

# Thousands of applicants swarm job fair

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It's been a waiting game for hundreds of the island's unemployed, but the packed parking lot outside the Hotel Nikko Guam and its swarming second-floor ballroom showed they were ready to take matters into their own hands yesterday.

To most, the number of recruiters present and the sheer volume of applicants was a sign of promise, rather than an indicator of just how dismal the recession has become.

More than 2,900 job seekers registered at the Department of Labor's job fair, which featured 58 employers. That beats last year's figure, when the department saw about 2,400 applicants and 50 employers, according to Erica Unpingco, deputy director of the Department of Labor.

"They are a lot more engaged than years past, and part of that is because of the unemployment rate," she said.

"People were really gravitating toward employment with military and federal contracts because of the military buildup, and the anticipated increase in jobs and activity there," Unpingco said. "That seems to be where the hiring's taking place right now, and (applicants are) continuing to be more aggressive about finding out about opportunities there."

Those federal contractors included employers like Chugach World Services, Naval Base Guam's security department, the U.S. Naval Hospital and DZSP-21.

## Frustrated

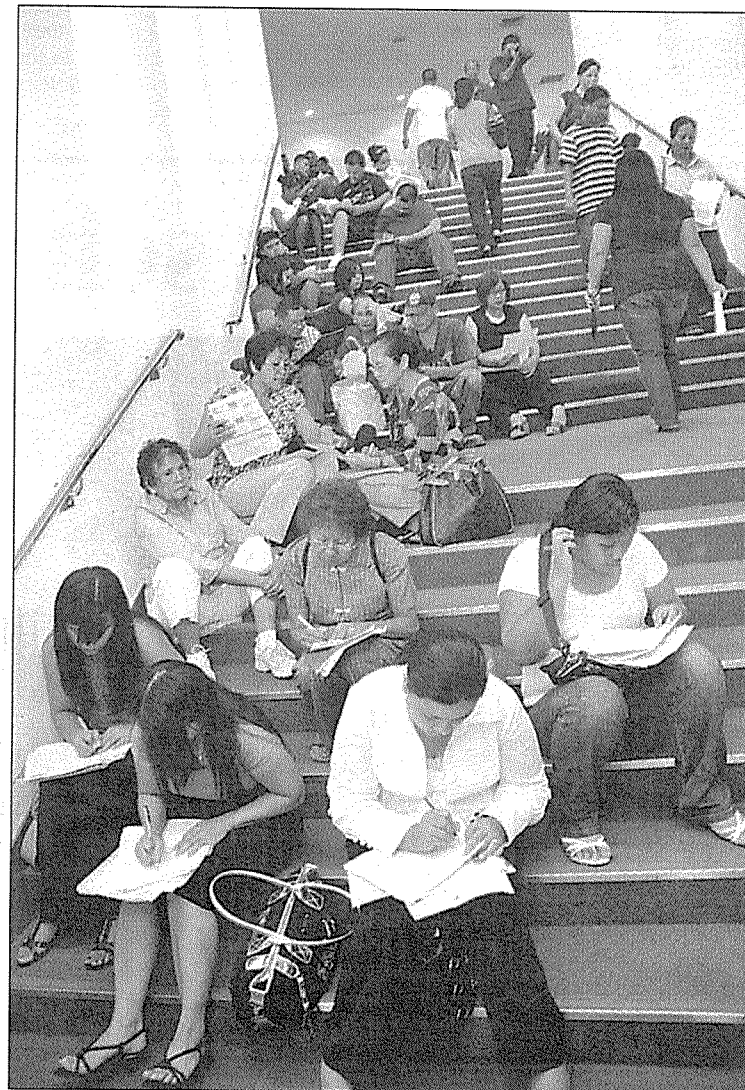
And applicants weren't deterred because they had been receiving rejections until now; rather, they were more frustrated that prospective employers were keeping them hanging on the line with no response.

"It's been four to six months," said 52-year-old Danny Perez, who is looking for a job in construction. "There's no shortage in construction — it's booming actually," he said.

When he does call to find out the status of his applications, he said he gets referred to someone else.

"I don't know what they're doing with my application," he said. "They haven't called me."

On Monday, he decided to finally meet face-to-face with employers, instead of going through a third par-



Rick Cruz/For Pacific Daily News

**Applicants:** Job seekers fill out their applications on the stairway to the Tasi Ballroom during the Island-Wide Job Fair held by the Guam Department of Labor, One-Stop Career Center and the Hotel Nikko Guam yesterday.

ty. Although he's getting "somewhat frustrated," he said he will not settle for a job outside his expertise or interests, which include carpentry, painting, masonry and plumbing.

Meanwhile, 24-year-old Pamela Marcellana, who has been job-hunting for three months, said she'll resort to any job if

she doesn't find a position to meet her business or accounting skills within the next six months.

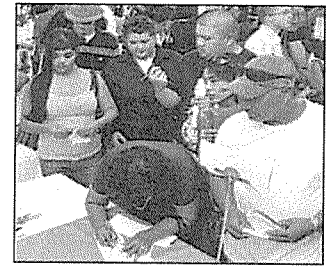
"A lot of businesses right now are downsizing with the ongoing global recession, and employers are cost-cutting with their companies," she said.

So far, she's been looking online

at the Guam labor department's Web site, and scouring the newspapers for openings. In her spare time, she's been sharpening her skills by practicing with Quickbooks and other accounting software.

With computer skills like hers and her college degree, Marcellana has an edge over some of the other applicants.

According to Yolanda Calvo, human resources manager at the Personal Finance Center, applicants for the one job opening for which they are recruiting must have basic bookkeeping skills and should be computer literate in Microsoft Office, Excel and Word.



## PHOTOS ONLINE

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For those who want further training to increase their chances of hire, Unpingco said they can utilize services offered through the Department of Labor's partners, including Guam Community College, the Guam Trades Academy, the Navy Fleet and Family Readiness Center, AmeriCorps, Department of Public Health and Guam Memorial Hospital.

"I see this as a positive outcome," Unpingco said. "People looking for jobs or looking to advance their careers, looking to accelerate in their field. There seemed to be lot of interest with the training services."

While military and federal contracts were heavily represented, Unpingco said tourism had a fair share of recruiters present at the job fair, too. Hyatt Regency Guam, the Pacific Islands Club, Fiesta Resort and Sheraton Laguna Guam were among those looking to hire, despite the reported shrink in tourism jobs of 300 positions out of a total of 5,400, year over year, according to Pacific Daily News files.

Hotel Nikko Human Resources Manager Ele Magdael said things are starting to pick up compared to two months ago. There are always opening in food, beverage and housekeeping services. The main problem is that many applicants aren't flexible with their schedules, he said.

"These are 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week operations," he said, which is why food and beverage seems to be the best fit for most. Managers can schedule employees in shifts, depending on each applicant's availability, and applicants don't need to have years of experience. The main thing they're looking for is excellent customer service skills.

"If you're ready to work, we're here to employ you," he said



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