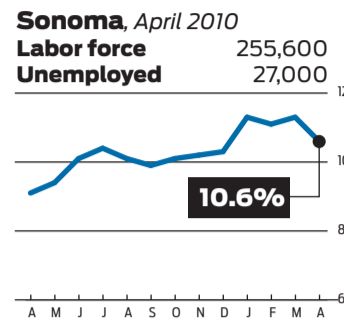
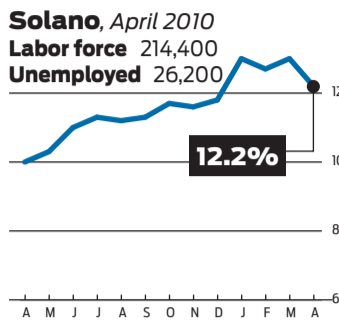
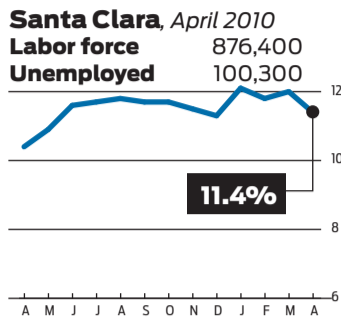
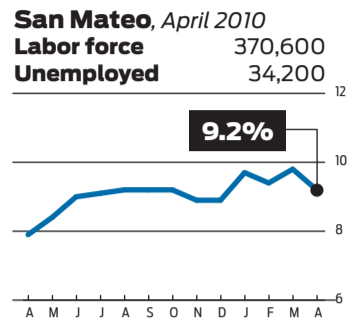
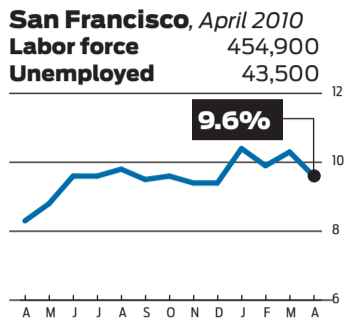
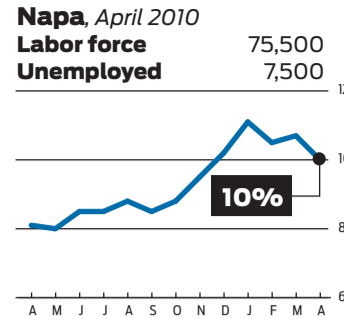
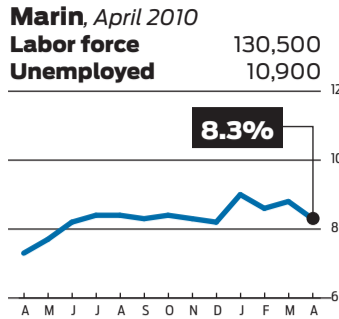
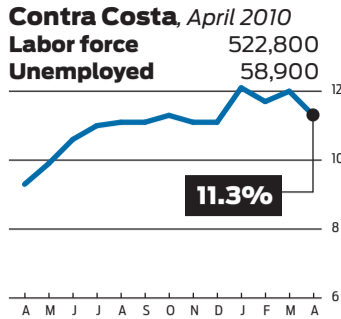
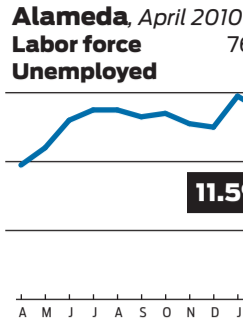


BUSINESS The Chronicle with Bloomberg

DATABANK

A snapshot of Bay Area unemployment rates

Here is a county-by-county look at unemployment rates across the Bay Area. Compared with the jobless numbers in January, all of the rates were lower in April.



Source: California Employment Development Department

Research by Julia Dickinson and graphic by The Chronicle

THREE QUESTIONS
 For Melissa Rich, CEO, InterSchola

Turn trash into cash

By Carolyn Said
 CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Melissa Rich is CEO and founder of InterSchola, a San Francisco company that helps schools and public agencies “convert trash into cash” by selling their surplus goods and equipment on eBay. From school buses to cafeteria equipment, all kinds of items get a second life at other schools, public agencies, nonprofits and small businesses through the online auctions. The company says it has helped raise nearly \$4 million for schools since its 2004 founding and has helped divert more than 10 million pounds of waste from landfills. Rich previously was director of business development and senior financial manager at Classroom Connect, which helped school districts integrate technology into their curricula.

Q: How did you come to start InterSchola?

I had a random conversation with an old friend and mentor who had just picked his son up from soccer practice at his private school and saw 30 desks sitting out in the rain. I thought, why wasn't there a way to get it to the East Palo Alto (school districts) of the world that are lucky to have 10 desks that match, or better yet, stick it up on eBay and let them purchase it at pennies on the dollar?

My thought process was schools selling to other schools, but we found that a lot of asset categories appeal to not just other schools but small businesses, individuals, hobbyists.

Q: How do your services work — are you basically similar to eBay Trading Assistants, experienced users or companies who help others sell on eBay?

Our model is very similar, but our services are targeted at school districts and local public agencies. Our local field auction managers go to clients' locations, where they take digital pictures, write descriptions and create strategies for pricing and listing items. Then centralized listing managers put together formal listings and do marketing of the auctions — we have a significant database of potential buyers of surplus equipment.

Usually a day before the auction closes we host an inspection of items at our client's location. We then collect payment and arrange pickup or shipping of items. Our fee is a sliding scale but winds up being about 35 percent of the sale.

Q: What are some of the most interesting items you've sold and who bought them?

Recently a school district sold a planetarium, an indoor dome where they taught students about stars. The buyer was setting up an after-school program to get kids interested in science.

Another school district had two or three tons of ground salt from its former water-softening system; it had been sitting in a warehouse taking up space for close to 10 years.

We've sold tons of portable buildings to small businesses and construction companies as offices, store-fronts, computer labs. We've sold school buses to church groups, white-water rafting companies; one went to a family with eight or 10 kids.

We sell tons of musical instruments — we sold some that looked like firewood, they were violins and cellos that were all splintered, but a gentleman bought it and had us ship it to Europe.

E-mail Carolyn Said at csaid@sfbchronicle.com.



Henry Navarro

Melissa Rich is CEO of InterSchola, which helps schools raise money by selling surplus goods.

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CHASE WHAT MATTERS™
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To qualify for this offer, open a Chase Business Checking account in person and deposit a minimum of \$500 or more into your new business checking account within 30 days of account opening with funds not currently on deposit with Chase or any of its affiliates. Account opening and award of premium are subject to approval. Limit one business checking account-related premium per customer per calendar year. Offer does not apply to IOLTA and Client Funds Checking accounts. Chase reserves the right to withdraw this offer at any time without notice. Attempts to earn multiple premiums may be voided by Chase, at its discretion. Offer not available on account conversions or in combination with any other offer and is non-transferable. Employees of JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. and our affiliates are not eligible. Cash premium will be deposited automatically into your checking account within 10 business days after the minimum deposit requirement is met. Cash bonus may be considered interest reportable on IRS Form 1099-INT.
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