

The National Senior Network keeps Massachusetts seniors connected and working

Posted on 29 September 2015. Tags: [Department of Labor](#), [Individual Employment Plan](#), [K.B. Sherman](#), [National Senior Center Service Employment Program](#), [National Senior Network](#), [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#), [Susan Jepson](#), [Veterans Forward Program](#)

By K.B. Sherman

Are you over 55 and bored? Like to make some extra money during retirement? Like to get back into the workforce? The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), operating through the National Senior Network, assists people 55 and older who want to work and who are committed to searching for employment.

SCSEP offers an on-the-job training experience and community service employment at a host agency while one continues to look for a job with another employer. National Senior Network also offers support, job hunting counseling and strategies, will help with preparing resumes, cover letters and job applications, and offers interviewing skills assistance and other job coaching. Once one is enrolled, he or she will be paid a stipend of \$9 (minimum wage) per hour while assigned to an on-the-job training site in their community for between 14 and 20 hours per week, depending upon funding. Eligibility is determined by federal regulations and Department of Labor guidelines. SCSEP participants in Massachusetts must be 55 years of age or older. There are some income restrictions for eligibility.

Susan Jepson is the director for the Massachusetts chapter of the National Senior Network (NSN) in Lowell, known nationally as the National Able Network or NAN.

Satellite offices are located in Lawrence, Lynn and Cambridge at the Career Source.

“NAN started in Chicago in 1982 to help older workers get back into the job market,” Jepson explained. “In 2003 the Department of Labor funded it for Massachusetts in Lowell under the National Senior Center Service Employment Program for people over 50 years of age. In 2009 the program became the NSN as a separate entity and since then has also opened offices in Boston, Maine, New Hampshire and Indiana.”

Jepson said she has a staff of “three and a half people” who serve the approximately 250 seniors currently enrolled. She pointed out that 20 percent of the workforce in the U.S. is 55 and older.

In Lowell, participants from NSN work at Lowell City Hall, the National Parks Service, the Lowell Community Charter School, CTI, Boys and Girls Club, and the Career Center of Lowell, among others. Program participants work as a team with NSN to make an Individual Employment Plan on a regular basis throughout enrollment, which lasts typically from 12 to 24 months. Host agencies must be either a not-for-profit agency or a government office. Participants’ goals should include upgrading job skills, a commitment to developing and following an Individual Employment Plan, and willingness to participate in workshops, meetings and other activities that the SCSEP program offers.

The National Able Network also has a director of veterans programs who shares firsthand experience transitioning from a military career to the civilian job market. The Veterans Forward Program can be reached at 312-994-4290.

NSN also helps mature workers maintain a positive self esteem during difficult times by providing senior art classes and ESL and computer skills training, and forming job clubs for mature workers.

NSN encourages all members and non-members to keep up with what is happening in the over-55 job market by monitoring the NAN’s weekly blog at <http://blog.nationalable.org/> or view more information at <https://www.nationalable.org/our-services/brochures/scsep-nsn-brochure-0113.pdf>. To contact SCSEP, call 855-994-8300.