

Career Builders

By Mary-Alane Wiltse

Free Cruise and Rock Concert for Local Employees Age 25 and Under

In an effort to recognize the importance of the contributions made by the young adults who live and work in our community, the Workforce Investment Board of Columbia & Greene Counties (WIB) is sponsoring a free Hudson River cruise on August 22, with boarding beginning at 5:30 pm. The two-hour cruise is open to the first 100 employed workers who are between the ages of 18 and 25. The event will also feature free food and performances by local bands, including Barbecue Rush.

This event is designed to kick-off the WIB's effort to address the "brain drain" crisis our area is experiencing as young adults continue to move away. Because nothing is ever really for free, the cruise is being offered to help gauge participants' interest in the idea of a professional development association designed to address the issues faced by young people as they begin their careers.

Numerous studies, based on census data, show that young adults are leaving rural and suburban areas and flocking to large cities. This is especially true for people under the age of 25, but relocation can continue until people reach their mid thirties. One of the complaints young adults express about living in a rural area is the lack of social opportunities available where people of similar interests can meet. The idea behind creating this organization, which is tentatively called the Next Step Association, is to provide a venue for a member-led organization offering a variety of career and leadership development activities, job placement services, networking opportunities, and social activities for its members.

Much research has been done on "Generation Y" and what people in this generation are expecting from their employers and their community. Social Scientists point out that as adults we pretty much expect the world to treat us in the same manner we were treated when we were growing up. This generation has grown up with parents that structured much of their free time with sports, classes and clubs. These young people are also extremely proficient at using and understanding every new piece of electronic equipment that comes along. They like to multitask, using all of this hardware at the same time. Parents of this generation also believed in positive reinforcement, including constantly telling their kids how great they are and providing rewards for every small accomplishment. As a result, these young workers have a tendency to expect instant gratification, special acknowledgement of their contributions, and the opportunity to be given new things to do so they don't get bored.

Large multinational corporations that want to attract and retain these younger workers are responding to these expectations. These companies cannot necessarily provide their young employees with jobs that offer constantly changing work tasks or opportunities for a meteoric rise to the top. However, they can offer such benefits as flexible work schedules, mentorship programs, tuition assistance and after-work social events. One company, KPMG, claims that steps like these have lowered their turnover rate from 25 percent to 18 percent in the last four years.

Smaller companies, like the ones that exist in our area, may not have the resources to duplicate such efforts on their own. However, local companies may be able to support their employees' membership in an organization designed to provide these types of career benefits.

The cruise and concert is being offered by the WIB as part of its feasibility study to determine if our two counties can reasonably support this type of non-profit organization. The

mission of the Next Step Association will be to provide Columbia and Greene County young adults with an opportunity to develop leadership and employment related skills that will not only lead to career advancement opportunities for its members, but will also promote our local businesses' investment in our future workforce and the long-term success of our communities.

People interested in attending this cruise can register by either calling the Workforce New York Career Center or by visiting our website. Proof of age and employment status will need to be brought on the day of the cruise. Employment status can be proved by either bringing a recent pay-stub or other confirmation from their employer (such as a letter or Employee I.D. Card). Those young adults who are not currently employed can also attend as long as they are registered with the Workforce New York Career Center as a job seeker.

The cruise will take place on the "Spirit on Hudson", located at the Waterfront Park in Hudson New York, Water & Ferry Street. Boarding for the cruise will be at the dock at Mariner's on Hudson and will begin at 5:30 pm. The cruise will run from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. It is suggested that everyone wear low heel and soft sole shoes.

Mary-Alane Wiltse is the Director of the Workforce New York Career Center at Columbia-Greene Community College, located in the Professional Academic Center. For more information visit the website at www.columbiagreenevents.org, or call 828-4181 ext. 5510.