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# Job fair sought, received

By Thomas G. Keane

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East Palo Alto wants to taste a slice of the Silicon Valley pie, and employers at several high-tech firms seem willing to oblige.

On Saturday, representatives from Hewlett-Packard Co., Rolm Corp., Syntex Corp., Varian Associates Inc. and Lockheed Missiles & Space Co. Inc., plus others will sponsor a job fair for residents of East Palo Alto, east Menlo Park and Redwood City.

The companies plan to interview candidates to fill job openings — perhaps as many as 60 or more. The conference also will include seminars on job interviews and training.

"We sure as hell wouldn't be over there if we didn't have openings," said Harry Portwood of Hewlett-Packard, who is the coordinator of the event.

"I think this conference is a little different than the average job fair — we're also talking about training," he said.

Portwood and other officials said the emphasis of the conference would be on training and education. "We don't want this to be just a one-shot deal," he said.

No jobs are being promised to anyone. What officials and others do promise, however, is to help job-seekers see the best way to land a desired job.

East Palo Alto City Manager Fred Howell said, however, that the job prospects are real.

"Over the years, East Palo Alto has been studied, workshop-ed and meeting-ed to death," he said. "One thing we don't need is an another informational workshop."

Howell said the number of job openings the companies will advertise at the conference is "rather sizable." He said it involves 35 to 40 different job classifications, including professional and non-professional opportunities, with emphasis on entry level positions.

According to Rick Nelson, an aide to Congressman Tom Lantos, East Palo Alto's unemployment rate is 9.4 percent, double that of the countywide figure. In an effort to help the city's unemployed, Lantos called in private industry to help.

Compared to other cities in the area, the unemployment problem in East Palo Alto is "blatant," Nelson said. Lantos decided to target East Palo Alto after receiving a request for help from Mayor Barbara Mouton several months ago.

In a statement released from his office, Lantos said, "Since my first visit to East Palo Alto in 1950, I have been convinced that there is a tremendous vitality and human potential in East Palo Alto ... Unfortunately, most of this potential is underutilized."

Nelson said a job fair seemed to be a good way to build a special bridge between the city and the wealth of high technology firms. There also are plans to keep that bridge operating, he said.

Howell reiterated the city's de-

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sire for more than a one-day seminar.

"The success (of Saturday's event) will determine the frequency of future" events, he said.

The day begins with registration at 8:45 a.m. in the East Palo Alto Municipal Services Building, 2415 University Ave. At 9:30 am. Hewlett-Packard and Lockheed officials will host a panel discussion entitled "Silicon Valley — The Real World," aimed at taking a general look at the high technology business and its future.

From 10:30 a.m. to noon, workshops are scheduled on job interviewing techniques and training opportunities for high-tech jobs. Representatives from Canada College, the Stanford Mid-Peninsula Urban Coalition, the San Mateo Private Industry Council and Op-

portunities Industrialization Center West will be on hand for the discussions.

In the afternoon, firms will interview candidates for jobs, ranging anywhere from production to security to entry-level executive positions. Nelson said the interviews will be an attempt to match skills to openings.

He also said there should be enough room for hundreds of people. If the first session fills and some people cannot get in, there will be an "overflow" session in the afternoon, he said.

"We have no idea whether 50 people will be there or 5,000," he said.

Residents of East Menlo Park, known as Belle Haven, and those from east Redwood City — other areas of high unemployment — also are invited to participate in discussions and interviews.

Other sponsors of the event include Friends of East Palo Alto, the city, and the East Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce.