



“LEVERAGING YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE”

Organized by the **Junior League of Northern Westchester Training Committee** in collaboration with the Mount Kisco Public Library, Westchester Community College, and The Volunteer Center.

Saturday, March 6th • 1:00-3:00 pm
Mount Kisco Public Library • 100 East Main Street • Mount Kisco, NY

45 ATTENDEES

- Learned about local resources that can aid in developing a strong resume as well as advance volunteer and professional skills.
- Learned how to properly reflect and leverage their volunteer experiences on their resume, in their job search and also in advancing their volunteer career.

Moderator: Becki Fleischer (Training Chair)
Junior League of Northern Westchester

Panelists: Sue Hacker
Associate Professor / Counselor & Coordinator Career Services, Westchester Community College
Eileen Stephan
Managing Director, Head of Graduate Recruitment & Program Management, Citigroup
Martha Iwan
Reference Librarian & Volunteer Coordinator, Mount Kisco Library

Structure & Notes:

Panel Round 1 – 10 minutes

- *Welcome & Recognize Partners – Kiersten Marich, JLNW President*
- *Introductions – why you are on the panel / expertise*

Panel Round 2 - 20 minutes

Resume Writing 101 – what are the core elements of a resume, how long should it be, how many years of experience should be included, how best to group and classify your volunteer experience.

- Consider your focus, this is a marketing tool for your next job – not the job you have now.
- Volunteer skills are critical bridges for career shifts.
- Tailor your language so that it's relevant to the person who is reading it / the field you are targeting.
- Describe the skills you used – not the job you had.
- Format depends on what will make you look more interesting.
- Create one “experience” category and lump paid and unpaid work together. Do not differentiate between the two and do not label “volunteer” work. The skills you used are equal.
- Resumes must be PERFECT – no typos, grammatical errors, etc... Have a lot of people look at it.
- It should clearly define who you are.
- No static resume – it has to change for each job you seek – it always needs to be tailored.
- Always include a summary at the top – it's the most prominent sales pitch section – get their interest to read on.
- Don't name your electronic file “Resume.doc” – an employer will lose it. Name it “JaneDoe.Resume.doc” – adding a date is smart too.
- The first time you write your resume don't worry about format or anything – just data dump all of your work experiences into a Word document – make it as long as it needs to be and then edit down from there. If you edit in your head as you write you will forget or miss something important. This data dump is also important for when you go back to tailor your resume for other jobs.
- Show your data dump to friends or trusted colleague to help edit down to the most important points or they might also identify strengths you didn't think of.
- When done with your resume show it to a lot of people to see if it makes sense. What does it say to them?
- Depending on the field, a cover letter is important or not. Financial services, cover letter are never looked at. What you write in the body of your email counts. Writing the cover letter can be a good exercise to prep for an interview.

Panel Round 3 – 15 minutes

Job / Volunteer Market – what do employers look for on a resume, what do non-profit boards look for on a resume for potential board members, is highlighting volunteer experience important and if so, why.

- Attach resumes in a PDF file (so format doesn't jump) – and DO NOT put it in the body of an email. Always attach as a separate file.
- Each point on your resume should spark a 5-6 minute conversation about it – if you can't speak 5-6 minutes about it, take it off or combine with something else.
- Employers look for quality experiences – they don't care if they are paid or not.

- They also look for transferable skills – multitasking, management skills, stretch assignments, history with an organization, leadership assignments very appealing (getting people to do things they never thought of before).
- Skills non-profit boards may look for – flexibility, timeliness, tactfulness, patience
- Letters of reference – do not include on first submission of resume, wait until they are requested. They usually are not asked for – if an employer has a question, they will just call a reference.
- Only spend 5% of your time thinking about references – they aren't the most important things – they don't get you the job.
- 2-3 References are fine – mixture of boss/colleague is good.
- How far you go back on your resume depends on how you are framing yourself for that job. Definitely include college, but HS not necessary.
- Keep your data dump and revisit it every 6-12 months to add new skills you have acquired or things you've done to keep it all current. Makes the process easier.
- List all expired and current licenses – especially if they are relevant to the job you are seeking.

Panel Round 4 – 15 minutes

Local Resources – what resources exist in Westchester to help individuals prepare a resume and/or gain needed skills for a new position (volunteer or paid).

- Online resources at the library: Learning Express & Job Accelerator.
- Learning Express: walks you through how to write a resume and cover letter, has occupation information and job postings as well as career testing to help you find what you would be good at.
- Job Accelerator: more in-depth, skills testing, GED, civil service, firefighter, real estate.
- Career and Educational Counseling Services (WEBS) – offers career counseling and seminars
- Lots of print resources in library
- Westchester Community College – if you've ever taken (or ever do take) just one course at WCC you can use the career center for free. They also have programs called "Mainstream" and "The Center for Mature Workforce".
- Also check out local high schools and BOCES for continuing education.
- WCC has a robust continuing education program.

Panel Conclusion & Unstructured Social – 30 minutes

- WCC Department of Continuing Education Table
- Volunteer Center Board Bank Table
- Mount Kisco Public Library Information on Table
- JLNW Table