

EMPLOYMENT

WATER COOLER

Optimistic view for Silicon Valley

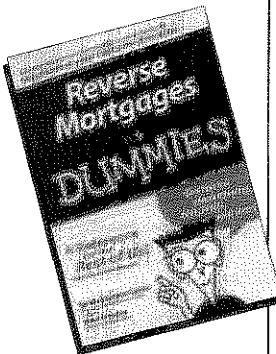
A survey by the Bay Area job search site KITlist.org predicts company health and modest to strong growth in hiring by Silicon Valley firms this year. The KIT list is a "referral-based" job posting email list with more than 47,000 subscribers. The survey results were compiled from the KIT List subscriber and employer/recruiter responses in December and represent first-hand views on the strengths and growth of local companies.

Other findings:

- 41 percent of employers/recruiters predicted up to a 25 percent increase in hiring this year vs. 2005.
- 26 percent predicted 26 percent to 100 percent increase in hiring.
- 4 percent predicted more than a 100 percent increase in hiring over the same period.
- 53 percent reported that their companies were "healthy."
- Job growth was fairly evenly split between technology-specific and marketing-related jobs.
- The majority of job seekers had been on the market for less than 3 months, while 20 percent had been looking for three to six months.

— Staff report

ONE GOOD BOOK



"Reverse Mortgages for Dummies"

By Sarah Glendon Lyons and John E. Lucas (Wiley, 2005, paperback, 270 pages, \$16.99)

Confusion and early negative reports have tainted the field of reverse mortgages, which allow a borrower to tap home equity without making payments; when the borrower dies or sells the home, the loan is repaid. Like most "Dummies" books, this one explains in simple detail how to obtain a reverse mortgage, walking the reader through every step of the process. It also offers a number of cautions, tips and importantly discusses the wisdom of such a mortgage.

— Staff report

Program helps residents get started in biotech

BY NATALI T. DEL CONTE
Staff Writer

Most people think that you have to have a doctoral degree to work in the biotech industry. Not true. SFWorks, a workforce development affiliate of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, is trying to fight that notion by helping San Francisco residents enter the biotech industry through its On-Ramp training program, a six-month series of courses that prepare students to work in biotech.

"One of the things that we face is a stereotype about people in the biotech industry, but there is a diversity of jobs available," said Terri Feeley, director of SFWorks. "After our program, students are moving into entry-level jobs, but over time they can be promoted within the industry and take increasingly better paying jobs."

On-Ramp targets low-income adults with "dead-end" jobs who are interested in opportunities in biotech. Students must live in San Francisco.

SFWorks prefers that they be specifically from the southeast end of The City in the Mission, Bayview, Visitation Valley or Bernal Heights neighborhoods.

"These are the areas where the biotech industry is moving into and we want to make sure that those residents get those jobs in their community," Feeley said.

Feeley said the University of California at San Francisco is by far the biggest employer of On-Ramp students but SFWorks also works closely to employ graduates with Chiron Corp. (CHIR), Bayer AG (BAY) and the federal Department of Agriculture. To date, 44 students have gone through the On-Ramp program. Of those graduates, 75 percent have secured employment in the biotech industry. Additionally, 75 percent have enrolled in more post-secondary education.

"Clearly, there is an overlap of people who are pursuing additional skills training as they obtain work experience in the industry," Feeley explained.

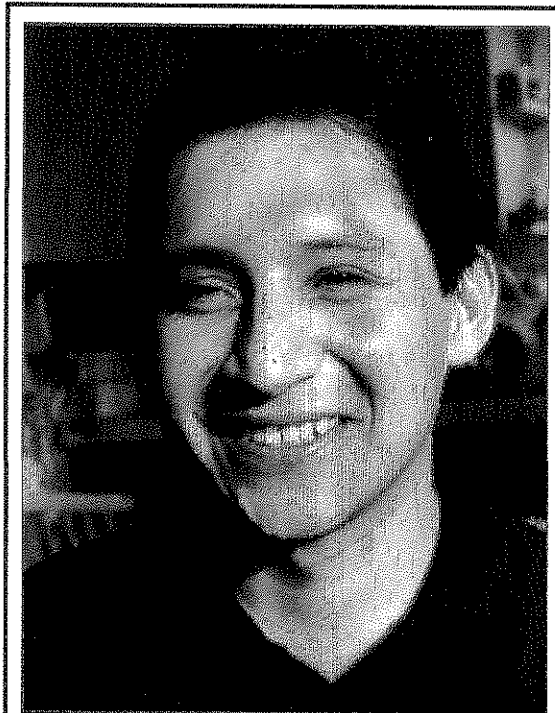
Graduation

The latest class of On-Ramp students will have their graduation ceremony on Friday.

Time: 4 p.m.

Date: Friday, Jan. 20

Location: J. David Gladstone Institutes Auditorium, Mission Bay, 1650 Owens St., San Francisco



JASON STEINBERG/SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

José Martínez took a huge step forward by joining SFWorks' On-Ramp program and entered the biotechnology field.

An 'adventure into biotech' turns into full-time job

José Martínez is one of On-Ramp's most recent success stories.

Martínez came to the U.S. from Mexico in 1997 with only a primary education and no English comprehension. He began working for Jelly Belly Candy Co., commuting nearly three hours a day from his home in the Mission to the factory in Fairfield. Martínez, 30, knew that he wanted a job with more opportunity for upward mobility and biotech caught his attention.

"I thought to myself, 'That industry sounds really good to me because if I get the job, I'll be so happy because I'll feel like I'm a part of a team that is working to find cures or discover medicines for our health problems,'" Martínez recalled.

He began applying for entry-level jobs but without any education in the field, he could not land interviews.

He learned about On-Ramp and, through a series of orientations and application sessions,

was accepted into the program last summer. Martínez, who has a wife and 2-year-old son, admits that he was nervous about committing.

"I had conflicting feelings," he said. "It was hard to quit my job. No job, no money. No money, no food."

Martínez and his wife agreed the program would be a step forward for their family so he took a leap of faith and began what he calls his "adventure into biotech."

While in the program, On-Ramp students are required to do a 15-20 hour a week internship. Martínez did his at Chiron and just last week received an offer to join the company full-time as a lab associate. "I'm very excited that I will be able to support my family with a job that I am proud of," Martínez said.

— Natali T. Del Conte

For more information about On-Ramp, dial the Biotech Information Line at (415) 217-5188.



Harvey Mackay
Getting ahead

Only your best is good enough

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer of his plans to leave the house-building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he would build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career.

When the carpenter finished his work his employer came to inspect the house. He handed the front-door key to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said. "My gift to you!"

The carpenter was shocked! What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have made sure it was all first class.

So it is with us. We build our lives, day at a time, often putting less than our best into the construction.

Then with a shock we realize we have to live in the house we have built. If we could do it over, we'd do it much differently. But we can't go back.

Many people are aware of Mother Teresa's quote, "The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway." But there is more to the quote: "Give the world your best anyway."

Charles M. Schwab, the American industrialist (not the investment leader), had 10 business commandments. No. 10 read: "In all things do your best. The man who has done his best has done everything. The man who has done less than his best has done nothing."

We are all carpenters. Each day we hammer a nail, place a board or erect a wall. Life is a do-it-yourself project. Your attitudes and the choices you make today, build the "house" you live in tomorrow.

Harvey Mackay is the author of five New York Times bestselling books, including the No. 1 bestseller, "Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive." Reach him at harvey@mackay.com or Mackay Envelope Co., 2100 Elm St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414.