

San Franciscoâ??s first-ever Older Adult Hiring Fair was so popular, they might just do it again

Description

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Sel Butler worked concessions for the Warriors in Oakland. A San Franciscan, he wanted a job on this side of the Bay. Angela Lee, an experienced cook, was looking for a cooking job that paid more than minimum wage. Maureen Sansburn has been looking for work for the past eight months, since leaving her job at the Summit Medical Center to care for her 101-year-old father.



Photos by Kate Kuckro

They were among more than 300 people to attend a job fair organized specifically for seniors and people with disabilities, based on a campaign promise by Mayor London Breed. Whether you were considered a senior depended on who was hiring. For city jobs, itâ??s 65. For others, it was 50 and still others 60.

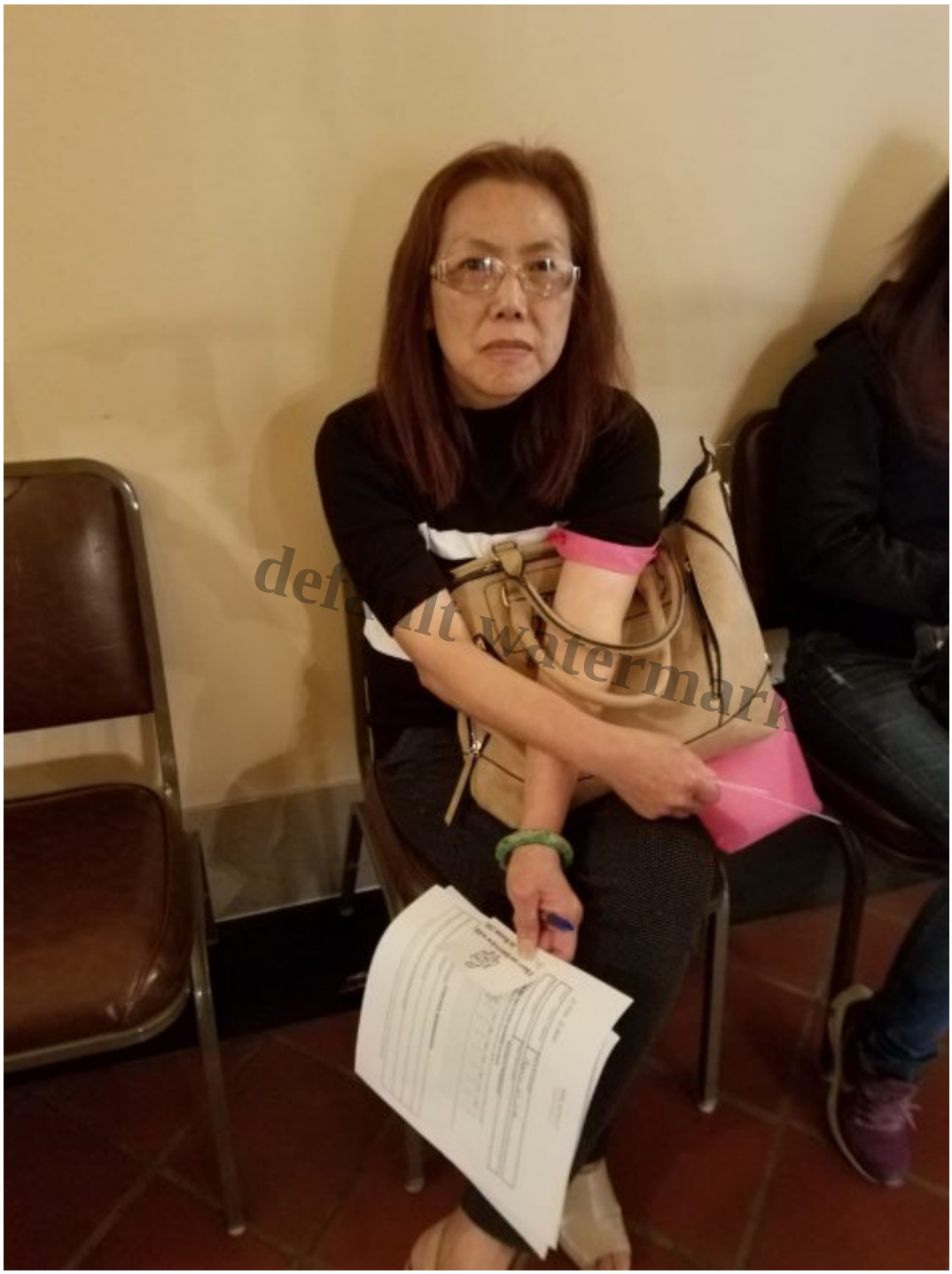
The Older Adult Hiring Fair was sponsored on Aug. 5 by the Mayorâ??s Office of Economic and Workforce Development in partnership with the Dignity Fund Coalition, Felton Institute, the San Francisco Department of Aging & Adult Services, Jobs Now! and a network of other organizations.

â??Iâ??ve done the work, I have the experience, I hope to get a job,â?• said Butler, who is in his 50s, before walking into the interview room. Twenty minutes later, a big smile on his face, he walked out, â??I got it,â?• he said. Heâ??ll be working in at the bon appÃ©tit concession at the Chase Center.



Sel Butler got a job working at the new Chase Center.

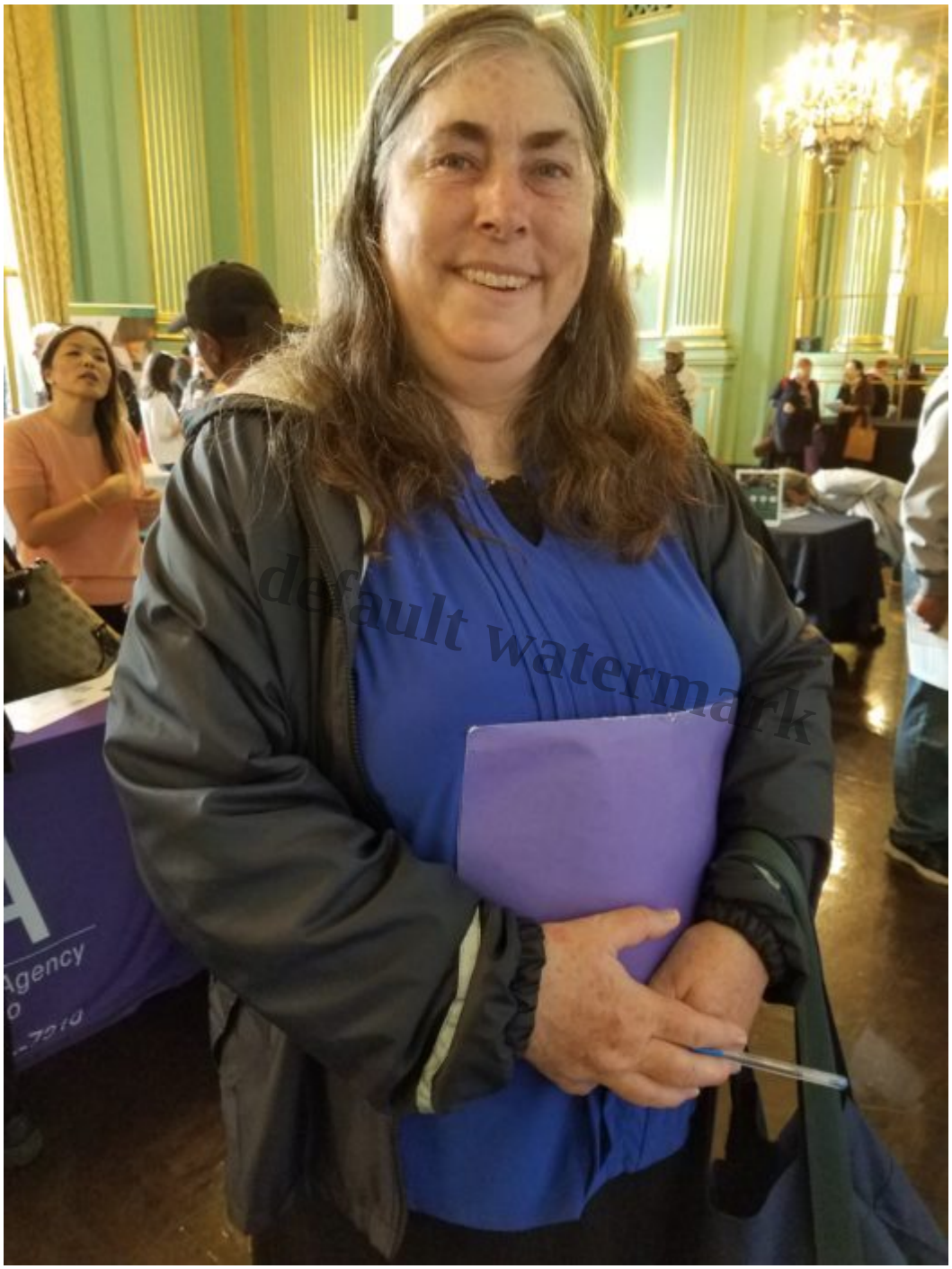
Lee, also in her 50s, received one offer, she said, â??but it paid minimum wage and required travel, and I donâ??t have a car.â?•



Angela Lee, an experienced chef, was looking for a more-than-minimum wage job.

Sansburn, 63, who hopes to get back in the healthcare field, has only been able to find temporary or part-time jobs. â??I guess there are some permanent jobs, but I havenâ??t been able to find them,â?• she said. â??Iâ??m raiding my retirement funds. Iâ??m just grateful I saved money.â?•

Sheâ??s taking computer training classes, has registered at other employment programs and has completed applications for On Lok, the Institute on Aging, the City of San Francisco and San Mateo County. â??I think my age is a problem. I hope I get a job soon.â?•



People like Maureen Sansburn, who are ready to learn new things, have a better chance of finding a job, said hiring experts. She didnâ??t find a job but said sheâ??s ready to learn.

More such hiring fairs promised

While not everyone found immediate employment, organizers called the event a success and predicted follow-ups. â??This is the first hiring fair of its kind, but it wonâ??t be the last,â?• said Breed.

Anne Yalon, Economic and Workforce Development business services specialist, said 375 people registered in advance, â??but we estimated there were closer to 500 attendees.

No one was turned away, and 131 people landed interviews.

She said 42 job offers were made by companies including bon appÃ©tit catering, Bauerâ??s Intelligent Transportation, Allied Universal Security Services, the Mental Health Association of San Francisco and Gukenheimer corporate dining services.

Upwards of 500 people attended the Older Adult Hiring Fair

Applicants carrying multiple copies of their resumes, had the opportunity to talk with representatives of businesses ready to hire and nonprofit agencies providing job training skills. Seekers with relevant skills received a token that allowed them to advance from the large room with multiple firms and agencies to a quieter room for initial interviews.

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Organizers and employers both were surprised by the heavy turnout.

â??I think the turnout was amazing, better than anyone expected,â?• said Fiona Hinze, co-chair of the Dignity Fund Coalition, the organization responsible for recruiting job seekers

â??Weâ??ve done other job fairs, thereâ??s never been this many applicants,â?• said Jessica Grant, who represented bon appÃ©tit. â??We were only hiring for concessions, for cashiers, stand workers, and cooks. It was a no-brainer to get involved in this hiring fair.â?•

Well-prepared applicants

Gala Martin from the Felton Institute found the event â??a little overwhelming, there were so many applicants. Many were well-versed in interviewing for their position, although some could have used more practice.â?•

â??There was a real buzz in the room, a high level of energy,â?• said Jamie Goddard, director of SF ReServe, an employment program run by the nonprofit San Francisco Community Living Campaign. â??Employers were there and hiring. It all felt very positive â?¦ and there was real diversity within the job seeking population.â?•



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Goddard said people, like Sansborn, who are willing to continue learning, as well as those with administrative and transferable skills are easier to place. â??Itâ??s true across the board, for all ages.â?•

Breed made the promise to sponsor a hiring fair when campaigning at a mayoral forum hosted by the Dignity Fund, a collective of nonprofits who helped pass legislation to guarantee funding to organizations serving seniors and people with disabilities.

Mayor London Breed welcomes job seekers

â??I am so proud to be here with all these employers and future employees,â?• she said, noting that when her aunt, who was disabled, finally found a job in the neighborhood, she â??felt she belonged to the community, and could give back.â?•

A job offers a sense of belonging

â??We all have different shapes, sizes and disabilities, but we all can contribute. No one should be left behind,â?• she added. â??All of us coming together to support and lift up out community is exactly what we need to bring our city together.â?•

Yalon credited the positive energy at the fair to its layout and excellent job directing traffic to the interview room.

â??We also learned some things for next time,â?• she said. â??We learned that people want to work as many hours as they can, but that seniors or people with disabilities who work more than 16 or 17 hours a week, may lose their benefits.

â??Thatâ??s one of the reasons why Gukenheimer, which was looking for full-time employees, couldnâ??t find people. On the other hand, the 10 hours a week offered by Felton discouraged many applicants. We need to be clear with employers about the hours job seekers can work, and what part-time employment is. We also learned the importance of bringing in interpreters.â?•

After the fair, the Office of Economics and Workforce Development sent registered attendees a list of resources for job opportunities and trainings. OEWD supports numerous job centers located in Neighborhood Access Points. You can call 415-701-4848 for more information.

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Date Created
12/09/2019
Author
jgoddess

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