

Local Focus

#5/Daily Herald WEB Question

Was Lovie Smith the right choice for head coach of the Bears?

Results: 50 percent said yes, 50 percent said no.

To answer today's online question, go to dailyherald.com after 11 a.m.

Watch NBC 5, at 10 p.m., for Daily Herald suburban headlines

News you can use

• The third annual Stories by the River storytelling event begins at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Batavia Public Library, 10 S. Batavia Ave. Come for "This, That and Other Stories" featuring Linda Gorham and Greg Leifel. Call (630) 879-4777 to register.

• The Friends of TriCity Family Services plan a "Home Touches Design Day" fund-raiser from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 24 at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 40W451 Fox Mill Blvd., St. Charles. Call (630) 232-1070 or visit tricityfamilyservices.org.

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Durbin pushes for worker benefits extension

On visit to N. Aurora, senator listens to unemployed residents' stories

BY PATRICK WALDRON

Daily Herald Staff Writer

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin spent part of Thursday listening to stories from laid-off job seekers and gathering steam for what he hopes is a new push to extend federal unemployment benefits.

"The unemployment has reached into just about every community," said Durbin, a Springfield Democrat, during a stop at the Illinois Department of Employment Security's North Aurora office.

"There is not a lot of support for families in this situation."

Durbin says he will push for another 13-week extension of jobless benefits for recently unemployed workers when Congress reconvenes next week.

Such a move would be a repeat of a similar authorization approved by Congress and President Bush last year.

Congressional Democrats tried for another extension before Christmas but the issue was never brought to a vote before the Republican-controlled Congress adjourned for the year.

Durbin sat with a dozen state unemployment professionals

and local networking groups listening to personal accounts of job searches and struggles. It was information he said he would "bring back to Washington."

Jim Flurry, 48, of Geneva, told Durbin how he had been laid off from Burr Ridge-based manufacturing company Hansen Technology Corp.

"Unemployment affects the entire family," he said, telling the senator about dozens of job interviews that have yet to yield a position equal to the one he had 11 months ago.

Charles Dodson, 58, of Geneva, talked about losing his

job as a marketing executive in the candy industry.

During the 30-some interviews he's been on, Dodson says he hears the words "overqualified" too often.

"I am absolutely convinced I will find that right job out there," he said. "It's just a question of when."

In the meantime, more and more workers keep coming into the unemployment office, said Bern Colleran, spokesman for the department.

And without an extension of benefits, Colleran said 3,700 Illinois workers a week are getting to the end of their benefits.



JEFF KNO
U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, a Springfield Democrat, listens to the Employment Training Center in North Aurora as workers tell their stories.