

ENEC Helps Retiree Land Job at UPMC

By Carolyn Ristau *The Bulletin*



Garfield – Pat Roccasano’s initial application to UPMC East was unsuccessful, but then she found the Eastside Neighborhood Employment Center (ENEC).

After Ms. Roccasano attended the Partnership on Workshop Readiness and Retention (POWRR) sessions at ENEC earlier this year, the staff then worked with her and with UPMC to get her application into the early pool of applicants for UPMC East. This month Ms. Roccasano will be starting a new position as a food service employee.

Ms. Roccasano retired several years ago from her career as a real estate agent to care for her mother, who was in failing health. After her mother passed away in 2010, Ms. Roccasano found that retirement did not provide enough money.

“I will have to work for a long time.... I can still do things,” Ms. Roccasano explained. “I like helping people. I do not want to sit behind a computer or a desk.” She targeted UPMC East as her ideal employer, conveniently located a few miles from her home in Wilkins Township. She said UPMC provides a good benefits package, plus the type of job she wants – helping people instead of sitting behind a desk.

In the two years since she re-entered the workforce, Ms. Roccasano held several positions, including temporary and seasonal retail positions. She was laid off from her position flagging work-zones for a utility company in January 2012. While

searching for a new position, Ms. Roccasano found the three-step POWRR program recommended for getting jobs with UPMC.

The POWRR program is a partnership between UPMC and community organizations such as the ENEC. It is comprised of three workshops focused on understanding, preparing for and getting a job at UPMC. Candidates who complete all three workshops and meet UPMC job needs and requirements are referred for an interview.

The ENEC was the closest center to Ms. Roccasano with all three POWRR workshops on its schedule. Ms. Roccasano attended the three POWRR workshops as well as some computer courses on Microsoft Word and Excel offered through Pittsburgh CONNECTS, a free technology center that shares space with ENEC. She said the staff at ENEC helped her every step of the way, from registering for the workshops to applying for a job at UPMC East to accepting the job offer that followed.

“I couldn’t have done it without the staff at ENEC. They are wonderful people and very knowledgeable. They know exactly what to do for you and what direction to send you,” Ms. Roccasano explained.

After two interviews with UPMC East, Ms. Roccasano received an offer of employment as a food service worker. “I thought the first offer was ‘take it or leave it,’” she said. However, Bill Freed, workforce coordinator at ENEC, encouraged Ms. Roccasano to negotiate with UPMC. With this encouragement, she negotiated a better hourly rate.

Ms. Roccasano said she is looking forward to starting at UPMC East when it officially opens this month. “Praise to the wind the ENEC,” she said. “Nothing is too much for them; they will go to the ends of the Earth for you.”

To make use of ENEC’s services and workshops, drop by the office at 5321 Penn Ave. or call 412-362-8580. ♦

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successful in finding a private developer for the project.

The Pittsburgh Housing Development Corp. (PHDC) will likely be issuing a request for proposals this summer that would allow for the construction of up to three single-family town homes on several properties currently controlled by the Friendship Development Associates (FDA) and Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC).

Two parcels at 5422 and 5424 Penn Ave. have vacant buildings standing on them, both owned by the FDA. The BGC and FDA jointly own a third plot of land next to 5422 Penn that would be consolidated into the first two parcels, creating a site for the three new homes and possibly an outdoor seating area for the Quiet Storm. All three properties would be conveyed to the PHDC prior to any development occurring there.

“We want to take advantage of an improving real estate market on Penn by building homes that would be competitively priced,” Rick Swartz, executive director of the BGC, told *The Bulletin* recently. “There are some state grant funds that could be used to help keep sales

prices for what would be 2- to 3-bedroom homes close to what the market would be willing to pay.”

Swartz said that in inner-city areas, the cost of new housing development almost always outstrips what people are willing to pay for the product. “It is not uncommon to spend upwards of \$250,000 for a new single-family house that, in the end, can only be sold for \$140,000 to \$150,000.” Swartz said the PHDC would be hoping to narrow that gap considerably with this project.

“What most folks don’t know is that one of the few areas where the Obama administration has been successful in cutting the federal budget is on spending for single-family housing development in communities where the market has been historically depressed,” Swartz added. “So we have to be more strategic about what type of for-sale housing gets built and where.”

The PHDC is a non-profit corporation the URA formed a decade ago to take on projects that eliminate blight and give additional capacity to community groups engaged in revitalizing the housing market in city neighborhoods. ♦

BELOW: These two vacant buildings could soon make way for new housing on Penn Avenue. Photo by Paula Martinac







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