Palomar College offering free help for a career change

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SAN MARCOS – Do you wake up quickly and feel excited to get to work? Or do you hit the snooze button over and over again, dreading the morning?

Do you hate Mondays? Love Fridays?

Do you overeat at work and call in sick regularly? Or do you feel calm in the mornings, happy with yourself and your daily accomplishments?

Asking yourself these questions is a good way to determine how satisfied – or unsatisfied – you are with your job, said John Dise, director of the Career Center at Palomar College.

Dise said that 70 percent to 80 percent of people working today aren’t completely happy with their careers. Many feel trapped: too old to make a change, too tied up with financial commitments, or just confused.

"Lots of people just settle for something they fell into," Dise said. "They feel stuck, they have obligations. But it’s a personal choice if you want to take charge of yourself and your life."

Dise said there's no better time than the present to seek out one's true passions in life. That's why Palomar College is touting 2006 as the "Year of the Career Change." And, as such, the school is offering free vocational testing and "work-interest inventorying" to the public through Jan. 14.

"We want to try and wake people up who are dormant, people feeling like they're too old, that it’s too late," Dise said. "It's never too late."

Through next week, anyone can come to the career center and get free advice, or take a shortened version of the Myers-Briggs test, a personality test that divides people into 16 personality types. The test then lists careers that would be a good match. Counselors are available to help analyze the test, choose a career path or set up steps to achieve those goals.

Also available is a one-unit course that includes a whole battery of tests. The class, called "Counseling 165: Career Search," costs $30.

"We are . . . helping people find their purpose," Dise said. "We are helping people to discover something about themselves that is profound. That makes their eyes pop open."
Dise was hired in 1972 to set up the career center and provide vocational counseling. Career counseling is important, he said, because the dropout rate in community colleges is about 40 percent nationwide.

"My belief is they drop out because they don't have a purpose, a goal, they don't know what they are doing," he said.

Last year, 11,516 students visited the career center. During the month of December alone, 1,285 sought advice.

Eddie Tubbs has helped many of them. Tubbs, an instructional support assistant at the center, benefited from its services before he began working there.

When Tubbs retired from the Marine Corps in 2000, he didn't have a career in mind. He was thinking only of job security, and worked for a few years as a headhunter for a recruiter.

"But I just felt stagnant," he said.

"My wife told me I should go to college. And I realized Palomar was right next door."

So he came to the career center, took assessment tests and discovered he had a dream to work with children. Now he has his bachelor's degree in liberal studies, is about to take a certification test to become a substitute teacher and has a job he loves – helping other students find their passions.

"It's like the doctor's office," Tubbs said of the center. "People come in and they are sick, and we try to give them the right medicine to feel better."

Carlos Batista came to the career center yesterday to talk about getting an associate degree in business. Batista wants to open his own bar and grill in San Marcos to cater to the college crowd. After talking to Dise, he had a bigger goal: pursuing a master's degree at a university.

"I thought an (associate degree) would look good on my résumé, give me more business understanding," Batista said.

Batista already has a bachelor's degree in communications from California State University Chico, and after talking with Dise, he decided to explore taking his education further.

"(Dise) asked me what my final goal was," Batista said. "He said, 'Go straight for the MBA, quit messing around with the AA.' I thought it was good advice, and I just called the University of Phoenix and made an appointment."

Junius Dion of Temecula is a Palomar student studying kinesiology. Dion is working toward a bachelor's degree and plans to transfer out of Palomar after two years and finish at California State University Long Beach.

He has a specific career goal now: to be a physical therapist with Veterans Affairs, helping injured veterans returning from overseas. But he hasn't always been so clearly focused, and he credits the career center with helping him define his plans.
"I talked to the counselors here, and decided what I really wanted to do, where I am headed. They really put me in focus. They told me, 'This is your goal, here is a good path to accomplish it.'"

Others, such as sisters Guadalupe Arreola and Maria Jimenez, come to the career center to take advantage of the computers and résumé writing tutorials, and to do class scheduling.

Arreola is almost finished with her associate degree in liberal arts, and soon will transfer to CSU San Marcos to pursue her bachelor's degree in social work. She enjoys going to school so much, she said, that she decided to take some extra classes in child development, CPR and child nutrition "just for fun."

Her sister, a senior in high school, has been inspired by Arreola to take courses at Palomar. "Just to get ahead," she said. Her early entrance into college has helped Jimenez define her goal of becoming a high school literature teacher.

This is exactly what Dise encourages people to do – to seek out their passion and pursue it with zeal – whether they are 17 or 82.

"With the new year, it's a perfect time for people to make a resolution to take the training that will lead them to a career that gives them meaning," Dise said. "My advice is to stop procrastinating."

The career center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and Fridays until 4 p.m. More information is available by calling (760) 744-1150, ext. 2194.