others.

Career exploration and mentoring activities are part of the Berkshire College/career readiness programming and assist thousands of youth annually in every school district in Berkshire County. Contact Kat@MassHireBerkshire.com to learn more or to help make a difference in a young person's life.

Workforce predictions

At the beginning of each year, we revisit workforce trends to help see the bigger picture, respond more effectively and make better choices. All economic indicators show a positive view of the economy in 2020, which typically causes salaries to increase and employers to invest more in advertising, staffing and benefits.

Experts also feel that as unemployment continues to drop, it will become increasingly difficult to find the right talent in 2020. According to business leaders, 2020 will bring more remote work options, greater technology dependency, increased awareness of mental health, shorter workweeks, diversity and a greater focus on improving the overall office work/life balance.

If you want to find a new job, recruit employees, advance your training or learn more about college/career readiness programs, MassHireBerkshire.com can assist you with your efforts.

Although Jan. 1 signifies a new beginning, each day allows for a new opportunity to reset your habits differently. Here's hoping that you meet the challenges and take advantage of the best opportunities in the new decade!

Heather Boulger is the executive director of the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board in Pittsfield.