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Out of work and off to camp

A new six-week camp in Edina give adults a place to network and get some career tips. The hourlong seminars, which are preceded by a "happy hour," meet for six Mondays in June and July.

By **JOHN EWOLDT**, Star Tribune

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When Marsha Buchok of Edina's adult community education program asked how job seekers networked, she heard about Laid Off Camp, Pink Slip Party and Layoff Cafe. Despite the success of those groups in other parts of the country, she was looking to offer more than a support group or a job fair.

"I wanted a casual, fun venue to bring people together, not only for support and camaraderie but also action plans," said Buchok, who went with the name Out-of-Work Camp.

Scratch the officious classroom setting. Skip the bottled water and the store-bought cookies. Buchok contacted Tejas to host, where the party room will include free chips, salsa, soda and, ahem, a cash bar.

The hourlong seminars, which are preceded by a

"happy hour," meet for six Mondays in June and July. Buchok is going beyond the usual resources to get the word out. Typically, adult community education classes attract a female, older demographic, but the camp is also being marketed on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to appeal to younger audiences.

"People out of work are all ages, male and female, ethnicities and income groups," Buchok said. "All are welcome, whether they live in Edina or not."

Bob Boettcher of Edina, who has been out of work more than a year, plans to attend the six sessions. He has been to other networking groups, such as the Minneapolis Job Support Workshop at Christ Presbyterian Church and Smiling and Dialing at the Golden Valley Country Club, but he likes the idea of having a beer in the company of people helping one another. Boettcher is glad that the event promises to be fun as well as functional.

"We'll meet and mingle for an hour and then get some career tips," he said.

Seminar topics range from how to handle emotions when you're "Out of Work and Mad as Hell" to "Managing Your Career Campaign." Speakers will address buying individual health insurance plans, managing rent or mortgage payments in lean times, identifying job search tools and living on less.

Buchok said that, at its heart, adult education is

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about outreach to the community at large. "If you haven't lost your job, chances are that you know someone who has," she said. "Tell them about the Out-of-Work Camp."

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