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The Hunt for Summer Employment

By Courtney Cheng

As soon as school lets out for summer, the hunt for the illusive job begins for many teenagers. Whether it's because of a parent's insistence or self-motivated, high school students often have difficulty finding summer employment. Those who already have part-time jobs are lucky in the summer months. For first-time job seekers, the process of job-hunting can be frustrating and fruitless in spite of good intentions and hard work.

For Michael Yom, a Campolindo student who graduated last year, the search for employment took half the summer. "Any job would have worked in the beginning, since a lot of places here in the Lamorinda area wanted college students or previous work experience."

Recent Miramonte grad Virginia Yan went on her first job search with similar results. She and a friend stopped by pet stores, cafes, bakeries, and other small stores in Lafayette as well as venturing through the tunnel to College Avenue asking about job openings. Not only did they realize they needed resumes and cover letters, they also discovered the same thing Yom did. Yan reports, "We got a lot of immediate rejections. Most stores want people with at least one year of experience or people who can work full time and continue working into the school year."

As summer slowly works its way to its July peak, the chances of finding summer employment gradually get slimmer, as some stores plan to hire new employees beginning in September for the school year. For those who are still diligently seeking a job, though, here are a few pointers from fellow job-hunters.

Yom states that "getting into retail is probably the easiest compared to other jobs, seeing as all you really need is a high school education," and Virginia is staying optimistic despite her initial setbacks. "I do not have a job yet, but I'm going to keep in touch with the stores to see if they will have any future openings."

In spite of optimism and continued pursuit, there exists an inevitable Catch 22 for teenagers seeking employment. In order to obtain some jobs, stores require teens to have had a year's worth of prior work experience. Without experience, how will first-time job hunters get their first job? The search continues.

Courtney Cheng is a part-time co-host and the Book It! reporter for Be the Star You Are! Charity's Express Yourself! Radio Program. She will be attending UC Berkeley in the fall.

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