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Larry McHugh's Column

Mortgage Lenders Network Dislocated Employee Assistance Program –

Always proactive in the business community, the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce continues to implement successful workforce development programs. Working closely with the Workforce Alliance, Inc., the State Department of Labor, and the Office for Workforce Competitiveness, the Chamber has addressed the growing need of servicing dislocated workers.

The benefit of these relationships and our experience in job development has allowed us to expand our network with various social service entities, municipalities and businesses. I am happy to report that the Chamber will be utilizing our services with a new endeavor, the Mortgage Lenders Network Dislocated Employee Assistance Program.

Back in late December, Mortgage Lenders Network, because of nationwide financial problems, closed its doors and started to lay off Connecticut employees. That total has now reached approximately 1,800 nationwide and close to 1,000 in Connecticut. By the end of January, the Middletown-based lender informed employees these layoffs would be permanent.

The Chamber has received funds from the Connecticut Department of Labor and Workforce Alliance of New Haven to operate a dislocated employee assistance program designed to assist the former employees of the MLN. Led by my staff member Jeff Pugliese, the Mortgage Lenders Network Dislocated Employee Assistance Program will serve to get those displaced workers back into the workforce.

Jeff and other members of my staff here at the Chamber have extensive experience in job development and can effectively assist those dislocated by MLN in such things as resume redevelopment, interview skills, job searches and eventual job placement. We currently have a membership of over 2,400 businesses, many of whom are seeking to hire qualified individuals. We have reached out to our member businesses that may have employment opportunities and we are in the process of making matches. This is a win-win situation for everyone in the business community as we are assisting employees and providing local businesses with highly qualified staff.

I want to offer an invitation to all MLN dislocated workers to come and hear more about this job development program being run out of the Chamber that has been designed specifically for dislocated Mortgage Lenders employees.

We will be at Middletown High School on Wednesday March 28, at 3 p.m. in the school's auditorium. This is an opportunity for you to learn more about possible employment opportunities and career changes and determine how we can help you get back into the workforce. I would like to give a big thanks to Michael Frechette, Middletown Superintendent of Schools, for hosting this program at the high school.

Another effort we are supporting through the Workforce Alliance is the MaturityWorks Program that may be of interest to dislocated MLN workers and others. Workers 55 and beyond are invited to participate in the MaturityWorks Open House on Friday, March 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The CTWorks Career Center will be hosting the CTWorks Career Coach in front of their offices at 645 South Main Street Middletown.

The number of Americans age 65 or older still working or looking for work has grown by 50 percent since 1980. In addition, 60 percent of Americans age 55 to 64 are still working. MaturityWorks (A Senior Community Service Employment Program) delivers training and job searches for people age 55 and older. As they obtain the skills necessary for employment, participants receive paid training, assistance finding employment, and a customized Individual Employment Plan (IEP)

The Open House will offer tours of the CTWorks Career Center and its Computer Lab, as well as tours of the mobile CTWorks Career Coach. A Special Workshop "55 & Beyond" will be offered at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Employment specialists will be on hand to explain all of the CTWorks' services to job-seekers. A certified professional will be available to critique resumes.

Pre-registration is recommended for the MaturityWorks Open House and space is limited. Call 860-754-5030 for more information, email lpape@workforcealliance.biz.

For more information on the Mortgage Lenders Network Dislocated Employee Assistance Program or the MaturityWorks Program, please contact Jeff Pugliese at the Chamber at (860) 347-6924 or email jpugliese@middlesexchamber.com.