



Yuba-Sutter job fair: 'I will never give up'

By [Jonathan Edwards/ADiedwards](#)

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Ken Jinherd has stalked jobs for 11/2 years without bagging much prey, but he was prowling again Thursday with hundreds of other job hunters.

More than 750 job seekers swamped the Veterans Memorial Building in Yuba City, according to an estimate from Linda Baker, business and workforce specialist with Sutter County One Stop, which organized and hosted the job fair.

The prospects waited in a line that at one point snaked around the building. Once inside, they shook hands, chatted with recruiters, picked up brochures and filled out applications.

Jinherd said he wasn't deterred by the competition or the fact that he's been looking for so long.

"It's been very difficult to try and find a job," the man who is deaf said through an interpreter. "But I will never give up."

He had a plan to turn his fortunes around: "I need to be more assertive. I need to be more outgoing and apply to more jobs."

There were a lot of those available at the fair, Baker said. Thirty-three employers trying to fill about 200 positions attended Thursday's job fair.

"It's a very good turnout," Baker said, "one of our best."

She wasn't just talking about the number of workers who showed up but employers, too. All of the business at the fair had positions they wanted to fill, and they represented a range of professions, including welders, truck drivers, registered nurses and salesmen.

"There's something for everybody," Baker said. "It's all across the board."

The Yuba-Sutter job market has been and continues to be brutal. The unemployment rate topped 18 percent in December, the last month for which numbers are available from the Employment Development Department.

If trends from the last few years continue, that rate climbed higher in January and February when retailers shed the extra staff hired to handle the crush of holiday shoppers. January figures are scheduled to be released today.

The average job hunt lasted one to three months a few years ago, Baker said. Now it lasts a year.

That's not good news for Hector Muñoz, 25, who graduated in December from Humboldt State University with a bachelor's degree in computer information systems.

Muñoz moved to Marysville to improve his odds of getting a tech job, but so far he's only managed to get work as a cashier at Kmart. The part-time job, however, isn't enough to pay the bills since Muñoz gets six to 10 hours of work a week.

He doesn't know how he's going to pay rent, which has been a juggling act. He paid February's rent with the deposit from his former place, March's with his tax return, but doesn't know how he'll manage for April.

"Luck?" he said with a half smile.

Muñoz's roommate, Ryan Naster, 24, is in the same boat and also came to the job fair, which he called "a complete waste of time."

Naster said he wanted to land a job as a chef, but found out the advertised jobs in food service were for coffee baristas.

"I don't do that," he said.

Both men said the months of job searching had taken a toll.

"After three months of searching —" Muñoz said, before Naster finished his sentence. "You get kinda beat down from it."

Baker doesn't have any quick fixes for them. Finding a job is hard, takes a long time and a lot of guts, she said.

"It's hard to look at that glass half full all the time when you're looking at possibly living in your car," Baker said. "How do you remain optimistic in that kind of situation? I really don't know."

Jinherd seems to have figured it out. He collects a paycheck when he can find paid work. When he can't, he goes and volunteers, which Baker said is a great way to keep your skills sharp and your attitude upbeat.

"The worst thing about not working is you don't feel useful. You don't feel like you're contributing," she said. "It's so easy to go into depression."

Jinherd's not there. He said he's ready to do what it takes to land a job, whether it's networking more, applying to more jobs or studying something he needs to get his foot in the door.

"I know I can do anything I can set my mind to," he said. "I'm very strong at that."

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