

SUCCESS

Lake County Workforce Development is a partner of the Job Center of Lake County. Workforce Development receives grants from the US Department of Labor including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) grants to fund programs designed to cultivate and connect employers and the workforce.

Lake County Workforce Development

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Working in a New Field

Lake County Workforce Development created employment opportunities for unemployed individuals during the pandemic. In partnership with local employers, Workforce assisted individuals to learn new skills while earning a wage and being a part of the community responding to the pandemic – helping small businesses and healthcare professionals.

ShaRhonda worked for many years for a large call center, starting in customer service and working her way up to quality assurance. When she was laid off in 2019, however, she had a hard time finding employment. ShaRhonda had many transferable skills but recognized she needed additional training in new computer applications and office procedures. ShaRhonda started the Office Manager training program at Computer Training Source. She completed over 25 individual courses successfully by May 2020.

ShaRhonda knew that she could juggle work and training and applied for multiple positions with large employers but had no success in the uncertain labor market. Her Career Specialist knew that she needed employment and told ShaRhonda about a paid work experience at the **Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County (BCCLC)**.

Lydia Lewis, President of the BCCLC, sought an Administrative Assistant to help her organization with potential growth and future projects. Lydia worked with Workforce Development Business Service team members to source résumés of potential candidates.



Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County

Lydia says that ShaRhonda met all of her qualifications and exhibited dedication, experience and a desire to learn. ShaRhonda started a work experience in March 2020 only a week before the pandemic struck. She rapidly converted to a tele-working model, as she began helping small businesses to apply for grants during the crisis. ShaRhonda was hired permanently by the Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County as an **Administrative Assistant** in July 2021.

ShaRhonda wants to advance on her career path by completing an Associate degree at the College of Lake County. Lydia will continue to work with the Business Service team to source talent. *“The Job Center offers a great opportunity to any employer looking to hire individuals to grow their organization.”*



Beginning Again

The Illinois Department of Employment Security was intensely involved with the pandemic response. Employment Service personnel contacted laid off workers to inform them about career and training services available to them through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Ana was working as a Customer Service Supervisor when her position was eliminated due to downsizing in 2019. Wanting to move into a new role in human resources, Ana looked for opportunities for over a year without luck. Her job search became even more complicated when the pandemic hit. While she was receiving unemployment insurance, Ana received information from the Illinois Department of Employment Security about services offered for dislocated workers including **Illinois Job Link**, the state's largest job database, and WIOA programs.

Ana qualified for a work experience under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and was placed into a paid work experience in Human Resources with the Lake County Health Department. During the busiest times of the pandemic for the Health Department, Ana was tasked with onboarding the staff and volunteers that supported the vaccination site at the Lake County Fairgrounds. Ana stated, *"This was a challenging and high-volume task, but I am so appreciative of the opportunity as it provided me with the qualifications for my next role."*

Ana was hired by Ajilon as a **Talent Attraction Specialist** in May 2021. She is excited about this new opportunity where she can grow in her career. Ana wants other job seekers to know that the loss of a job can have positive results.

"Having my position eliminated forced me to go after what I wanted and not just settle for another supervisor job. It forced me, in my 40's, to start from the beginning, accepting an internship to obtain the skills I needed for the role that I wanted. It's not easy taking a pay cut and starting over, but sometimes that's what it takes, and I am thankful that I did."



Starting a Career



Lake County Workforce Development has a team dedicated to working with young people ages 18 to 24 as they enter the workforce. *"The youth team remained mission-focused during the pandemic,"* explained Jennifer Everett, Program Manager. *"Young people need to be connected to careers regardless of environmental pressure. This is the start of their professional lives."*

After graduating from North Chicago High School in 2017, **Brandon** held a variety of jobs but did not find a good career match. At the suggestion of his father, Brandon applied to Workforce Development where he qualified for WIOA training funds and immediately began working with a Career Specialist to select a career path. Brandon's father works in information technology (IT) and Brandon had a strong interest in the field, so he decided to pursue training in this area.

Brandon began a Computer Technician/ Help Desk course at Microtrain in April 2020. He completed 4 months of training in A+, Net+ and Security+. He learned to problem solve IT issues and configure or set up technology equipment. After successfully completing his training program, Brandon was placed in an internship with the Lake County Health Department's IT division. This internship position gave Brandon the opportunity to implement the skills he learned in training and to lead orientations and organize the department's inventory. Brandon's work left a positive impression on the Lake County Health Department. He was hired full time as an **IT Technician** at more than \$22 per hour in June 2021. Brandon had this advice for other job seekers like himself, *"Whatever you're doing, stick to it and don't give up, persevere!"*

The Job Center of Lake County is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment by calling TTY 800-526-0844 or 711. To request accommodations, contact dharris@lakecountyil.gov or 847-377-3423.