

Employment center at Brooklyn, N.Y., Navy Yard helps broaden horizons

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People: Vega, Yanira, Scott, Mary

Author(s): Joyce Shelby

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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"I was a nervous, stay-at-home mom on public assistance. She saw more in me than I saw in myself," Vega said. [Janis Quarles] helped Vega get a position as a receptionist at G.M.D. Shipyard Corp., one of the 220 tenants at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Now, Vega is the purchasing agent for the entire company, which repairs ships.

"A lot of people see the Navy Yard as a place that generates jobs," said Eric Deutsch, president of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp., which runs the center.

Full Text (461 words)

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Jul. 9--Nearly four years ago, Yanira Vega of Fort Greene was desperate for a job.

"A friend told me about the employment center at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and I went," Vega, 34, said yesterday.

She was expecting to get work as a cleaning lady.

"There's nothing wrong with being a cleaning lady," Vega said. But her employment counselor, Janis Quarles, thought Vega might be better suited for administrative work.

"I was a nervous, stay-at-home mom on public assistance. She saw more in me than I saw in myself," Vega said. Quarles helped Vega get a position as a receptionist at G.M.D. Shipyard Corp., one of the 220 tenants at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Now, Vega is the purchasing agent for the entire company, which repairs ships.

"Yanira is an integral part of our administration," her boss, Michael Cranston, said. He estimated that nearly one third of his 100 workers were hired through the employment center.

"A lot of people see the Navy Yard as a place that generates jobs," said Eric Deutsch, president of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp., which runs the center.

For more than 150 years, the Brooklyn Navy Yard was a major facility for military ship building. After the federal government closed the yard in 1966, the city assumed ownership and reopened it as an industrial park.

About 3,700 people work at the Navy Yard in industries ranging from furniture manufacturing to electronics. About 2,000 of the workers live in Brooklyn.

While the employment center does not place workers at the Navy Yard exclusively, it did find jobs there for 97 workers between January 2003 and March 2004. Eighty-nine of the workers lived in the surrounding communities of Fort Greene, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Williamsburg, according to center statistics.

"We are committed to creating economic opportunities for the local workforce," Deutsch said.

The center's director, Alice Lunsford, said, "We do assessments, a free job readiness class. We direct people to training. We help them with their resumes. We offer tips on filling out applications and going on interviews. We do everything that we possibly can."

Two weeks into her new job as an information technologist, Mary Scott of Flatbush had no complaints about the center. She lost a secretarial position when the building in which her company was located was sold.

Employment counselor Gil Gainey helped Scott land a job at Shiel Medical Lab at the Navy Yard. She now is a troubleshooter for people with computer problems.

"Everything has worked out just fine," Scott said yesterday.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard Employment Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Call (718) 907-5996 for information.

Credit: Daily News, New York