

Nonprofit Agency Helps

By DANIELLE FLOOD

CARROLL PRESANT East Brunswick recently answered a newspaper ad for a laboratory technician, but the man at the personnel agency that ran the ad never called her back.

So she called him again.

"He said he didn't call me because he couldn't reach the man who was hiring the lab technician. I told him one phone call would have sufficed.

"He said, 'What did you expect me to do? Call you every hour on the half-hour?'"

That was the gist of what he said. I didn't raise my voice. I said I didn't think that was very nice."

The other day, 33-year-old Carroll Presant—she holds a bachelor's degree in zoology, which she earned shortly before her marriage of 13 years ended in divorce last fall—registered with Professional Roster, a free job-referral service in Princeton.

"It's not institutionalized, impersonal," she said.

The Roster is a nonprofit organization that is geared toward helping women "recycle" themselves after the period of unemployment that

usually accompanies raising children or housekeeping. It also serves recent graduates and career women.

"For some people, it's very intimidating to go to an employment agency after 10 to 15 years of not working," said Helen Gorenstein of Princeton, co-director of The Roster. "Any harshness can turn them off."

The Roster: Turn left at the second-floor landing of the green-trimmed, 15-room white building that also houses the Center for Continuing Education at 5 Ivy Lane, on the Princeton University campus. Through the open double doors, a 40x60-foot room is divided in half by a 12-foot-long bulletin board. There, the green and blue in the upholstered arm chairs blend well with the green carpet and yellow phones of the well-lighted Roster office.

The Roster: One day recently, you might have met Rhoda Cohen of Princeton, one of 15 volunteers who staff the office five days a week between 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. Or, you might have met Carolyn Wilson, Elly Stein or Maureen Rosenhaupt, also all of Princeton. Or, it could have been a member of the organization's 1,000 members, such as Ruth Payne or perhaps Heloise Mailloux.

Ruth Payne, a 38-year-old mother of three, has been a member of The Roster for two years. She began looking for a full-time job last October. She is divorced and lives with her children in Princeton Junction.

"I worry because I know that eventually I'll be the sole support for the family," she said.

Mrs. Payne visited The Roster to check the list of jobs posted on the white sheets on the right side of the bulletin board. She'd like to do administrative work, perhaps in a bank.

"I worked in New York City more than 11 years ago, between 1959 and 1964," she recalled. "I started as a clerical assistant in a bank and worked my way up to investment administrator in the pension division."

Mrs. Payne stopped working to raise her family. When she first began job-hunting, prospective employers pointed out that she didn't have current experience.

"I guess I felt a little badly, although I didn't show it," Mrs. Payne said. "You have to get your nerve up a lot of times when you're faced with a question like that. You have to stick up for yourself."

Mrs. Payne finds The Roster particularly helpful because of its emphasis on professional jobs.

"Private agencies are not going to push a woman in the kind of job I want," she said. "You can't quite prove it. You get the feeling that some companies, unless you have a lot of education credits to show, are not going to be as accepting of a woman as a management-trainee."

"I was talking to one employment agent. 'Why don't

Cont'd on Following Page

Women Re-enter Job Market

Cont'd from Preceding Page

you go into retailing?" he asked. I'm not interested in retailing. I don't like the hours.

"One agency had an ad for a bank management-trainee job. I applied, and the pay was in the range I felt I could work out. When I applied for the job, it didn't exist. It no longer existed. They sent me out for an interview as an assistant bookkeeper."

Mrs. Payne has a bachelor's degree in economics from Vassar.

"Somehow, I think this place [The Roster] helps," she said. "It's made certain companies aware that there are capable women available."

That's where Elly Stein comes in. She's in charge of The Roster's job development.

Certain organizations regularly list with us: Educational Testing Service, Mathematica Inc., a consulting firm; Princeton University, not faculty but administrative jobs; Mercer County Community college, schools

in the area," Mrs. Stein said.

Sometimes a woman who has obtained a job through The Roster will call or write in about available jobs. Some companies, such as Nabisco, RCA and Johnson & Johnson, will send The Roster a description of an opening.

In addition, Mr. Stein visits its local companies in search of job openings.

"At the present time, most personnel directors are very polite to us," said Mrs. Gorenstein, who often visits the local companies with

Mrs. Stein. "They are aware they cannot ignore women."

They recently went to see the people at Western Electric, which has its research and development headquarters in the area.

"But as we talked to them, it was apparent we would have difficulty," Mrs. Stein said. "They want people with very specific training."

This is a problem at The Roster. There is an abundance of certain kinds of jobs available in the Princeton area, jobs that can be

filled by persons willing to move to Princeton to fill them. There are a lot of Roster members with certain kinds of training, as well as members who are not generally geographically mobile. Often, the jobs and the training don't match.

"If we had engineers, we could place every one of them, or chemists," said Carolyn Wilson, the organization's co-director. She asserted that The Roster also did not have enough people to fill statistical, economic and

computer jobs.

Teaching and editorial experience dominates The Roster's membership.

Last year, about 10 per cent, or 100 members, of the organization found jobs through The Roster. Men are not discouraged from joining the "agency," but few register.

When The Roster receives a job description, its volunteers match it with qualified members and then notify them by postcard to call The Roster. After contacting The Roster to find out where the job is, the member then takes over the job hunting.

There are hundreds of career-counseling services

for women throughout the country, but ones that list available jobs for women, or refer them to jobs, are in the minority. Of these, "most start with counseling," Mrs. Gorenstein said. "We start the other way around."

In general, the words, "I'm looking for a job and can't do anything," are commonly heard at 5 Ivy Lane, Mrs. Gorenstein asserted, adding:

"By talking to other women, you recognize your own thought. You recognize your own worth."

"Even when we can't get people jobs, we do give them enormous reassurance—that almost everybody has a marketable skill," said Mrs. Ro-

senhaupt, the Roster's office manager, who also calls herself "the body reaper."

Every two or three months, she goes through member cards, makes up a list of those who said they had one morning a week to staff The Roster and calls them.

Although The Roster has changed from its original purpose of serving only women who would like to work to helping women who need to work, its basic approach to its members has remained the same.

"Very non-threatening," explained Nancy Lichtenstein, a charter member. "We wanted to provide an environment where the most timid

of people would be comfortable."

According to members of The Roster's advisory board, the idea for The Professional Roster came from another Roster that a group of Princeton professors' wives had begun in 1966.

The first organization was sponsored by the University League and served only professors' wives and university employees. A couple of years later, a group of women in town decided to start a Roster of their own. ■

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