

▶ **Hotel Jobs at Your Service**

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▶ **Chicago Hotels Primed for Hiring**

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▶ **State of the Union Worker**

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▶ **WERC: A New Model for Successful Hiring**

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▶ **Newsflash!**

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► Hotel Jobs at Your Service

Chicago is home to an array of elegant, world-class hotels, many of which need friendly, smiling people with good hospitality skills. Employment opportunities exist at all levels, from housekeeping staff to front desk clerks.

With the economy growing stronger, business is improving for the hotel industry. Hotel consultant Ted Mandigo, president of TR Mandigo & Co., says that hotels in the downtown Chicago area had occupancy levels above 70% in 2004. Mandigo expects that number to go up in 2005, and predicts an increase in employment opportunities as hotels re-hire staff members who were laid off during the recession, and add new positions to serve a growing commercial and leisure travel market.

Marc Gordon, president and CEO of Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association (IHLA), is also optimistic. “The [hotel] industry is continuing to improve. ... Our hope is that it will recover to where it was in 2000,” says Gordon, adding that the planned expansion of McCormick Place (to be completed in 2008) will be a significant factor in attracting more convention business which, in turn, will further boost the Chicago hotel industry.

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According to Cook County industry projections from the State of Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), nearly 32,000 people were employed in hotels and other lodging places in the year 2000. By 2010, that number is expected to jump to more than 35,000 -- an increase of almost 10%.¹

In a city the size of Chicago, there is no shortage of hotels eager to employ and retain a diverse staff. In 2002, Cook County boasted more than 400 hotels and motels combined, and employed more than 25,000 workers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²

Many of the city’s most luxurious hotels are located in the heart of downtown Chicago and the surrounding areas. IHLA lists more than 70 hotels within the metro Chicago region in its 2005 membership directory.³ ■

¹ State of Illinois Department of Employment Security, Economic Information and Analysis Division, Industry Projections 2000-2010, Cook County.

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2002 County Business Patterns, Accommodations & food services.

³ To view an on-line listing of IHLA member hotels – or to order a free copy of the “Illinois Hotel-Motel Directory” – visit www.stayillinois.com. (Click on the “Contact Us” link to order the directory.)

► Chicago Hotels Primed for Hiring

CJC recently talked with Ken Maier, director of human resources at The Palmer House Hilton, as well as Amy Wicklund, human resources manager for The Ritz-Carlton Chicago (a Four Seasons Hotel), to learn more about various entry-level positions, as well as inquire about essential job skills.

The Palmer House Hilton

The Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe, is one of Chicago's most historic hotels, originally founded about 135 years ago. The hotel has more than 1,600 rooms and approximately 1,000 employees who, according to Maier, represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Maier says the housekeeping and steward departments at The Palmer House Hilton employ the largest number of entry-level workers, with approximately 350 employees working in housekeeping alone. Room attendants are responsible for such duties as making beds, cleaning bathrooms, dusting, and changing linens. "The hotel industry is pretty labor-intensive," says Maier.

Maier says that the majority of The Palmer House Hilton employees are union members. According to the union contract, room attendants at The Palmer House Hilton will earn \$11.40 per hour as of May 1, 2005; that figure will increase to \$11.75 on November 1, 2005; and to \$12.10 in May 2006. "A seasoned room attendant can make almost \$24,000 a year," says Maier.

The aforementioned hourly wages are significantly higher than the national average, according to WageWatch, a web-based compensation and benefits survey tool for human resource professionals.⁴

The Palmer House Hilton offers free individual medical and dental coverage to employees, as well as "very affordable" family coverage, according to Maier.

Other perks include a free continental breakfast, as well as free lunch at the hotel cafeteria everyday; two hotel staff parties per year; reduced rates at other Hilton hotels; savings on RTA/CTA rider passes; discounts on movie tickets; and more. "We try to do a number of things to help our staff," says Maier.

Maier reveals that turnover is highest among housekeeping staff, so it's an area that's frequently hiring. "[Housekeeping] is a little bit of hard work," says Maier. "Some people just decide it's

... it's helpful if an individual has previous hotel or hospitality experience, but The Palmer House Hilton offers training, including a bilingual employee who trains housekeeping staff.

⁴ WageWatch (www.wagewatch.com) collected data on starting wages for housekeepers/room attendants from 799 participating U.S. properties. The median starting wage reported was \$7.50. (This data is less than a year old, according to WageWatch.)

not for them.” Maier adds that employee turnover is also dependent upon the economic climate. “When business is slow, turnover is slow,” he says.

Stewards (or utility stewards, as they’re commonly referred to) are responsible for cleaning up the kitchen areas, washing dishes, and performing other miscellaneous duties. Beginning May 1, 2005, utility stewards will earn \$11.15 per hour, which is also exceptionally higher than the national average.⁵

Regardless of the position, Maier says there are basic characteristics he looks for when screening candidates, such as past employment. “We look for people with a stable work history,” says Maier. Flexibility is also very important since The Palmer House Hilton is open year-round.

Maier says it’s helpful if an individual has previous hotel or hospitality experience, but The Palmer House Hilton offers training, including a bilingual employee who trains housekeeping staff. Friendliness also ranks high on Maier’s list; in fact, it’s a quality he looks for during the interview process. “If people have good hospitality skills, they’re noticed,” he says.

Exceptional hospitality skills can also help an individual move ahead. “Most of our housekeeping managers started out as room attendants,” says Maier. “And most [steward] supervisors started out as dishwashers.”

The front desk is another area where good communication skills are essential; however, it involves more complex responsibilities, such as handling cash and using a computer. Maier says it can be a great starting point for individuals considering a career within the industry. “They get a feel for the hotel industry, and they get to see if it’s something they want to pursue,” he says.

Maier says The Palmer House Hilton will consider candidates who have a criminal background, depending on the offense and how long ago it happened. “We do a drug and criminal background check on everyone,” says Maier.

Application Process

The Palmer House Hilton actively recruits new employees by sending representatives to job fairs, as well as directly contacting community organizations about job openings. “We send out a large number of e-mails and faxes,” says Maier. In addition, the hotel has a job hotline that provides current openings. “We only accept applications for the open jobs,” explains Maier.

The employment manager at The Palmer House Hilton (whom Maier prefers not to identify by name) is the first person job developers should contact in order to receive a list of available jobs. Once the job developer identifies some opportunities from the list, he/she should then contact the employment manager to set up a convenient day and time for a candidate to come in and fill out an application. Applications are available in both English and Spanish.

⁵ WageWatch (www.wagewatch.com) collected data on starting wages for stewards/dishwashers at 580 participating U.S. properties. The median starting wage reported was \$7.40. (This data is less than a year old, according to WageWatch.)

If you're interested in learning about current job openings at The Palmer House Hilton, please call the hotel's job hotline at: **(312) 621-7378**. Or, call the hotel's main number at **(312) 726-7500**, press "0" for an operator, and ask to speak to the employment manager.

The Ritz-Carlton Chicago

Amy Wicklund, human resources manager at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago, 160 E. Pearson, actively works with local refugee agencies to find employees, including such organizations as Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights and Interfaith Refugee & Immigration Ministries. "We work with the agency to let them know we have these positions available," says Wicklund. She says most of the refugees she meets are from Africa, and that most speak English.

Similar to The Palmer House Hilton, Wicklund says that housekeeping and stewarding are two areas where The Ritz-Carlton is doing a lot of hiring. (The hotel employs approximately 100 staff members in housekeeping, and about 35 employees in the stewarding department.)

Wicklund also notes that there are a lot of pastry cook positions opening up, although culinary experience and schooling are required.

"When you're dealing with guests and customers, you could have two completely different personalities, one right after the other, so you need to be able to adapt to the guests."

"[We're] just getting ready for the busier months, which are coming up," says Wicklund. She says that May and June are especially hectic, along with September and October. During the slower winter months, employees may find that there isn't as much work, but The Ritz-Carlton does everything it can to retain workers. "[Employees] may see some reduced hours," says Wicklund. "But, we make an effort to try to help them find hours." Wicklund gives an example of a bus attendant whose hours were reduced during the slower months, but who was then able to find extra work in the stewarding department because he had previously worked in that area.

Wicklund says that job developers would do best to select candidates who have a stable work history, preferably with hotel or some sort of customer service experience. It's also important that the individual have a flexible schedule or can at least work the hours that are required for the position (including overnight shifts, if necessary).

The Ritz-Carlton prefers that an individual have previous experience, but it's not always necessary. "Sometimes we'll look outside of that," says Wicklund.

"Especially for something like our steward positions -- we may not require someone to have been a dishwasher before."

Wicklund notes that every position has a training program. "We'll train on the core responsibilities of a job ... like physically how to set the table, how to serve," she says. There are certain physical requirements, as well. "When we extend an offer, we have a job description that [candidates] review," says Wicklund. The form that is given to candidates explains any necessary physical movements, including lifting, pushing, and standing.

Not all employees are required to have perfect English proficiency, but it's important to know the basics, according to Wicklund. "Someone needs to have enough English to understand what the guest is trying to ask, because anyone that works here, really, could be in a situation where they're dealing with a guest of the hotel. So, they would need to have enough skills to determine what the guest needs," she says.

Wicklund says she can usually assess a candidate's language proficiency during the interview, which is always conducted in English. (Job applications are only available in English, as well.)

When asked whether there are opportunities for individuals who don't have a lot of work experience, Wicklund keeps an open mind. "I hate to say we would never consider someone," she says. "It depends on the position, and it depends on the individual, too."

Wicklund says that turnover at The Ritz-Carlton is low compared to the industry average, which could possibly be attributed to the company's culture. "I think a lot of people that work here are generally very friendly and warm, and they just anticipate other people's needs, and that's something that they're doing with the customer all the time," says Wicklund.

The Ritz-Carlton is a union property, so full-time employees get complete benefits. The hotel also offers generous compensation, according to Wicklund. "In doing research, we found that we are one of the top-paying hotels in the city," she says, explaining that The Ritz-Carlton pays even higher than the base pay negotiated by the union.

Other fringe benefits include free breakfast in the hotel cafeteria, along with complimentary lunch or dinner, depending on the shift. Wicklund says the hotel also provides uniforms for most positions, and cleans them free of charge.

There are certain qualities Wicklund looks for in candidates, regardless of the position. "[We look for] professionalism, good communication skills, someone that's adaptable and flexible," says Wicklund. "When you're dealing with guests and customers, you could have two completely different personalities, one right after the other, so you need to be able to adapt to the guests," she says.

There is also room for growth in many positions. For example, The Ritz-Carlton's executive housekeeper originally started out as a room attendant.

Application Process

The first step in applying for a position is to fill out a paper application. (HR prefers that method over phone calls.) Applications can be picked up 24 hours a day, right outside the HR office, which is located in the basement of The Ritz-Carlton. Candidates should use the back entrance of the hotel, located on a street called Mies van der Rohe, which runs parallel to Michigan Ave. Press the "BP" button once inside the elevator.

HR is available M-F, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; however, even if HR is closed, an applicant can still complete an application and slide it under the HR office door. Or, the application can be left with someone in the security office, which is located right outside HR and is staffed on a 24-

hour basis. “We try to make our applications available, so that if someone’s working odd hours, they don’t have to rearrange their schedule just to apply for the job,” says Wicklund. Applications or resumes can also be faxed directly to HR at: **(312) 266-9007**.

Wicklund says that HR is consistent in responding to all applicants. “When [the candidate] completes the application, we usually get back to the candidate within about 7-10 business days ... either by phone or mail,” says Wicklund.

Individuals who are considered for employment at The Ritz-Carlton may be required to interview with as many as four hotel staff members, including an HR representative, a department manager, a division manager, and, finally, the hotel manager.

The Ritz-Carlton also has a 24-hour job hotline that job developers can call to learn about current openings: **(312) 573-5034**. ■

► State of the Union Worker

What might job developers want to understand about unionized positions in the hotel industry before matching a job candidate? CJC interviewed representatives from UNITE HERE Local 1 to find out.

Local 1 represents service workers at more than 30 upscale hotels in downtown Chicago. Lars Negstad, research director for Local 1, ticks off the benefits of being a union member, not least of which is the drastically reduced cost of medical insurance. “I think it’s very important to note that, under the union contract, individual health insurance is *free* to workers,” emphasizes Negstad. “Family coverage is \$45 per month and will come down to \$30 per month as of January [2006],” he says. “This is a huge economic benefit to workers. It’s a good Blue Cross/Blue Shield health plan. Union workers also get a pension, pre-paid legal [assistance], seniority rights, a grievance procedure, and protection from capricious managers. Workers in non-union hotels don’t have any of those protections.” (Local 1 has a union affiliate that represents hotels near O’Hare International Airport. Workers at those hotels are covered under this same contract.)

“Some hotels allow a union representative to speak to new employees during orientation.... Regardless, job developers may still want to be prepared to help answer questions and provide information to their job seeking clients.”

Negstad says that non-union hotels generally pay similar or slightly higher wages than union hotels, but there is a big difference in health insurance costs. “[Non-union workers] have to pay around \$100 per month for individual coverage, and up to \$300-\$400 [per month] or more for family coverage. Needless to say, most [workers] can’t afford that ...” says Negstad. “Union jobs are better jobs,” he adds. “You have protection and rights on the job.”

Andre Kellum, a marketing consultant who has worked within the job development industry, adds a word of caution regarding health insurance costs and union dues. “[Employees] are still paying union dues even when they go on strike,” advises Kellum. He adds that Chicago is a big convention industry, and many hotels typically lay off workers during the non-convention season (starting in late November), and re-hire them after January. “[Employees] are working maybe only nine months out of the year, *and* they’re paying union dues [for the entire year], so the insurance is not really free,” says Kellum, explaining that workers have to keep paying union dues in order to keep their insurance benefits.

According to Clare Fauke, a researcher for Local 1, long-term employees are provided with additional job security through the union. For example, during slower months, the employer is required by union contract to lay off individuals with the least amount of seniority first. “[With a contract], you get rewarded for your years of service, and it protects all workers from discrimination and favoritism,” Fauke says.

Fauke says the union also sets limits on workloads, particularly for housekeeping staff. Many hotels now feature more luxurious bedding with heavier mattresses and extra pillows. What may be a perk for guests actually creates a lot more work for housekeepers; therefore, the union sets limits on how many rooms each attendant must clean per day. Fauke says the majority of housekeepers are women, and that some of them have developed chronic health problems over the years because their job duties are so physically demanding.

Some hotels allow a union representative to speak to new employees during orientation about the benefits of joining the union. Other hotels leave that task to the HR department. Regardless, job developers may still want to be prepared to help answer questions and provide information to their job-seeking clients.

Kellum says that a lot of individuals who apply for lower-level jobs, such as those in housekeeping or food service, often don’t have all the facts. “[Workers] may not be aware of the benefits they’re entitled to [under a union contract],” he says. Kellum advises job developers to look at all the factors upfront, including wages, benefits, union dues, and possible career paths, so they can pass those details along to their clients.

As with any union job, members must pay dues in order to support the union. “Dues vary by classification (i.e., job title), but are generally around \$36 per month and are due on a monthly basis,” says Negstad. “Most hotels deduct them automatically from the paycheck,” he adds.

It’s important to note that if an individual is hired for a job that is covered by a union contract (such as a housekeeper), he/she must join the union. Negstad explains that it’s a collective choice to become a member, not an individual choice.

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According to UNITE HERE's website, the majority of downtown Chicago hotels are part of an association that negotiates a citywide contract with UNITE HERE Local 1. The union represents nearly all of the service workers at these hotels, including housekeeping; laundry; kitchen; banquets; food service; bell/door staff; and telephone operators.

Job developers may want to stay aware of current conditions at hotels experiencing ongoing turmoil and worker unrest. One such hotel is The Congress Plaza Hotel, 520 S. Michigan Ave. Workers have been on strike since June 2003, after the hotel cut wages and benefits. (For more information, visit <http://www.congresshotelstrike.info>.)

While you're on the website, you can also view a list of Chicago hotels deemed "responsible union employers" by UNITE HERE. Simply go to the home page and click on the "Hotel Guide" link found on the left-hand side.

According to Nagstad, there is no policy against undocumented workers joining Local 1, because the union does not check immigration status of its members. "We fight for all workers in our industry, regardless of status," says Negstad.

Jose Oliva, director of Chicago Interfaith Workers' Rights Center, explains that unions are not required to check immigration status, but employers are. "The employer is breaking the law [if it hires illegal workers], not the union," says Oliva. He points out that all individuals working in the U.S., regardless of their immigration status, are protected by U.S. law, although many immigrants aren't aware of this.

Oliva is strongly in favor of unions. "Without unions, you wouldn't have [affordable] health insurance or timely pay increases," he says. "Job safety in itself is worth having a union."

Ultimately, job developers may be best served by keeping in mind that the decision to apply for a unionized position is an individual choice for each candidate. Some job seekers may not want to be locked in to a union contract or they may be uncomfortable with the idea that they could go on strike at any time. Other job seekers may feel that the benefits outweigh the costs and constraints. Kellum advises job developers to do their research -- as they would for any other industry -- and to advise clients of the pros and cons of working within the dynamic, though sometimes unpredictable, hotel industry. ■

► Up Close & Personal

Name: Rosa Luna

Position: Stewarding Supervisor

Employer: The Ritz-Carlton Chicago

Stewarding is a family affair for Rosa Luna, who has worked in the hotel industry for nearly 25 years. “My father and two brothers [were stewards],” says Luna, adding that her father was employed for more than 20 years at a Chicago hotel that has since closed. “He loved [his job],” she says.

Luna, age 54, left her native Puerto Rico when she was eight years old to come to the U.S. with her family. She later began her hotel career at Palmer House Hilton as a steward, where she performed a number of kitchen duties, such as washing dishes.

Luna's commitment to hard work paid off. She is now one of three stewarding supervisors at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago and has held that position for 15 years.

After working at Palmer House Hilton for seven years, Luna learned through a friend about an opening for a stewarding position at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago. She was ready for a change at that point, so she applied for the job and was accepted. Upon being hired, she worked on such tasks as polishing silverware and working in other areas of the kitchen as needed.

After only two years, she was offered a position as a stewarding supervisor. She was a little surprised at being chosen, because some of her fellow employees had been at the hotel a lot longer. Luna

attributes her promotion to her strong work ethic. “I was a responsible employee,” she says. “I was never late and never missed a day [of work].”

Luna’s commitment to hard work paid off. She is now one of three stewarding supervisors at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago and has held that position for 15 years. “I like dealing with people,” says Luna, referring to the 16 employees she supervises.

Her day typically starts at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m., although sometimes she starts even earlier in the morning if it’s really busy. (She gets paid overtime in that case.) She explains that her kitchen is very structured, with each person assigned to work in a specific area, like washing dishes or pots. “I’m on my feet all day long, walking back and forth [in the kitchen], making sure everything is running smoothly,” Luna says.

"A good attitude [is important] because you're dealing with a lot of people."

At the same time, she has to make sure her department looks clean and beautiful. “I’m very proud of my kitchen,” says Luna. “I get a lot of compliments from [upper] management.”

Summertime and the holidays are especially busy, and the hardest part of Luna's job is dealing with employees who call in sick at the last minute. "It affects the whole department," says Luna, who often has to pitch in and help when the kitchen is short-staffed. (She adds that the hotel is always looking to fill stewarding positions.)

In a supervisory role, it's essential to have a positive outlook. "A good attitude [is important] because you're dealing with a lot of people," she says. "As a supervisor, you deal with managers and line employees." She points out that it's also very helpful to understand both English and Spanish, because a lot of stewards are Spanish-speaking.

Luna says she's been offered other positions at the hotel, but she's happiest as a stewarding supervisor. "I love where I am now," says Luna. "I plan to retire from the Ritz-Carlton." ■

► WERC: A New Model for Successful Hiring

As any busy workforce development professional can attest, one of the most effective ways to learn about new job opportunities is to network directly with employers. But, this can be a very time-consuming responsibility. In addition, an individual job developer and his or her respective organization may have only a small number of qualified candidates who possess all of the skills that an employer is looking for.

Recently, a new grassroots organization was formed as a way to help job developers present a united front to employers who need to fill multiple job openings. The name of the group is **WERC** (Workforce Employer Resource Collaborative), which was created in order to match employers with quality candidates; assist job seekers in finding livable wage jobs; and customize strategies to enhance hiring procedures and retention. It accomplishes this by fostering a network of workforce development professionals committed to providing value-added services to employers.

The HR staff at Marshall Field's enthusiastically agreed to give Ortega's plan a try. He and Anne Tiesenga (who worked on employment placement for Heartland Human Care Services at the time) teamed up to recruit job developers from different agencies."

Alberto Ortega, a youth employment coordinator and program manager with Instituto Del Progreso Latino, and the founder of WERC, was inspired to come up with a new way of collaborating with employers during a training session hosted by the Chicago Jobs Council (CJC). Ortega listened to a panel of speakers who were discussing hiring methods used by different employers. Marshall Field's was mentioned, specifically, because it utilizes an online computer system as a way for people to fill out job applications.

"I felt it was exclusionary," says Ortega. "If [a candidate] has limited PC skills, then it would probably discourage him from actually applying [for a job]. There are a great many people out there who are qualified to do the job of a line cook or to do a sales commission job, but who don't have the essential skills to apply via computer."

Ortega felt compelled to learn more about the hiring process at Marshall Field's, so he went directly to the store's HR department and asked to speak to someone about an opportunity he had in mind.

"My interest was in trying to measure the needs of Marshall Field's, so that a group of job developers could potentially meet those needs," says Ortega, adding that he was very open and honest in explaining his role as a job developer to the HR staff, who responded positively.

Ortega was given a tour of the different departments and operations at Marshall Field's, and he even had an opportunity to speak to hiring managers in five different departments to learn about their specific needs.

The HR staff at Marshall Field's enthusiastically agreed to give Ortega's plan a try. He and Anne Tiesenga (who worked on employment placement for Heartland Human Care Services at the time) teamed up to recruit job developers from different agencies. The job developers were provided with a list of available positions, along with a set of specific criteria and qualities that Marshall Field's looks for in job seekers, such as people skills and flexibility. Job developers were then asked to pre-screen candidates whom they believed best met those qualifications.

Marshall Field's gave Ortega and Tiesenga feasible days and time slots that the groups of candidates could come in to complete the application process. The first hiring initiative took place in October 2004, and was followed by a second initiative in November.

Due to the effort to involve job developers from different social service agencies in this hiring initiative, a number of diverse groups were represented, including the Latino, Asian, and African-American communities.

The candidates were required to fill out online applications, but job developers were on hand to help explain any questions that were unclear. "[The Marshall Field's application process] is based on a survey of psychological questions, and it can be very confusing at times," says Ortega.

The HR staff also allowed a few candidates who were struggling with limited computer skills to fill out paper applications. "There were individuals who clearly could not – in a timely fashion – complete the application via online. So, they were given the option of using a paper application," explains Ortega.

In total, Marshall Field's hired approximately 23 individuals from the pool of candidates that job developers presented over two separate days. They were hired as seasonal employees and were assigned to work in such positions as cashiers, line cooks, and food service personnel.

Howe says that the job developers did a lot of the legwork for the HR staff by pre-screening candidates ahead of time and selecting the right people based on criteria Marshall Field's had provided.

Tim Howe, recruitment manager at Marshall Field's, was very impressed with the success of this hiring initiative and plans to do it again. "At the holiday time, we double – and in some areas, we triple – our staff. So, we have a huge need," he says. "To have 30 applicants walk in at nine

o'clock in the morning, when we usually don't have any [applicants] ... no matter how many [new hires] you get out of that, it's more than we would have had anyway."

Howe says that the job developers did a lot of the legwork for the HR staff by pre-screening candidates ahead of time and selecting the right people based on criteria Marshall Field's had provided.

The collaborative effort with Marshall Field's was so successful that Ortega and the other job developers decided to officially establish themselves as an organization, using the acronym WERC. WERC continues to use the job development strategy (or model) it created as part of its approach in working with other employers throughout the city, including Sears, Home Depot, and Avis and Budget car rental companies.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about joining WERC, along with other initiatives the group is working on, please send an e-mail to: werc_network@msn.com. ■

► NEWSFLASH!

New Hotel Opportunities in Suburbs & Downtown

A recent article in the Chicago Sun-Times reported that two major hotel projects are under way in Schaumburg and Wheeling. First, a 500-room Marriott Renaissance is being built in Schaumburg, just northeast of Interstate 90 and Meacham Road, as part of a convention complex, and is expected to open in mid-2006.

Meanwhile, Wheeling is in the early stages of building a 411-room Westin North Shore at the southeast corner of Lake-Cook Road and Milwaukee Avenue, and is expected to be completed by early 2007.

Sources told CJC that the Marriott could possibly start hiring as early as January 2006 (no word yet on the Westin's hiring schedule). Watch for updates in the business sections of Chicago's daily newspapers, as well as future issues of *Industry Insider*.

Also newsworthy, Four Points by Sheraton Chicago opened its doors on June 1, 2005, in the downtown area. The hotel, located at 630 N. Rush Street, is still accepting applications for job openings, including some entry-level positions. If you have a qualified candidate, please fax a resume or letter of inquiry to Sonjia Kelley, HR coordinator, at (312) 981-6622. ■

CJC welcomes **Program Assistant Linda Joyce**, who recently joined us to help launch *Industry Insider*. Linda has more than a decade of experience working as a free-lance journalist, writing for such publications as *Chicago Tribune*, *Pioneer Press*, and *Today's Chicago Woman*. In addition, she honed her media relations skills while working at Weber Shandwick, a Chicago public relations agency. Linda has a B.A. in Marketing Communications from Columbia College.