

BIZfact

\$35,580

Median annual wage
of Long Island's
920 butchers
and meat cutters

Source: New York State
Labor Department

NISSAN TESTING 'ROBO VEHICLE' RIDE

Nissan Motor Co. says it will use feedback from volunteer testers in Japan to fine-tune its "robo-vehicle mobility service."

The automaker said Friday 300 people have signed up to try out Easy Ride next month. The Japanese automaker hopes to roll it out as a commercial service in the early 2020s. Details, including pricing, are undecided.

The service was developed in a partnership, which began last year, with Japanese mobile game provider DeNA Co. DeNA has been working on driverless bus and delivery services in Japan.

For now, Easy Ride will be limited to a 2.8-mile course that starts from Nissan headquarters and winds through a shopping mall area in the port city of Yokohama.

The app is only in Japanese, but there are plans to offer it in several languages for tourists and other travelers.

Like other autonomous-drive technology, the Easy Ride vehicle is packed with cameras, sensors and radars to recognize pedestrians, intersections, traffic lights and other vehicles.

It's still only driverless in principle, though, since Japanese law doesn't allow totally driverless vehicles. So a human driver in a no-hands position sits behind the steering wheel.

The system isn't flawless, with human intervention sometimes needed to avoid a crash, according to Nissan. — AP

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Catching up after gap years

'Returnships' provide training and a paid route to getting back into the workforce

BY LIZA N. BURBY
Special to Newsday

Marina Groothuis left her senior-level position in direct marketing to be a stay-at-home mom when her oldest, now 15, was a year old. In 2015, the mother of two decided to return to work full-time. But to her surprise, after two months and 400 job applications, she hadn't received any promising leads, despite a part-time marketing and advertising position she had added to her résumé.

"Even though I had all the skills, in hindsight, it was hard for me to translate what I'd been doing onto paper because I didn't have enough current experience," says the Roslyn resident. "The way people work in marketing had changed."

Through a friend Groothuis, 45, learned about the return-to-work program launched in 2015 at Return Path, a software company. The 20-week internship for experienced workers with a gap in their résumé gave her the opportunity to work for an hourly rate in the company's Manhattan office while learning current marketing practices. Groothuis honed her skills in Excel and PowerPoint, and learned how to use internet resources and videoconferencing. In March 2016 she was offered and accepted a full-time job there as a marketing analyst.

"The returnship made all the difference because it gave me a chance to get up to date on my skills in a non-stressful environment," Groothuis says.

Return Path is one of dozens of companies offering experienced workers the equivalent of a paid internship. Whether it's called a returnship, relaunch or re-entry, the concept is the same: a paid three- to six-month program for mid-career-level men and women who have left the workforce for two or more years, with the potential for a full-time job offer.

Returnship workers often earn hourly rates that can start at \$20; pay levels depend on



Theresa Mulder of Seaford left legal work for 10 years, used JPMorgan Chase's ReEntry program and now works in the firm's Brooklyn office.

the industry and the individual's experience.

Tami Forman, executive director of Path Forward, a non-profit in Manhattan that works with companies to set up return-to-work programs, says the average participant has been out of the workforce for five to seven years and is usually between the ages of 45 and 55. The majority are female.

According to Carol Fishman Cohen, CEO of iRelaunch, a career re-entry programming and consulting business in Boston, the returnship concept was first

identified in 2008, but "there has been a huge uptick in the number of corporate re-entry internship programs created globally since 2013, and we're expecting this growth to continue because the hiring rates for these programs are so high."

Forman says 30 companies, including Cloudera, Cloudflare, Medallia, Verisk and Apple, have participated through Path Forward — a substantial increase since her company launched two years ago with PayPal as its first partner. To date, there have been 142 partici-

RESOURCES

- **PATH FORWARD** has a list of companies in the New York area that it partners with on return-to-work programs at pathforward.org.
- **IRELAUNCH** offers returnship programs for more experienced professionals through more than 35 blue-chip companies. Go to irelaunch.com.

pants, and 80 percent have been offered employment. Forman says she knows of another 30 companies that have run U.S. programs and 30 more abroad.

The appeal to workers is that these programs fill in the résumé breaks that can hinder their return to work.

"The stereotype tends to be that the longer you're out of work, the more out of touch you are," says Amanda Augustine of Bay Shore, a career advice expert for the résumé-writing service TopResume in Manhattan. "So getting into a returnship is a great way to reconnect with people in your field and have new experience at the top of your résumé. The programs are not guaranteed to lead to a job and may not be at the same salary as when you left. But they're a good gateway to getting back in."

Meanwhile, Augustine says companies are beginning to realize "that a lot of good talent has been overlooked because someone left the workforce due to a change in their personal life, like raising kids or caring for an aging parent, and in order to compete for the best talent, these programs are good business."

This is particularly true in the finance and tech industries, Forman says. "They recognize they have a gender problem and a talent problem. They can't find enough people to do the work that needs to be done. So these returnships are helpful because they give managers an incentive

See **RETURNSHIPS** on A30

Business to Business Guide

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Christine Vignola, left, who helped create Fidelity's Resume program, with Avani Patel, a participant who now works as a financial planner at the investor center in Huntington Station.

RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS TO GET A JOB AFTER A GAP

RETURNSHIPS from A29

to hire someone they wouldn't normally take a chance on, and human resources supports it because they believe women returning to the workforce will make their companies better."

The recognition that there's a talent pool that has largely been ignored is what led JPMorgan Chase to create a 14-week ReEntry program for senior executives, according to Marni Strumwasser, co-chair of the program. ReEntry, which launched in New York in 2013, is now global and has had around 100 participants. It offers networking and mentorship opportunities, a reintroduction to corporate life, and a chance to interact with the firm's leaders.

Among the participants is Theresa Mulder, 46, a Seaford resident who is now vice president and assistant general counsel in JPMorgan's Brooklyn office. She was a corporate attorney until 2004, when she left for 10 years to raise her three children. When she decided

to return to work, she found Chase's ReEntry program through her law school and applied in April 2016, starting in October after a rigorous interview process.

Mulder says the hurdles she had to get over included changes in technology, which is a common problem for returnees. "I think these programs are necessary," she says. "Coming back to work is hard enough no matter how long the gap is, but the program built my confidence."

On Long Island, Fidelity Investments offers its Resume career re-entry program, part of a pilot in the New York and New Jersey regions that launched in spring 2017. The six-month paid program helps prepare individuals for a career in financial planning. Out of 255 applicants — 85 from Long Island — there have been five participants: Three have been hired, one is just finishing the program, and one, Avani Patel, is the first Long Islander to be accepted. She began this month at the firm's Huntington Station branch.

Christine Vignola, who helped

create the program and is the branch manager in Roslyn, sees the value of leadership experiences people gain while they are outside the workforce. "From our perspective, their life experience and their professional skills are the perfect balance and invaluable when connecting with clients."

Patel, 40, who lives in Nassau, says she worked for 15 years as a senior financial adviser, but decided four years ago, after two years as a working mom, to stay home when her second child was born. While she carefully planned leaving the workforce, she says, "I didn't have a long-term plan for how to return. I hadn't thought that it would be difficult to do."

But Patel continued to network, so when she was ready to return, it was through a contact that she learned about Fidelity's program. "What helped me to get to this next stage was staying connected to the field and continuing to network even while I was being a stay-at-home mom."

How about some fees with those fries?

It's never been easier to get burgers, burritos and other items from fast-food chains delivered to your doorstep. But the convenience can hurt your wallet.

More fast-food companies have been offering delivery by teaming up with food-ordering apps, many of which charge fees or other added-on costs. The chains see delivery as another way to boost sales, but for customers it can turn a typically cheap meal into a pricier one.

"If you're not careful, your fees can add up to be more than the cost

of the food," says Sara Skirboll, a shopping and trends expert at deal site RetailMeNot.

Most apps charge delivery fees, and the amount can differ widely depending on where you live and which app you're using — from \$1 to as much as \$11, according to a report last month from analysts at investment bank Mizuho.

Another thing to look out for: surge pricing. Uber Eats, which delivers for McDonald's, and Postmates, which has partnered with burrito chain Chipotle, charge more during

busy ordering times. Both companies notify users they will be charged more for delivery before they pay. And both companies say they need surge pricing to give delivery people more incentive to deliver for them when more customers are placing orders.

Some apps may charge more for menu items than they cost if you walked into the restaurant. Uber Eats, Postmates and DoorDash all say prices on their apps may vary from what is charged in-store. — AP