

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Job Seekers Overwhelm Canegata Multipurpose Center In Search Of Opportunity

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ST. CROIX -- Before the Division of Personnel (D.O.P.) started its job fair in earnest at 10:00 a.m. this morning, job hunters were already seated inside the Canegata Ballpark Multipurpose Center, ready to present their resumes.

By 10:00 a.m., the facility was overwhelmed.

Aware of the scarce job market on this island, the young and middle-aged made their way to Gallows Bay, where the facility is located, early, hoping to be among the first to present their resumes and fill applications. They were responding to a call by D.O.P. that said, "This is your opportunity to meet with HR professionals of the Division of Personnel

and several government agencies to discuss your employment options." And D.O.P. was keeping with Governor Kenneth Mapp's announcement during his State of the Territory address, that the government had available some 876 job openings.

Various government agencies were stationed at the multipurpose center -- the Department of Human Services, Education, Labor, the Bureau of Corrections, the Virgin Islands Police Department and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency -- with representatives introducing job seekers to the various opportunities available. Even non-governmental organizations like the Virgin Islands National Guard was on site.

The hundreds who visited the job fair today were mostly women, with men making up about a quarter of overall turnout. Njeri John, 21, who is currently employed at Kmart Pharmacy, said she was out seeking a second job so she could save enough money to do anything that's available that matches



Millicent Aubain, Division of

Personnel's territorial administrator of Recruitment and Classification, helps a job seeker fill an application.

Emil Lewis, 57, a St. Kitts immigrant who came to the territory one year ago, described himself as a jack of all trades with over 31 years of experience in the construction industry, working at an island chain called Carib Supply. Mr. Lewis, who was part of the firm's senior staff in recent years, said he and others were made redundant when the chain was acquired by new owners.

"I would rather work in a warehouse or something similar, but I will take what I get," Mr. Lewis said, noting the difficulty in finding work here, and after being tired of sitting home.

For D.O.P., the capacity crowd was expected, but the division's Assistant Director, Averil George, was still amazed by the strong turnout.

"I'm overwhelmed and excited that individuals are really taking the opportunity to seek employment with the Government of the Virgin Islands," she said. "This is long overdue, and since we're looking at this grand turnout, we're going to be hosting drives as positions become available," the assistant director added, revealing that of the 876 job openings that Mr. Mapp said were ready, 389 were being posted on the division's [website](#)

, including eligibility criteria and other pertinent information.

"We're excited about the direction that it's going, and we're continuously taking applications online, individuals are walking into our offices and we have postings going up periodically to reach that count," she said.

Another job seeker that The Consortium spoke with, who agreed to speak only if his name would not be included in this article, said he was testing the job market, and noted that a lot of those seeking employment today were of a younger generation.

"They seem to be high school and college graduates," he said, "not too many people 40 and up seeking jobs today." He further stated, rightfully, that most of St. Croix's middle class worked in the HOVENSA refinery and left when the facility shuttered, in search of opportunities elsewhere.

Even so, today's crowd included a fair mix of individuals from various backgrounds, all of whom visited the fair with one goal: employment.

D.O.P. will continue its drive tomorrow at Tutu Park Mall, starting at 10:00 a.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m.