

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 12, 2015

**CONTACT**

Sheila Solomon Rudd, TampaBay-Job-Links, 813.344.0200

***TampaBay-Job-Links helps recent college grads enter the workforce***

*New graduates need job-hunting skills and a strategy*

**Tampa, FL.** August 12, 2015-Traditional college graduation season ended in June and new graduates who don't have jobs can be feeling anxious as summer progresses. While students expect to spend four years or more earning their degrees, they often don't realize the next milestone in life – landing that entry-level job – can take time and require skills they haven't been taught. TampaBay-Job-Links recognizes that job-search coaching and career planning are essential to a successful search in today's world and is working with recent college graduates to prepare them to take that critical next step.

The job market for new graduates is improved over last year, according to the Job Outlook Survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Companies in the survey indicated they plan to hire 9.6 percent more graduates in 2015. But finding employment continues to be competitive; no longer does a college degree guarantee easy entry into good-paying jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that nearly twice as many college graduates are working for minimum wage compared to 10 years ago.

Sitting at home and searching Internet job boards won't be enough to land employment, said Sheila Solomon Rudd, executive director of TampaBay-Job-Links, a non-profit organization created in 2010 in response to high unemployment from the Great Recession.

In today's job market, finding work requires a sophisticated skill set and strategy. The basics include knowing how to customize résumés; software programs used by human resource departments eliminate resumes without the right key words. Among other crucial skills are networking, using social media platforms like LinkedIn and honing in on potential employers.

"Ideally, students would learn how to do this while in college, but universities and colleges don't really prepare them for how to enter the work world. That's really a course in itself," said Solomon Rudd.

TampaBay-Job-Links provides individualized job search support to job seekers from recent college graduates to displaced workers who can't retire. A career strategist is paired with clients for one-on-one support and in weekly workshops clients are guided through topics like what interviewers are really looking for. They also are introduced to tools that help them develop a career identity and self-guided marketing plan.

Michael Lebovitz, a 2014 graduate of the University of Kansas who moved to Pinellas County for his fiancée last year, said what he learned at TampaBay-Job-Links not only helped him find a job but will be an asset throughout his career. He holds a degree in linguistics with a concentration in Jewish languages, and he was working as a part-time tutor when he heard a presentation about TampaBay-Job-Links at a young leadership training event.

"It sounded like a phenomenal program, and I was in need of a fulltime job ... I ended up finding so much more than that," said Lebovitz.

With the help of TampaBay-Job-Links career strategist Bob Barry, he took care of nuts and bolts, like getting his résumé in the best shape. He learned about building a network. "They taught me how to reach out to people. Just something like a business/netowrking card – what's the polite way to offer your card," said Lebovitz.

Lebovitz's future plans are to attend graduate school in speech pathology. So looking for jobs in the medical field seemed like a natural fit. Barry showed him how to search for health care jobs through online resources like indeed.com. Most of the openings required a medical-related degree, which he didn't yet have. Again with Barry's guidance, Lebovitz expanded his search, with some parameters that would keep him from ending up in a job he hated.

Barry encouraged him to compose a "personal work philosophy" which includes personal values and work ethics. Lebovitz was employed throughout college and drew from his experiences to articulate his work values that included "I never fly blind" and "I'm thankful to customers and co-workers; they are the ones making my success."

He applied for a job as an account manager at ClassB, an online custom t-shirt company in Tampa, and attached his values statement to his resuma. "They looked at what I'd written as my values and said, 'These are a lot of the things our company holds to high standards.'" He got the job. Later, a manager told him the values statement had been one of the reasons he was hired.

It's been a good match. He's been inspired by how his managers treat employees and run the company. "They're phenomenal to us. I may have my own business someday, and I'm learning as much as I can," Lebovitz said.

Different age groups may face their own set of challenges but no matter the stage of life, “the process is the process” in finding work, said Robyn Winters, a career strategist at TampaBay-Job-Links. It can be intensive and likely take time. Preparing a résumé and cover letter in response to a job posting can take two hours, because they must be customized to match the position.

A challenge for new college graduates can be feeling impatient, said Winters. “They should be prepared that it could take more than a few months.”

They may also have some unrealistic expectations about entry-level jobs, according to a recent survey by Accenture Strategy. The online survey polled nearly 2,000 graduates from 2015, 2014, and 2013.

More than half of those about to graduate this year believed they wouldn’t have any trouble finding a job, but only 12 percent had one lined up. Most of the 2015 graduates also didn’t anticipate being employed in low-paying jobs. The reality for 2014 and 2013 graduates now working, however: 49 percent were underemployed or working in a job that didn’t require a college degree.

Perhaps it’s better to understand up front that the path to a first job after college can be challenging. And also that staying motivated and having the right tools will give new graduates the best chance of finding what they want.

*TampaBay-Job-Links is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides professionals with career and job-search coaching, and provides local employers with qualified candidates. TampaBay-Job-Links began as a grassroots initiative of the Jewish community, and its services are available to individuals without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, or sexual orientation. Over 370 job-seeking candidates have been supported by TampaBay-Job-Links since its inception in 2010. For additional information, call 814-344-0200 or email [job-links@tbjl.org](mailto:job-links@tbjl.org).*

#####