

ADDING FACE VALUE?

Some hope nip, tuck will help land job

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MIAMI • With unemployment at a 25-year high, job seekers such as Broward County, Fla., interior designer Jerry Johnson think a little nip, tuck or peel might be the answer to getting work.

Johnson, 63-year-old bookkeeper Raema Joss of Hollywood, Fla., and Laurie Miller, a 50-something entertainer who previously worked on a cruise ship, are among 1,200 of South Florida's newly jobless who recently vied for free Botox, dermal fillers, laser liposuction and other cosmetic procedures offered by Dr. Jason Shapiro of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"It's been rough," said Johnson, 55. "It's hard at this age. You kind of feel like a dinosaur."

He closed his 5-year-old furniture store last year. This month, he became one of the 50 selected for free procedures plus a makeover. Having his crow's feet smoothed and age spots faded, he hopes, will produce a younger look that eventually will lead to work.

Nationwide, a growing number of people are turning to cosmetic procedures to put their best face forward as they look for a job — or try to hold on to the one they have. In a survey of physicians by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 75 percent of respondents said they had treated patients who requested facial plastic surgery to stay competitive in the workplace.

"Youth is becoming more and more emphasized in the workplace," said Dr. Steven Pearlman, past president of the organization. "The seasoned experts, once pictured in ads with lots of wrinkles, have been replaced by young go-getters with multiple degrees and the appearance of boundless energy."

Dr. Fredric Brandt, who has practices in Coral Gables, Fla., and New York, agrees. Over the past year, an increasing number of his patients have come in looking for cosmetic procedures to help increase their competitiveness in a cutthroat job market.

"They consider it an investment," Brandt said. "They feel the money they're spending on this

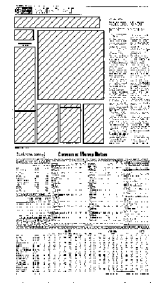
will help them get a job and that it will pay for itself and then some."

Although being jobless may be a time when some pinch pennies, doctors said that many noninvasive procedures cost less than people might think. Though a face-lift can cost \$6,000 to \$12,000, Botox injections can start at about \$300, and professional teeth-whitening at about \$500.

"Even for job seekers who can't land a free treatment, the results may be worth the money, although no one should feel they have to draw blood to draw a paycheck, said New York gerontologist Ellen Eichelbaum, author of "206 Things You Should Never Do or Say When Working With An Older Client." Older workers — or workers who look older than they are — already had a hard time getting hired. That task is only more difficult now, she said.

"If I could afford (a face-lift) I'd have one," said Eichelbaum, who is in her 60s.

In the job market, she said, "40-year-old to 45-year-old people are considered old right now. What is a 60-year-old person supposed to do?"





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Laurie Miller, former singer from the Miami group Expose, received a microdermabrasion treatment from aesthetician Angela Warner at Tribeca Medaesthetics last month in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. In today's competitive job market, some people are undergoing cosmetic procedures in hopes of looking younger to potential employers.