



Creating a community that works

Newsletter

North Lawndale Employment Network

Spring 2011

Save the Date

Outstanding Women in Not-for-Profits Award Ceremony
March 23, 2011
5:30pm-7:30pm
Chase Towers Auditorium

Aspiring CEO Networking Event
March 29, 2011
9am-1pm

The Axelson Center At North Park University

Dr. King Legacy Apartments Gala
April 3, 2011
5pm
McCormick Place Hyatt Ballroom

Vanishing of the Bees Screening
April 13, 2011 6:30pm
The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

Chicago Defender's 5th Annual Women of Excellence Celebration
April 29, 2011
Hyatt Regency Hotel Regency Ballroom

Inside This Issue:

NLEN Receives LISC Social Innovation Fund Grant (p. 4)

U-Turn Permitted Success Stories (p. 6)

NLEN Board Member Profile (p. 7)

The Buzz with Sweet Beginnings (p. 8)

Emergency Fund Impacts (p. 10)

FamilyFarmed Expo (p. 11)

Cook Co. Board President Toni Preckwinkle and County Commissioner Robert Steele visit NLEN

On March 10, 2011, NLEN was honored to host Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and 2nd District County Commissioner Robert Steele at our offices in North Lawndale. We are fortunate to receive such a visit from influential local political leaders, and enjoyed sharing with them the highlights of our various programs. They were able to experience firsthand NLEN's approach to addressing client struggles.



From left: Commissioner Steele, Brenda Palms Barber, Board President Preckwinkle

After a brief introduction to the staff, President Preckwinkle was shown a brief video highlighting our work made at this year's Sweet Beginnings Tea. With testimonials from clients, staff and speakers at the event, the video gives a brief presentation of the impact NLEN has on the community.

Commissioner Steele emphasized his support for the work NLEN does, as he was a part of the team that initially recruited Brenda Palms Barber to start NLEN. Steele

(Continued on page 5)

6TH ANNUAL SWEET BEGINNINGS TEA HIGHLIGHTS

On February 9, 2011, we held our Sixth Annual Sweet Beginnings Tea Celebration, our most memorable and successful Tea in the event's six year history. The Tea represents a special chance for NLEN board members, staff, and clients to gather together with our supporters and advance the goals of our mission. The unrestricted funds raised during the Sweet Beginnings Tea allow us flexibility in administering the innovative employment initiatives our clients need for secure futures.

This year's celebration saw the transition to a new venue, The Peninsula Chicago Hotel. The attendees were dazzled by the splendor of the hotel's Grand Ballroom, and the delicious selections from Executive Chef Kai Lermen's menu. Chef Lermen used our one-of-a-kind beelove honey in a selection of dishes, from a savory honey mustard spread, to a honey macaroon offering for dessert. Sweet Beginnings, LLC is also excited to begin a new partnership with The Peninsula Chicago, who have agreed not only to sell our products in their gift shop, but also to place one of our hives at their rooftop garden in the spring!

Thanks to the larger event space and greater awareness of the Tea, we had fifty more attendees at this year's Tea than last



2011 Sweet Beginnings Tea Committee

(Continued on page 2)

Sixth Annual Sweet Beginnings Tea (continued from page 1)

year, making it the most well-attended Tea to date. Another new element to this year's Tea, the Green Silent Auction, created another revenue stream for the organization, while offering attendees the opportunity to bid on high-quality environmentally-friendly items such as an i-Go car-sharing membership, or a Green Dog Inc. dog boarding package.



*Pictured at left:
ABC7's Hosea Sanders
Master of Ceremonies*

*At right:
Majora Carter
Green-Economic
Pioneer
Keynote Speaker*



After a VIP reception for our sponsors, ABC7 Chicago's Hosea Sanders started the official program, and served as the evening's master of ceremonies. Our keynote speaker, green-economic pioneer and MacArthur "genius" fellow Majora Carter, gave a speech entitled "Home(Town) Security: What America Needs Now and Who Is Creating It". Her speech enlightened the efforts of those trying to create a new green economy for the most disadvantaged populations. In the summer of 2010, Majora Carter had produced an episode of her syndicated radio show *The Promised Land* featuring Brenda Palms Barber and Sweet Beginnings. We thank Majora for her continued interest and support of our work.

The Sweet Beginnings Tea would not be complete without the success stories of our clients, whose stories of transformation stirred emotion in all who attended. Jose Jimenez and Eddie Griffin turned their lives around in NLEN programs, and shared their stories with us.



*NLEN Success Stories Eddie Griffin (left) and
Jose Jimenez*

Every year NLEN also honors supporters with the Creating A Community That Works Award, acknowledging their continued support of our organization. This year's honorees, Spruiell D. Weber White and Jim and Kay Mabie have journeyed with us since the inception of the organization. Their confidence, leadership, and investment of funds, time, and knowledge have supported our spirit of innovation and impact-driven culture. We are thankful and honored to take this moment to recognize these individuals, who are instrumental in transforming neighborhoods, transforming lives and transforming the North Lawndale Employment Network.



*Brenda Palms Barber with 2011 Creating a Community That
Works Awardee Spruiell D. Weber White*

In all, the new elements of the Tea, the partnership with The Peninsula Chicago Hotel, and the Green Silent Auction, allowed us to achieve the Tea's tagline of "New Venue, New Experience, More Friends, More Impact". We exceeded our goals, raising over \$127,000 in unrestricted revenue. Stay tuned for more video highlights of the Sixth Annual Sweet Beginnings Tea on YouTube!

A special thanks to the 2011 Tea Committee: Chair Kenneth Holliday, Sharon Bush, Dr. Victoria Cooper, Jennifer Ezrow, Mary Kania, Maja Kunzi, O'Neia Mullins, Angela Rudolph, Ann Stevens.



*Brenda Palms Barber with 2011 Creating a Community That
Works Awardees Jim and Kay Mabie*

Dr. King Legacy Apartments Redevelop Site of Former King Family Residence

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family lived in Chicago, and in North Lawndale specifically, during the height of the civil rights movement, taking residence at 1550 S. Hamlin during the summer of 1966. With the violence and riots that ensued following Dr. King's assassination, much of 16th Street and the neighborhood surrounding Dr. King's former residence was destroyed. In the forty years since the riots, the first development on this site is the Dr. King Legacy Apartments, a major accomplishment for the North Lawndale community.

Come celebrate the opening of the **Dr. King Legacy Apartments** with a gala event sponsored by the **Lawndale Christian Development Corporation**. The event will honor community leaders who continue to exemplify Dr. King's "Dream" by keeping his spirit alive with their commitment to service. The event will also feature a keynote address from none other than **Martin Luther King III**. Don't miss the dedication this historic development effort.

McCormick Place Hyatt Ballroom
2233 S. MLK Jr. Drive
April 3, 2011
5:00 PM

To RSVP, or for ticket sales, contact Kyla Williams at kwilliams@lcdc.net or at (773) 762-8889 x. 22



Chicago Defender to hold 5th Annual "Women of Excellence" Award Ceremony

The Chicago Defender news publication will hold their 5th annual "Women of Excellence" Awards ceremony, honoring local African-American women who are influential leaders and role models for the community. On April 27th, the publication will feature the achievements of the 50 women to be honored, including NLEN Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber. Join The Chicago Defender in praising these women leaders in person:

Hyatt Regency Hotel
Regency Ballroom
151 East Wacker Drive
April 29, 2011

For reservations or more information, please contact Joslyn at Tamalar Consulting: (312) 952-1766 or jdipasalegne@tamalarconsulting.com

Aspiring CEO Networking Event featuring panelist and NLEN Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber

Our very own Brenda Palms Barber, NLEN Executive Director and CEO of Sweet Beginnings, LLC will serve on a panel of nonprofit CEOs as part of The Axelson Center of Nonprofit Management's "**Aspiring CEO Seminar Series**". The seminar series is a program of North Park University. Through six sessions that incorporate webinar presentations and the networking finale event, participants in the Aspiring CEO program learn how to avoid the common pitfalls of running a nonprofit, with presentations and lectures by successful nonprofit organization leaders.

NLEN Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber will join a panel that includes Stacy Ratner, Founder and Executive Director of Open Books (<http://www.open-books.org>), and Tom Vanden Berk, CEO of UCAN (<http://www.ucanchicago.org>), at this networking event concluding the seminar series. The panelists will discuss how they effectively motivate the many stakeholders who are instrumental to their organization's success. Following the panel, participants will hear about fundraising from a CEO perspective and meet a 2009 Aspiring CEO graduate as she speaks about making the transition to CEO. Participants will receive valuable resources and time for peer networking during lunch.



For more information, please visit the event website at: <http://www.eventbrite.com/event/1006902673>

April 29
9am- 1pm
North Park University
3225 W. Foster Ave

<http://www.eventbrite.com/event/1006902673>

LISC Twin Account Program Helps Clients Build Credit

The North Lawndale Employment Network, as part of our ongoing partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's (LISC) Center for Working Families (CWF) program is rolling out a new financial program intended to help clients build and maintain their credit scores. In July of 2010, NLEN and LISC worked together to launch this new financial product, the "Twin Account".

Clients who participate in this program agree to a 500 dollar loan with North Side Community Federal Credit Union. This money is kept in a locked savings account until the loan is fully paid off in 12 monthly payments, reported to the major credit bureaus. For all on-time payments, LISC will make matching payments, and at the end of the program, the client will receive the 500 dollars from the original loan, plus the matching funds, and a credit history of timely monthly loan payments!

LISC encourages Twin Account participants to continue building credit by securing a credit card, but clients may also use the funds for debt repayment, education expenses, down payments on houses or automobiles, or general savings. NLEN currently has two clients taking advantage of this innovative service.

Mr. Smith (to protect the privacy of our clients we are using a pseudonym) came to NLEN in June of 2010 for assistance in credit building. After meeting with our Financial Coach, Mr. Smith realized he had no established credit score. Knowing the importance of credit, Mr. Smith completed a monthly budget, and realized that he had some flexibility, and could make payments on a secured credit card if given the chance. He applied, but was denied due to his lack of a credit history.

Mr. Smith then took advantage of the Twin Account financial product. Six months after opening the Twin Account, Mr. Smith now has 250 dollars saved, 250 dollars in matching funds, and a credit score of 620. With his savings, Mr. Smith plans on opening the secured credit card as he had planned. He is currently a member at the credit union and will be opening up an additional savings account next month.

If you are interested in the Twin Account, or any other part of North Lawndale Employment Network's financial literacy program, please contact our financial coach



Pauline Sylvain:

**(773) 638-1813 or email
pauline@nlen.org**



NLEN Receives Count on COUNTRY Financial Grant

We are happy to announce NLEN received a grant from Country Financial in December of 2010, through their Count on COUNTRY community program. Since the program started in 2008, \$225,000 have been distributed to Chicago non-profits who have demonstrated a commitment to promoting financial security for families and their communities. NLEN's \$20,000 grant will be used to extend our Financial Education and Counseling Program to 500 individuals in North Lawndale, including one-on-one financial counseling with 100 individuals. The program educates clients on the importance of money management, debt reduction, asset protection, and savings. We thank Country Financial for supporting this necessary aspect of our work!



Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber accepts Count on COUNTRY Financial Grant on behalf of NLEN

NLEN Selected as LISC Social Innovation Fund Grant Recipient

Also in December, NLEN was selected by LISC as one of 47 non-profit organizations to be included in the new federal Social Innovation Fund program. The grants are expected to help more than 25,000 families find jobs, reduce inappropriate debt, gain financial literacy and build assets, as part of a \$4.2 million federal program authorized under the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. LISC matched the federal allocation with private funds, and identified the community-based partners with the capacity to implement the program.

The program works by creating and expanding Financial Opportunity Centers, that bundle services such as employment training, financial education, and public benefits to help disadvantaged families plan for the future, and break the cycle of generational poverty. LISC currently supports 33 such centers nationwide, and NLEN is proud to be named one of the 10 Chicago-based organizations to receive the Social Innovation Fund grant.

With the \$140,000 grant from the Social Innovation Fund, we estimate 270 clients will receive two out of the three core Financial Opportunity Services (employment services, financial coaching, and public benefits access); 168 will obtain employment; 60 and 40 will retain employment for three and six months, respectively; 70 will improve their net income; 85 will improve their net worth; and 100 will improve their credit scores.

NLEN Staff and Clients Participate in Illinois Action Day at the James R. Thompson Center

With the depressed economic climate, the federal budget debate has led to proposals for drastic cuts in spending, with many programs that NLEN clients benefit from on the chopping block. While tough decisions are to be expected given large budget deficits, we still felt called to action to stand against proposals harmful to our community. The proposed cuts affect large swaths of society, particularly through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), HeadStart, AmeriCorps, and urban weatherization initiatives. With cuts slated to directly impact our clients and the quality of service we provide, we felt compelled to participate in Illinois Action Day.



On March 2, 2011, The Community Action Partnership (nonprofit, national membership organization representing the interests of 1,100 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across the country that annually help 17 million low-income Americans achieve economic security) organized a rally at the James R. Thompson Center downtown. With a bus sponsored by the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA), NLEN organized and transported approximately 30 clients and staff to the rally. CEDA's home energy assistance program, which NLEN clients participate in, would suffer if the budget cuts are passed as written.

While it is not the position of NLEN to take political sides, we hope our elected leaders will not choose to balance the budget by cutting necessary programs that help the most disadvantaged members of our society. Here are some reactions from rally participants:

"I believe some of these cuts, especially the childcare and other social programs will hurt the community. It was really encouraging to see so many seniors at the rally."

- Delores Wright, NLEN Volunteer

"I think the rally was a beginning. I hope our leaders listen to what this rally was about."

- Amir Futrell, Sweet Beginnings Team Member

President Preckwinkle Visits NLEN (continued from page 1)

reiterated the need for programs to aid those re-entering society after incarceration, in light of such high rates of recidivism and the impact on future generations. A long-time resident and representative of the 24th ward, Commissioner Steele reminded the NLEN staff of his strong connection to this community.

After completing the video, NLEN staff led President Preckwinkle on a tour of the facility, through our computer lab and upstairs into the Sweet Beginnings production area. There President Preckwinkle and Commissioner Steele had a product demonstration and met a few Sweet Beginnings Team members on hand for the event. Some NLEN board members were also present for the visit, including Dr. Richard Kordesh, Dr. Dennis Deer, Colby Smith, and Dr. Dan Cantrell.



President Preckwinkle, NLEN Board Member Dr. Dennis Deer, and NLEN staff observe the production process

We'd like to thank President Preckwinkle and Commissioner Steele for visiting our offices, and are proud that our work is receiving this attention. Both officials left with Commissioner Steele in particular informed staff that he would share the story of NLEN's uniquely innovative approach to prisoner re-entry with his colleagues at the National Association of Counties. It is our hope that visits like these will continue to raise the profile of our work, and awareness of the issues faced by those with criminal backgrounds. We are very appreciative that President Preckwinkle and Commissioner Steele could make time for us.



Commissioner Steele and President Preckwinkle learn from Sweet Beginnings Team Member Saulman Brooks

U-Turn Permitted: Success Stories



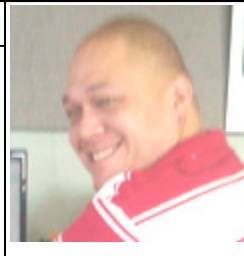
Dorine Poole

Dorine Poole first heard about North Lawndale Employment Network's U-Turn Permitted Program in the process of obtaining her rap sheet, where she was given a list of service providers specializing in programs for ex-offenders. She decided to try the U-Turn Permitted program in the hopes of finding employment to support her family

Dorine is a resident of North Lawndale, and had recently adopted two children that she would need to support, yet because of her background she had been unemployed since 2007. When she came to U-Turn in 2009, she was able to learn to how best market her job skills for success in the workplace.

Dorine had attended DeVry University for two years, studying Business Operation, and was able to put those skills to good use. She interviewed for a position with Sweet Beginnings in August of 2010, and there she really began to shine, using her office training on the job. With her calm and friendly presence, she emerged as a true leader on the Sweet Beginnings Team.

Sweet Beginnings provided just the launchpad for Dorine's new career. In November of 2010, she was hired as an administrative assistant at Urban Ponics. We are sure Dorine will embrace the challenges of her new position with an open heart and her graceful attitude.



Willie Brown

Willie Brown came to the U-Turn Permitted program in October of 2010. He had initially heard of the program through an attorney, a friend who had read about the services at the North Lawndale Employment Network. After a year of unemployment, with his background holding him back, Willie decided to give the U-Turn Permitted program a try. After 13 months of incarceration, Willie knew he would need to find work to support his wife and two children. Willie excelled in class, elected to the role of Vice-President, and maintained a calm and quiet leadership style for the duration of the program. It was clear he was ready to make a change in his life.

After graduation, Willie began working with NLEN's workforce coach in the hopes of landing employment. With his diligent approach to the job search, Willie was eventually selected to send his resume and apply for a position with Urban Ponics, a partner organization of NLEN.

Urban Ponics is a startup company that aims to provide fresh, locally grown produce year-round, using the latest in hydroponic farming technology. Willie had a background in agriculture already, making him an ideal candidate to work at Urban Ponics, and in December, he was hired at this impressive startup as an Operation Tech! We wish Willie the best in all his future endeavors, and know that he has taken the lessons of U-Turn Permitted with him in his new job.

How Do I

By Darrell Williams (February 2011 U-Turn Permitted Graduate)

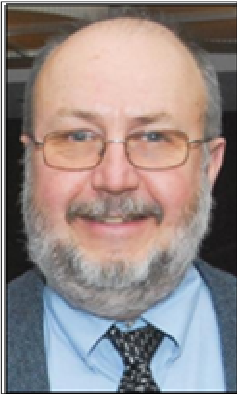
How do I survive when surrounded by malice and corruption
 How do I stay optimistic when all I see is destruction
 How do you meet your full potential and become all that you can be
 When a life of mediocrity is all that you can see
 Where do you find the fortitude to rise and overcome
 The obstacles in life for simply being a black man's son
 How does a person set goals in which to strive
 When living a subdued existence devoid of that feeling of being totally alive
 When you live in a neighborhood of degradation
 It drains your soul and causes stagnation
 Dealers on the corners causing genocide
 Are being patronized by addicts slowly committing suicide
 There is an enemy among us we can't see or hear
 It destroys lives, yet provokes no fear
 We unknowingly become pawns in a game we cannot win
 It turns some brothers against brothers and friends against friends
 But I say to those that are conquered
 Let's not make them feel shame
 Let's not point fingers and place blame
 We must all at least recognize that anything to do with illegal drugs is wrong
 It destroys our communities and it doesn't take long



Darrell Williams

Do you know someone who could benefit from the U-turn Permitted program? Please see our ad on page 13



Board Member Profile:**Dr Richard Kordesh, NLEN Board President**

In this new feature, we'd like to introduce you to some of the individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes to further our organization's goals. The president of our board, Dr. Richard Kordesh, has served on the board for eight years. Dr. Kordesh founded The Blue House Institute (<http://www.bluehouseinstitute.org>), and is the author of *Restoring Power to Parents and Places: The Case for Family-Based Community Development*. We caught up with Dr.

Kordesh and gained some insight into his favorite parts of his job, and his priorities for NLEN. We are honored to have such an accomplished and devoted person as our board president, and thank Dr. Kordesh for his service to NLEN!

What is your favorite part of serving on the NLEN Board?

"I enjoy making the partnership work between the non-profit, NLEN, and the for-profit subsidiary, Sweet Beginnings."

What is priority number one for you as Board President?

"Following the strategic planning process to generate more funds, a new stream of leaders, and board contributors over the next 5 years."

How many children do you have?

"I'm happily married and have 4 children, aged 24, 21, 21 (twins), and my youngest is 16."

What books have you read recently?

"The Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin. The book is a history of Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet."

What is your favorite beeline® product?

"My favorite is the raw Chicagoland honey, I love it at breakfast time."

What is your favorite pastime?

"I play a game of full-court basketball every Sunday morning. I love the game, and love the Chicago Bulls."

Any final comments for our newsletter readers?

"It has been a thrill to watch NLEN serve this critical networking role, then turn into a model social enterprise. I look forward to the bright future of the organization!"

Volunteer Profile:**Ann Stevens, Sweet Beginnings Beekeeper**

Four years ago, when Ann Stevens decided to take a beekeeping course, she was simply looking for a connection to nature. "I love the city, but I was thinking about the things that are not near me. Bees are a way to be close to nature in the city." A few years later, while working as a volunteer beekeeper at the Chicago Botanic Garden, she met John Hansen, the Sweet Beginnings Head Beekeeper. "I had read about Sweet Beginnings and was very interested in what they do, so when I met John I quizzed him about it. He then passed my name to Holley – the Sweet Beginnings General Manager – as a possible volunteer." Next thing you know, Ann found herself a part of the story of some hardworking bees on the West Side of Chicago.

Soon Holley invited Ann to help tend the bees. "I get to shadow John, and just learn from his presence. At Sweet Beginnings, I get to be around this expert and, in a small way, contribute to this wonderful, lovely cause, of helping people who need another chance by teaching them about bees and nature. I am aware that everybody needs chances, and some need lots of chances. This combination spoke to me. I feel lucky to find something I can really connect to." We here at Sweet Beginnings are fortunate to have committed interest from beekeepers like Ann.

In addition to helping with the bees, Ann has helped to connect Sweet Beginnings to a new potential partner, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park, where she also tends their beehives. Most recently, Ann served on the Sweet Beginnings Tea Committee and helped to collect a number of valuable silent auction items to raise funds for the program (see the Sweet Beginnings Tea article on page 1). General Manager Holley Blackwell is delighted to have Ann's support: "Ann has been a dedicated and compassionate supporter of our work. She has a true love for the care of the honey bee and service towards fellow humans."



Sweet Beginnings Volunteer beekeeper Ann Stevens tends a beehive



The Buzz with Sweet Beginnings, LLC

Sweet Beginnings is raising the roof with new hires, new vendors, and a new name!



Transformation from BEELINE TO BEELOVE – What's in a name?

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet questioned the value of a name as they examined their star-crossed love: "What's in a name?" At Sweet Beginnings we have also asked ourselves this question and found this answer: love! Sweet Beginnings is in the process of launching its new BEE-LOVE brand, and the name is leading the company into a new dimension of packaging, marketing, and branding. Our products are being sold across the country with increasing frequency, and we have even sent BEELINE to Canada and Australia to customers who have learned about our unique social mission and products. Because of this wide reach we have had to evaluate our trademark name, BEELINE, and revise it to align with trademark laws and customer feedback around the globe. We are very pleased to announce this major transition as we pollinate stakeholders for years to come.

Look for BEELOVE in Summer 2011!



The last months of 2010 and the first month of 2011 brought Sweet Beginnings 15 new hires with 15 unique stories of perseverance and focus. The December 2010 holiday sales were at a record high, with the beeline Production Room resembling Santa's Workshop for weeks. Sweet Beginnings sent products to over 25 states, to Australia, and to several holiday events around Chicago. Our online audience went sweet over the Nourishing Balms Gift Set

and the Small Amenity Gift Set (\$12 each). We also received an overwhelming response for our Holiday Honey (\$7). Sweet Beginnings has prepared new Gift Items for upcoming seasonal distribution! Please look for Mother's Day, Father's Day, summer, and other holiday offerings online at: www.beelinestore.com

Almost a Year Later...

The beelinestore.com website is almost one-year old! Our regular and holiday shoppers have been pleased with the informational and product-related content of the site, and they have shown their appreciation through RECORD SALES online. Be sure to tune-in to the website regularly for news, updates, honey and beekeeping information and more!

Spring Hive Installation

Sweet Beginnings will install its 2011 hives at three locations within the City of Chicago this year: our flagship Beelove Flournoy Apiary, the Beelove Wilbur Wright College Apiary, and the Beelove Peninsula Hotel Apiary.

The first week of April will be buzzing with the notes of honeybees settling into their new homes and meeting their neighbors who have survived the winter residency. Bees enact a form of hibernation in the winter, staying inside of their colonies while clustering around the Queen Bee to keep warm and feast on their honey stores. Each year a Beekeeper can expect to have some bee survivors and some who have succumbed to the winter weather. The excitement of the Spring Installation remains our ritual for welcoming our bees back to the promise of spring: fresh pollen and nectar needed for honey production. Make sure to check out our photos of our installations online! We are excited to begin this season with 10 Beekeepers who have used the winter months to prepare for the care of our bees. Good luck, Team!



Sweet Beginnings Team Member Profiles

Sweet Beginnings Team Member: Saulman Brooks



“I just wanted to share a little bit about what I have learned since I started working at Sweet Beginnings, LLC. It is simply wonderful to know how bees work in our food system, and how they use so much nectar and pollen to make delicious honey. I simply never realized how important bees could be!

I’ve also learned the ingredients and processes of how to make all of the various products using our honey, such as the body cream, lotion, hand and foot butter balm, lip balm, honey and brown sugar body polisher, and shower gel. Working with this team gives me great joy, because it has taught me to humble myself and work together with others.

Just the other day I learned how to prepare orders for shipment, first working with the team to jar honey, then printing and filling out order forms, before shipping the orders via UPS. This was another great experience for me, it makes me happy to know that I can learn something different every time I come to work. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to experience something new each day!”

Sweet Beginnings Team Member: Tramain Span



“The best thing that could have happened to me was being a part of the U-Turn Permitted program. It helped me change my attitude, making me want only positive things in life. The staff at North Lawndale Employment Network want to help every ex-offender they meet.

Some programs make empty promises, but at North Lawndale, they will work hard for you if you want to work hard for yourself, and Brenda Palms Barber wants to make sure she helps everyone she can. Since I’ve started working at Sweet Beginnings, it has been a perfect start for me on my new life.

Yesterday I had the experience of making hand and foot butter balm for the first time after watching the team during production last week. Everyone came together as a team with a plan on who would do which task to meet the deadline. Everybody is helping each other learn the products, the prices, and the ingredients. I’m also learning the proper way to answer the phone when dealing with other businesses.”

Tramain Span

Sweet Beginnings Team Member: Karietta Washington



“I enrolled in the U-Turn Permitted Program in November of 2010. After graduation, I heard about some job openings in the organization, and I was fortunate to be hired on at Sweet Beginnings.

Since I’ve started working, I’ve learned so much about Sweet Beginnings and Brenda Palms Barber. She is an incredible woman who has helped so many people with employment barriers obtain jobs. I admire her drive and determination to keep NLEN and Sweet Beginnings a very successful and positive organization. While working at Sweet Beginnings, I have learned a great deal about the production and manufacturing of all natural honey and skin-care products. Even though I’m the only female on the team, I’m in no way separated from the work that we do. I put in work just like everybody else. I thank my team for not excluding me and giving me this opportunity to learn alongside them. I am glad I will be able to take all that I have learned with me to future employment opportunities. Thanks again to Brenda Palms Barber and the entire NLEN staff for giving me the opportunity to work with you as my life transitions.”

Karietta Washington

Sweet Beginnings Team Member: Amir Futrell



“U-Turn Permitted made an impact on me, giving me more confidence going on interviews, dealing with certain situations at work, and generally turning negatives into positives. It was helpful to reflect on my past and focus on my future. With social skills, anger management, and a new resume I have more confidence trying to find employment.

Sweet Beginnings has been a great transitional place for me. I now think about starting my own business, and using my skills to help my father spruce up his business. He makes his own herbal concoctions, and I could help him with my internet expertise, or help him make his labels more appealing to the eye. I can help him organize his business, and bring his products to market.

Working here I have to be up every day, treat people the way I want to be treated, and be more professional in the way I act and speak. By working and being a part of the percentage that doesn’t go back to incarceration, I can tell my story. I am determined to go forward, and this is a good start!”

Amir Futrell

Emergency Fund Impacts

NLEN's Income Support Specialist began her AmeriCorps service term on September 1, 2010 and since then, 301 clients have applied for at least one service. These services include a variety of public programs such as SNAP benefits, emergency cash assistance, and medical benefits. Over 200 clients have been approved for these various programs, with an aggregate income support value of \$69,613.75. We would like to share some specific examples of the positive impact of this assistance with you.

In October, a client referred to us through the Homelessness Prevention Call Center was in risk of losing her gas service. After applying and being approved for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), she was still short \$130.61 on her gas bill. After a call to People's Gas verifying the amount she owed, we were able to provide the necessary assistance and keep her heat on.

Another client referred to us in December was just transitioning into permanent housing from a homeless shelter. Through Emergency Fund he was able to pay the cost of a stove, and was referred to Catholic Charities to furnish his new apartment. We assisted this client with a LIHEAP application where he received \$580 dollars in assistance, as well as a Com-Ed Residential Hardship application to eliminate his existing balance with the utility company.

Emergency Fund assistance was also able to help a U-Turn Graduate and Sweet Beginnings, LLC employee. Although this client had secured employment, the cost of an eye exam and new glasses were outside of his budget. With Emergency Fund assistance we were able to pay the cost of his eye exam and two pairs of glasses, as well as the fee for a new driver's license.

Resource Center Hosts Thanksgiving Through Tough Times Turkey Giveaway

In an effort to make the holidays a little more joyful this past fall, NLEN hosted an inaugural turkey drive for our clients. The turkey drive was featured at outreach meetings in the community, in an effort to bring more people unacquainted with our services into the Resource Center. Clients signed up for turkeys through a lottery system at the NLEN Front Desk, filling out a card with their name, phone number, email address, and family size to be eligible.

Donations were solicited from local markets, and with 100 percent staff participation and generous donations from Jewel-Osco and the Heartland Alliance, we were able to provide over 70 families with turkeys and

hams for the holiday. We received enough donations that we did not have to turn away any lottery entrants, and could provide turkeys to any client who filled out a card. We hope to expand our impact next year to reach more families who may not have the means to obtain a holiday meal.

We were honored to bring this minor comfort to families in the surrounding community, and thank everybody who donated and participated in the distribution. On November 17th, 2010, we distributed all the turkeys gathered and purchased for the event, through a collaborative effort with staff and board members. Anybody who set foot in the resource center that day couldn't help but leave with a smile on their face.



Volunteers prepare turkeys for distribution in the NLEN conference room.

NLEN in the Press



NLEN has continued to receive media attention through the winter months with stories about the Sweet Beginnings Tea, and our keynote speaker, Majora Carter. Executive Director Brenda Palms Barber and Majora Carter were featured on both ABC7 Chicago and FOX32 morning news programs promoting the Sweet Beginnings Tea.

Prior to the Tea, NLEN and Sweet Beginnings were also featured in an episode of *The Promised Land*, Majora Carter's syndicated radio program. The program was broadcast nationwide, and is available to stream online at <http://www.thepromisedland.org>

As always, to find out the latest news about NLEN or Sweet Beginnings, check "The Buzz" section of the Sweet Beginnings website, "The Press Room" section of the NLEN website, or follow us on Facebook or Twitter!

<http://www.facebook.com/sweetbeginningschicago>

<http://www.twitter.com/beelovestore>

***Vanishing of the Bees* Screening: The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum April 13th 6:30 PM**

Back in October, we were pleased to sponsor a screening of the critically-acclaimed documentary film *Vanishing of the Bees* at Garfield Park Conservatory. The well-attended event highlighted the importance of sustainable agriculture practices, especially pertaining to beekeeping. Honeybee populations are suffering from a mysterious disease known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), thought by some to be the negative result of chemical pesticide use. This thought provoking film chronicles the efforts of beekeepers to determine the true cause of CCD, which threatens their livelihood and the pollination of vital food crops.

Indeed as much as one-third of the food we eat is dependent upon honeybee pollination efforts. Without the bees, our food supply would be endangered, as they are an important cog in the system. If you missed our public screening of *Vanishing of the Bees*, we are pleased to announce an upcoming presentation of the film at The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. We are proud to screen the film in partnership with the museum, with the goal of raising awareness around this critical issue. The screening is free of charge, and will be held at the museum on Wednesday, April 13th at 6:30 pm. Please join us to learn more about the plight of the honeybee, and what you can do to help. Sweet Beginnings will have a table selling beelove® products as well.

The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

2430 N. Cannon Drive

Chicago, IL 60614

Wednesday, April 13th, 6:30 PM



Sweet Beginnings Participates in FamilyFarmed Expo The Midwest's Premier Good Food Event

Sweet Beginnings was fortunate to be invited once again to the FamilyFarmed Expo, a three-day conference, trade show, and food festival for farmers, businesses, individuals, and families, held at the UIC Forum March 17-19. The event featured three distinct days of programming promoting local and sustainable food production.

Thursday featured the world-class Financing Farm to Fork conference supporting the local food movement by encouraging investment in farm and food production, processing and distribution businesses.

Friday featured the Midwest's leading local food trade show, a major school food track, the Meet the Buyers reception, an innovative Food Policy Summit, and the scrumptious Localicious Party to cap the day.

Saturday featured cooking demos from celebrity chefs, educational workshops, Sally Fallon and an interactive Kids Corner.

Sweet Beginnings worked a table at the conference on Saturday, selling products and promoting awareness of our unique mission. We are glad to be in line with the local and environmentally-friendly food movement and to be part of such a high-profile gathering. As individuals begin to question their relationship with the way their food was raised and the impact their diets are having on society and the environment, we hope events like these will grow and expand, pollinating knowledge about local and nutritious food across the country.



FamilyFarmed.org is a sophisticated system designed to connect local food producers with trade buyers and consumers on a regional level. FamilyFarmed.org helps consumers and trade buyers develop trusting relationships with farmers and artisanal food producers by sharing information about their values and production methods.

APRIL 2011 NLEN Workshop Calendar

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mar 28	29	30	31	1 U-Turn Permitted Orientation 10am
4 Illinois Skills Match 10am	5 Resume Workshop 10am	6 Intro to Internet Job Search 2pm	7 Financial Aid/FAFSA Workshop 10am	8
11 Intro to Internet Job Search 10am	12 Illinois Skills Match 10am	13 Resume Workshop 2pm	14	15 Resource Center Orientation 10am
18 Interview Skills 10am	19 Expungement Workshop 10 am	20	21 Tenants' Rights Workshop 10 am	22

WORKSHOPS in **BOLD** are held at
United Baptist Church
4220 W. Roosevelt

Child Support Workshop date TBA

All others are held at NLEN!

Sign up at the front desk or call Andrew – (773) 638 1814



*At right: NLEN's Financial
Coach holds a workshop on the
importance of credit*



“bee wise... bee natural...beelove!”

Your purchase of beelove® products helps individuals facing significant barriers to employment, especially those with criminal histories. With this purchase, you are providing opportunities for individuals to establish a viable work history, learn productive work habits, and gain marketable skills. Your investment builds stepping stones toward employment, career advancement, and productive membership in society.



To purchase our unique, high-quality beelove products, please visit www.sweetbeginningsllc.com, to purchase online or to connect to local vendors. *We thank you for your continued support!*

For more information, contact Sweet Beginnings, LLC at (773) 638-7058.



U-Turn Permitted

A Job Readiness Program of the North Lawndale Employment Network

Am I Ready?

Am I...

- Serious about changing my life for the better after a felony conviction?
- Worried that my record might keep me from putting the past behind me?
- Prepared to work hard to find employment?
- Willing to attend four weeks of training, five days a week?
- Drug free?
- Ready to participate in anger management classes that meet parole requirements?

Orientation Sessions 1st Friday of each month at 10:00am

United Baptist Church

4220 W. Roosevelt Rd.

The North Lawndale Employment Network & Sweet Beginnings, LLC Thank Our New and Current Supporters of 2011 Who Support Our Work

Advocate Bethany
Alphawood Foundation
The Boeing Company
Barack, Ferrazzano, Kirschbaum, and Nagelberg LLP
Cedar Concepts
Center for Working Families
The Chicago Community Trust
Chicago Jobs Council
Chicago Urban League
Chicago African Americans in Philanthropy
ChiWest ResourceNet
Circle of Service Foundation
Community Development Block Grant
Country Financial
Crown Family Philanthropies
Deer Rehabilitation Services, Inc.
E-On Climate & Renewables
Emergency Fund
Exelon Corporation
The Field Foundation
Fifth Third Bank
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
Garfield Foundation
Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
I&G Charitable Foundation
Jewel-Osco
Jim & Kay Mabie
The Joyce Foundation
J.P. Morgan Chase
Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC)

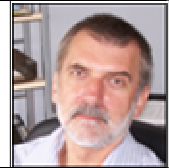
Lawndale Christian Development Corporation
McCormick Foundation
Dr. Michael McAfee and Maja Kunzi
Net-Telligence Group
The Peninsula Chicago Hotel
People's Gas
Polk Bros. Foundation
The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation
Project Safe Neighborhoods
The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
Schwab Charitable Fund
Sinai Health System
Solutions Associates
Steans Family Foundation
Taproot Foundation
University of Illinois at Chicago
Wilbur Wright College
William Blair & Company
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

NLEN Staff Members

Brenda Palms-Barber
Chief Executive Officer
773-638-1805



Ron Tonn
Chief Operating Officer
773-265-7948

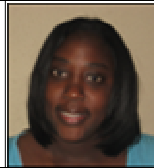


Coretta Rivers
U-Turn Permitted Program Manager
773-638-1806



Victoria Spires
Operations Manager
773-265-7947

Pauline Sylvain
CWF Financial Coach
773-638-1813



Jose Wilson
Clinical Workforce
Development Trainer
773-638-1820



Stacey Woods
Income Support Specialist
773-638-8201



Holley Blackwell
Sweet Beginnings General Manager
773-265-7942

Michael Malecek
Development & Program Associate
773-638-7060



Felicia Griffin
Workforce Development Coach
773-265-7945



Andrew Kinaci
Princeton AlumniCorps Fellow
773-638-1814



Call for Volunteers

U-Turn Permitted is an intense four-week job readiness training program for those with a felony conviction. Participants learn researched-based techniques for dealing with anger; how to conduct an effective job search; how to answer the most difficult interview questions regarding their convictions; and how to keep and advance on a job.

Class includes mock interviews, role-playing, and field trips to various locations that help U-Turn students develop and improve punctuality, information gathering, and synthesizing skills.

Volunteers are needed throughout the week, at any time, to help conduct mock interviews for students. Out interview goal is to practice often, in front of as many people as possible. If you are in the neighborhood between 8:30am—2:30 p.m., Monday—Friday, drop by for as much time as you have. Feedback is provided to the participant following each presentation.

**Please call Jose M. Wilson at (312) 543-0348
4220 West Roosevelt Road**

Are You Interested in Volunteering at NLEN?

Are you:

- ◆ Knowledgeable of computers?
- ◆ Knowledgeable of filing systems?
- ◆ Customer service oriented?
- ◆ Detail oriented?



Come volunteer at NLEN!!!

For more information please contact:

Pauline Sylvain ~ 773-638-1813

NLEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President of Board

Colby Smith, Customer Care Management, LLC
Board Vice President

Esther Franco-Payne, Chicago Metropolis 2020
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Dr. Nicole Norfles, Norfles & Associates, LLC

Dr. Patricia O'Brien, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago

Brenda Palms-Barber, North Lawndale Employment Network

NLEN STAFF

Brenda Palms-Barber, Chief Executive Officer

Ron Tonn, Chief Operating Officer

Victoria Spires, Operations Manager

Coretta Rivers, U-Turn Permitted Program Manager

Jose Wilson, Clinical Workforce Development Trainer

Holley Blackwell, Sweet Beginnings General Manager

Felicia Griffin, Workforce Development Coach

Pauline Sylvain, CWF Financial Coach

Michael Malecek, Development & Program Associate

Stacey Woods, Income Support Specialist

Andrew Kinaci, Princeton AlumniCorps Fellow

Please contact Andrew Kinaci at 773-638-1814 for future newsletter submissions!

NORTH LAWDALE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

Phone: (773) 638-1825

Fax: (773) 638-0728

3726 W. Flournoy

Chicago, IL 60624

www.nlen.org

SWEET BEGINNINGS, LLC

Phone: (773) 638-7058

Fax: (773) 265-7979

3726 W. Flournoy

Chicago, IL 60624

www.sweetbeginningsllc.com