

Temporary Help Week salutes efforts, impact of temporary workers

by Susan Kuhlmann

To acknowledge the contributions made by temporary workers, Gov. Ben Nelson has declared Oct. 3-9 Temporary Help Week in Nebraska.

"The week is meant to honor temps, who do such a nice job, and to make communities aware of the industry and its value in the lives of businesses and people," said Ann Kelleher, president of the Nebraska Chapter of the National Association of Temporary Services.

Kelleher, who is president of Mature Resources, said activities were planned in observance of Temporary Help Week. The first was an old-fashioned typing contest, held in conjunction with River City Roundup. At an Oct. 6 banquet, each temporary employment firm will honor an outstanding employee.

All funds raised by the events are to be donated to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund for flood victims.

This reporter participated in experiment in which media people were sent on temporary assignments for an hour, beginning by going to Mature Resources to fill out a four-page form with questions on work skills and preferences, desirable work environments, the workers' role—to follow orders or be given more independence, preferred location and hours.

Clients are interviewed and given packets of information on such issues as how to collect their pay and what to do if a job doesn't work out well.

They take several tests which measure skill levels, including simple math computations, grammar, spelling and filing. When appropriate, typing skills are tested.



Kelleher

This reporter's assignment at Share Health Plan of Nebraska involved putting together packets of information for clients.

Share uses temps to fill in for workers who are on temporary leave and to handle unusually large assignments, such as a project that required stuffing and then restuffing 100,000 packets.

Joanie Richards, account service assistant, said it's not uncommon for temps to start a short term assignment and remain with the firm for long periods. Employers have the chance to check out potential employees without having to go through a time-consuming interview and hiring process.

Performance as temporary worker wins Fishbain statewide acclaim

For Zena Fishbain, getting a call from Kelly Services in Omaha informing her that she'd been named Nebraska's Temporary Employee of the Year was a surprise. "My reaction was, 'You're kidding,'" she said.

Fishbain, who said she approaches each assignment as if she were a permanent employee, registered with Kelly Services four years ago. She had been a secretary before and after she married Bennett Fishbain almost 46 years ago, but she spent most of her children's growing-up years staying at home with them and doing volunteer work.

In 1976, when her youngest was 16, she combined her love of needlepoint and her aptitude for teaching by opening a yarn shop, Zena's Knit and Stitch.

"My oldest daughter had been in business with me,"



Fishbain

Share is quick to recognize good workers and use them in a variety of positions. Several have been hired after starting out on temporary assignments.

Among those doing temporary work are Kimberly Kehl, who has a degree in education but hasn't found the type of teaching position she wants, and Bart Wilkins, a minister who is working as a temp to support his family while he is preparing to open a new church in Omaha.

The National Association of Temporary Services was founded in 1966 to promote the quality of service to client companies and temporary employees and to enhance an

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Fishbain said. "When she got her degree and was offered a job and left, I found it was no fun without her. I decided to sell the store and retire."

Retirement lasted only one week before Fishbain decided to go back to work as a temporary. A friend's comment that she'd never be able to find work unless she could learn to use a computer and her own doubts about her ability to do so served as a red flag. A son-in-law who is a systems analyst helped her, but frustration led her to throw a pot of flowers at her instructor before she managed to pick up the computer skills.

"Kelly Services put me through the tests and gave me an assignment," Fishbain said. "I discovered to my delight that there was someone who was willing to lend me a hand."

"That's how I got started, and since then I've had some wonderful assignments. I started what was to be a three-week assignment at Union Pacific four years ago and I'm still there two to three days a week. It's nice to be there long enough to be considered one of the group. I've become something of a permanent fixture."

Other assignments have taken her to the University of Nebraska Medical Center and to ConAgra, for 18 months.

"In the beginning, I wouldn't go anywhere without the reinforcement of Kelly people," Fishbain said. The over-60

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