

## **Keeping Spirits In the Pink** **By CHARLES PROCTOR - 3/9/2009** **Los Angeles Business Journal Staff**

There are a few different ways to tell when you're in a recession, most of them having to do with numbers. But here's a sign of a recession almost anyone can understand: "pink slip parties."

The unemployed get together at such parties to commiserate over food and drink – and maybe meet a recruiter who lands them that next job. Pink Slip parties last popped up during the dot-com bust. Now, they're back.

Beryl Smith, president of LAX-area staffing firm BCS Staffing Inc., is planning a series of parties for the jobless called Pink Slip Party L.A. Smith wants to organize an event in different parts of Los Angeles County every month. The first will be 6 p.m. Wednesday at Pink Taco in Century City.

Unlike traditional job fairs, you won't find recruiters sitting behind booths at pink slip parties. Instead, job-seekers and employer reps from a range of industries – professionals from real estate, finance and hospitality will be among those in attendance at Pink Taco – swap business cards informally at the bar or at tables.

Smith said the pink slip party has its roots back in the early 1900s, when the unemployed would gather in bars and commiserate over beers. Since then, they resurfaced during hard economic times. At a November pink slip party in midtown Manhattan, about 500 people – many recently laid off from the financial sector – packed a bar to partake of \$2 beers and \$4 cocktails. An additional 50 people lined up outside. Pink slip parties also have been held in Texas, Ohio and Connecticut.

Pink Slip Party L.A. won't be the first such gathering in the L.A. area; Smith said she attended a similar event as a recruiter last month at the Crescent Hotel in Beverly Hills. But with the jobless rate in the county hitting 10 percent, she thought now was a good time for a traveling tour of the parties.

"It's about networking," Smith said. "It's about getting L.A. back to work so we can stimulate the economy and get our lives going again."