

Durbin, residents speak during roundtable discussion

By MARK FOSTER
Kane County Chronicle

NORTH AURORA — Charles Dodson sees himself as is an energetic and creative business executive.

He spends 50 to 60 hours a week looking for work.

Dodson, 58, was the vice president of marketing for the Willy Wonka division of Nestle until he lost his job in a corporate restructuring about a year ago.



Durbin

"I have a lot of energy, yet when I walk in the door for a job interview, I see the double-take," said Dodson, who lives in Geneva. "One interviewer asked me 'Do you think you have enough energy for this job?' That was a real slap in the face."

Dodson was part of a roundtable discussion Thursday with U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin at the Illinois Employment and Training Center.

Dodson is battling stereotypes about his age, the decline of American manufacturing and the general economic downturn in his search for a job.

He worries that he will have to settle for far less than the \$125,000-a-year that he was making in his marketing position.

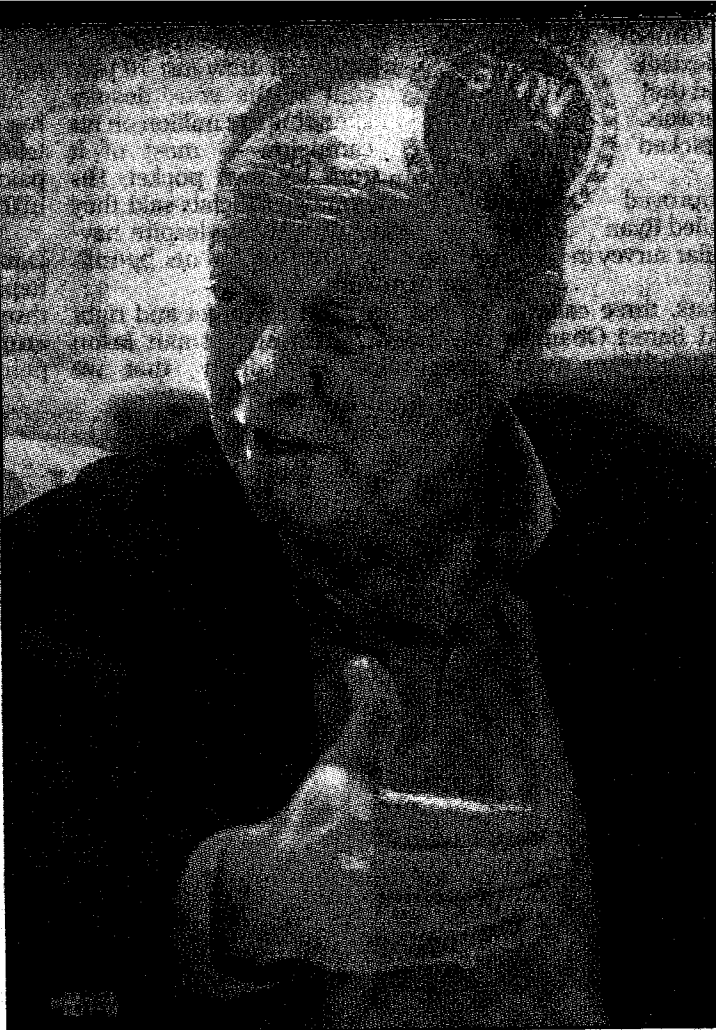
"The ability to command a salary depreciates over time," Dodson said.

Durbin said he understood Dodson's dilemma.

"You take a lower paying job and it lessens your earning potential," said Durbin, D-Ill., who believes that the federal government must do more to encourage manufacturing in the nation.

In his quest for a new job, Dodson has sent more than 420 resumes, attended about 350 networking meetings, attended 29 seminars and trade shows, and has had 34 interviews.

Yet Dodson said he often has feelings of guilt, believing that a job is "just over the



Bob Gerrard — Chronicle photo staff

Charles Dodson of Geneva, a business executive who lost his job to corporate restructuring a year ago, talks about his efforts to find employment, during a roundtable discussion on Thursday with U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., at a job training center in North Aurora.

edge," if only he makes one more telephone call or attends one more meeting.

Brenda Russell, director of the Illinois Department of Employment Security, listened to Dodson's story and said that is typical of Illinois workers who have lost their jobs. She urged Dodson and others like him to continue their search for positions with manufacturing firms.

"We think there will be manufacturing opportunities," Russell said.

Doug Seanor of Geneva wants to remain in manufacturing. He spent 29 years selling building products for doors and windows before being laid off about two months ago.

"I'm trying to stay in the industry. I'm still kind of feeling my way," Seanor said. "Twenty-nine years and you're still not safe."

Seanor and Dodson have hooked up with the Tri-Cities Unemployment Group, a non-profit organization that meets every other Monday at the St.

Charles Public Library.

Jan Flurry of Geneva started the organization shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. There are about 80 members who work on skills such as writing resumes.

But mostly they want to get their names out into the job market.

"Networking is the key to finding a job," Flurry said.

Flurry's husband, Jim, lost his job about a year ago.

"You start by being embarrassed," Jim Flurry said. "But you've got to build relationships," he said.

The Illinois Employment Training Center in North Aurora provides the jobless with facilities to do everything from filing for unemployment benefits to searching for work to receiving job training.

A consortium of institutions, including Kane County, Washonsee Community College and the Illinois Department of Employment Security work to provide the services to the unemployed.