

## Is Your Net Working?

By Daisy Saunders

You are looking for a job. Who do you know? But, more importantly, who knows you? In the book, *The Secrets of Savvy Networking*, the author writes, “It’s important to have know-how. It’s equally important to have know-who.” This statement was reinforced by Dorothy Hudson, a Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) enrollee who, after being with the same company for 19 years, was laid off. When forced to reenter the job market, Ms. Hudson said “my first rude awakening was it was no longer a matter of *what* you knew but *who* you knew”.

This has become a reality for many older workers. They are quickly realizing that in today’s world, the best way to get a job is through direct contact and personal relationships. Most jobs are never advertised. They are a part of the hidden job market. And, to tap into that market, you must know and understand the basis of networking. A few tips to help you enter the world of networking are:

**Understand the term.** The term “network” frightens many job seekers— young and old. Some view it as “using” people. Networking isn’t about using people; it’s about making contacts and building relationships. When you understand the importance of networking, even in everyday life, it should come as naturally to you as walking.

**Give back.** Reciprocity or giving back is the cornerstone of networking. This doesn’t mean that you must give something back to the person who gave you the lead or referral. It does mean, however, giving to others; and expecting nothing in return. Think of it as “paying it forward”.

**Expand your circle.** Step outside of your comfort zone. Meet some new people. When you step outside of your comfort zone, you open yourself up to new experiences, new learning opportunities, and new possibilities. When you meet and connect with a new person, follow up within 48 hours, with a “nice to have met you” phone call, email, or short note. And, periodically, keep in touch.

**Tell everyone.** Talk about your job search to anyone who will listen. Jane, for example, was out of work for 8 months before she let any of her friends know. What got in the way? Ego and pride. Don’t let your pride and ego stand in the way of your success. Tell anyone who will listen what you are looking for. Tell your neighbors, church members, family members, and friends. Let complete strangers know that you are looking for a job. And, remind them repeatedly.

Finally, be prepared. Know what you are looking for and jump at any opportunity to sell yourself. *People hire people they know.*

*Daisy Saunders is an inspirational trainer/speaker, facilitator, career/life coach, and author, specializing in issues impacting the lifestyles of older Americans. Her goal is to add value to seniors who want to live a healthy, happy, productive lifestyle. Her vision: seniors who are fit, fabulous, and fearless.*

Visit her website at <http://www.daisysaunders.com> for free downloads of articles and resources on job search strategies for older Americans, personal growth, and wellness; and to follow her blog on aging gracefully.