



Creating a community that works

NLEN News

NLEN and CJC Co-host AECF Conference: *Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race: A Jobs Initiative Conference*

NLEN Goals:

- Identify priority employment needs and promising employment opportunities for Lawndale residents
- Strengthen relationships between employers and employment & training organizations
- Provide technical assistance to build the capacity of North Lawndale E & T providers to meet the employment needs of Lawndale residents and area employers
- Build relationships among E & T providers, social service agencies and community groups to provide the full range of support services needed to help residents secure good jobs and advance to better ones

This past month, NLEN co-hosted a conference with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Chicago Jobs Council that convened employers, workforce development practitioners, researchers, representatives of non-profit advocacy and policy organizations working on social change issues, and funders, to learn about how issues of race, ethnicity and culture affect labor market outcomes among low-wage workers. Through the conference, we aimed to engage organizations committed to improving labor market outcomes among low-wage workers by sharing effective, culturally competent strategies.

The Casey Foundation initiated the Jobs Initiative, a workforce development investment whose mission is to help low-income young adults secure family-supporting, living-wage jobs with benefits and advancement opportunities. The Jobs Initiative invests in five cities and seeks to stimulate regional economies and labor markets to work for low-income job seek-

ers living in isolated communities.

Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race: A Jobs Initiative Conference was designed to provide an opportunity for members of the workforce development field to gather information to consider whether any common interests emerge for improving labor market outcomes by addressing issues of race, ethnicity and culture. During the meeting, the conveners (1) raised awareness regarding the relevance of these issues, (2) featured practical examples and tools to strengthen practice in the field, and (3) provided opportunities for expanding networks and collaborating on projects. If you would like more information about the conference, please visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation website at www.aecf.org!

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Farewell Lea... Welcome Aletra!

NLEN is saddened to say goodbye to our Associate Director, **Lea Weems**. Lea has been with the network almost from its inception, coming on just months after Brenda Palms Barber started here. Lea has proven to be a wonderful asset to NLEN and we miss her dearly. At the same time, we are excited to wish her the best of luck as she travels to Boston, MA to start law school in the fall at HARVARD University.

NLEN would like to extend a gracious welcome to **Aletra Nicholson**, who has accepted the position as Associate Direc-

tor. Aletra joins the network with a wealth of experience in the workforce development field and is excited to meet and work with our partners! Read more about Aletra in our fall issue!

Letter from the Executive Director, Brenda Palms Barber

Greetings:

Good Things are happening in North Lawndale all the time. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of our members and friends who attended both our Winter and Spring Quarterly Membership meetings. Our winter meeting centered on an open dialogue addressing the impact September 11th had on our workforce development community. Robert Wordlaw, Executive Director of the Chicago Jobs Council and NLEN board member, facilitated this lively discussion that left us all in a healthier state of mind and an improved and optimistic perspective about our work. Some key points made:

- Stay engaged in maintaining meaningful relationships with employers - the economy will

turn around

- Be realistic and clear about matching skills and job opportunities with clients
- We must strongly encourage Foundations to continue to fund social services, considering the significant cutbacks on resources from the state and federal levels
- This is the best time (during a recession) to advocate long term skills training—to create a safety net for individuals
- Encourage public service jobs

Our featured member organization of the Winter quarter was the Chicago Christian Industrial League. Felix Matlock, Associate Director, shared with us the history, purpose, and programs currently offered at CCIL. As you may know, they are

Raising Awareness in the Health Care Sector

Illinois Going Home Program: Integrating Former Violent Offenders Back into North Lawndale

Collaborate with us...
JOIN NLEN TODAY!

Your membership dues (\$100 each year, per organization or individual) enable NLEN to continue providing much needed services and programs to the North Lawndale residents, service providers, and employers.

Membership benefits for Employers:

- Access to a work-ready supply of workers through NLEN member training providers
- Seamless invisible support systems for workers from North Lawndale
- Variety of retention-driven products and services
- Networking opportunities
- Information about and access to numerous tax incentives and subsidies
- Increased presence in the community
- Reduced recruitment and hiring costs

Membership benefits for Service Providers

- Access to comprehensive system of services for your clients through all NLEN members
- Strong collaborative funding strategies and proposals
- Links to committed good employers with good jobs
- Networking opportunities
- Shared web-based data collection and referral process
- Exchange of employment and best practices
- Support and technical assistance

For more information, contact our Office Manager at (773) 542-2000 X 3305

**EX-OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT SERVICE
NETWORK (EESN)**

UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH, 4220 WEST ROOSEVELT RD
10:00 A.M.— 2:00 P.M., 1st and 3rd FRIDAYS of EVERY MONTH

Anyone interested in joining the network of employment and support services offered by the EESN should attend this orientation to the program. Contact Walter Boyd at (773) 542-2000 x 5588 for details or to make a referral.

SAVE UP! IDA PROGRAM

BASIC BUDGETING CLASSES

- June: Every Tuesday (4th, 11th, 18th, 25th) from 6-9 p.m. at Neighborhood Housing Services, NHS, located at 3555 West Ogden Ave

Save Up! is a special matched savings account program that helps North Lawndale residents build assets. These Basic Budgeting classes are free and required to enter the program. For more information, contact Anne Bracken at (773) 277-2724, ext 2.

**NLEN REGULAR MEETING
SCHEDULE**

- **Quarterly Membership Meetings**
2nd Wednesdays in January, April, July, and September, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Sinai Community Institute.

REMEMBER: JULY SUMMER MEMBERSHIP MEETING CANCELLED!

- **Ex-offender Advisory Committee Meetings**
3rd Wednesday of the month, 12:00-2:00 p.m., United Baptist Church, 4220 West Roosevelt Rd; lunch is served.
- **Health Care Committee Meetings**
3rd Wednesday of the month, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Sinai Community Institute, 2653 West Ogden Ave.
- **Manufacturing Committee Meetings**
Contact Kristen Roberts if you are interested in attending at (773) 542-2000 ext 4881.

Illinois Going Home Program: Integrating Former Violent Offenders Back into North Lawndale

Due to the vision and commitment of Governor George Ryan and the executive staff of the Illinois Workforce Advantage, the state of Illinois has undertaken a Department of Justice (DOJ) grant that is hoped to reduce recidivism in adult males ages 18 to 24 that “have a propensity for violence” and would likely re-offend without some intervention. The North Lawndale community was “targeted for this program because of the high percentage of ex-offenders who return” annually. According to the research cited in *Drugs, Crime and Consequences*, the Center For Impact Research confirms that 57% of North Lawndale residents were involved in the criminal justice system during 2001; They were either “sentenced to the Department of Corrections (DOC),” “sentenced to probation,” “on parole,” “still serving time at DOC,” “or still on probation.” Currently, there are 2,732 North Lawndale residents on parole between the ages of 17 to 35, and it is estimated that forty-four percent will return to DOC within three years. If North Lawndale is to break this cycle of incarceration, it is evident that something new and innovative need happen.

Though the Illinois Going Home Program will include West Garfield, Austin and West Humboldt Park, the most intensive services will be offered in North Lawndale. At least 200 incarcerated residents of North Lawndale will be selected based on their need for intensive re-entry services

such as “substance abuse and mental health counseling, housing, food and clothing, family reunification assistance, basic skills education, pre-employment and job training, and job placement.” In West Humboldt Park, Austin, and West Garfield, moderate re-entry services will be implemented.

The unique feature of the Illinois Going Home Program is the broad base of involvement with government and community organizations. While the DOC will be the lead agency, a wide variety of services will be provided at the community level. Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC) will provide intensive case management for those selected for the program, and North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) through the Ex-Offender Service Network (EESN) will be the intermediate that provides the model for job readiness and placement services in cooperation with a variety of community based organizations.

Lower rates of recidivism are the goal of this collaborative effort. Eligible inmates will be selected by the DOC with the involvement of a community based Reentry Steering Committee (RSC), and based on a variety of factors will be tracked through NLEN high intensity reentry network or the moderate intensity reentry network serving West Garfield, Austin, and West Humboldt Park.

AmeriCorps

North Lawndale Employment Network has been provided funded to host another year of AmeriCorps State and National Program through the Policy Research Action Group through Loyola University. It is a pleasure to announce that we have 14 AmeriCorps members providing technical assistance to 11 organizations located in North Lawndale. North Lawndale Community News, Neighborhood Housing Services, North Lawndale

NORTH LAWDALE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

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**NOTICE! JULY
SUMMER
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING WILL
NOT BE HELD!!!
(see page 4 for more
information)**

Please contact Alona Lerman at (773) 542-2000 x 3635 if you would like anything included in future newsletters!

NLEN Awarded 2 Grants to Continue to Serve Out-of-School Youth!

NLEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Debra Wesley-Freeman, Sinai Community Institute (Chair)
Robert Wordlaw, Chicago Jobs Council (Vice Chair)
Brenda Mitchell, Advocate/Bethany Hospital (Secretary)
Donna Ducharme, The Delta Institute (Treasurer) Sylvia Benson, STRIVE Chicago Employment Service, Inc.
Greg Darnieder, Steans Family Foundation
Margaret Davis, Healthcare Consortium of Illinois
Sam Flowers, H.I.C.A.
Davis Jenkins, UIC Great Cities Institute
Val Jordan, APL Plastics and Teaching Factory
Gail Nelson, Carole Robertson Center for Learning
*Kevin McCauley, Illinois Department of Human Services
*denotes ex-officio status

NLEN STAFF

Brenda Palms Barber, Executive Director
Aletra Nicholson, Associate Director
Tom Wetzel, Employer Liaison
Walter Boyd, Ex-offender Program Manager
Melanie Cardwell, EESN Client Services Manager
Alona Lerman, Program Associate
Victoria Cammon, AmeriCorps Coordinator
Pamela Thomas, Client Services Coordinator
Philip Light, Office Manager

NLEN is excited to announce that we have been awarded two grants to support our work around serving the needs of out-of-school youth. NLEN will work in collaboration with the Neighborhood Technology Resource Center and Family Focus Lawndale to provide job readiness training and occupational skills training to youth in North Lawndale. The program, called *Building Beyond!*, will prepare young adults for careers in IT and Telecommunications. NLEN currently receives funds from the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (MOWD) under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to provide occupational skills training to out-of-school youth. We were recently notified that we were refunded to continue to provide these services next year. In addition, NLEN was awarded an Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community grant to offer similar services. If you or your agency works with youth who are out-of-school and between the ages of 17-25 years old or if you are interested in receiving a flyer about the program, please contact Alona Lerman at (773) 542-2000 x 3635 for more information.

In the next issue, you can look forward to reading more about NLEN's efforts to serve youth in the community and the revitalization of the North Lawndale Youth Committee!