



Creating a community that works

NLEN News

North Lawndale Employment Network

Winter 2006

NLEN's
First Annual
Sweet
Beginnings Tea
Monday
February 13,
2006
3:30 to 5:30
at the
Park Hyatt
Hotel
For tickets con-
tact Brenda
Palms Barber
palms@sbcglobal.net
For details see page 3

A U-Turn Story: Allen Florence

Allen Florence is a recent U-Turn Permitted graduate who has lived in North Lawndale for all of his life. He is the oldest of eight brothers and sister and has therefore always felt a responsibility to help his mother provide for and support them. He saw that his relatives would take advantage of his mother and they would continuously take advantage of her kindness. From a young age, about 13 or 14, Allen began to work to earn money for his family by delivery groceries, shoveling snow and selling drugs. Allen had goals of bringing comfort to his family, and initially he told himself that once he achieved his goals he would no longer sell, but it soon became a way of life and more and more difficult to quit. Allen says he was "good at being bad" and he convinced himself that if you are doing the wrong thing for the right reason you'll have good luck. It also didn't help that people viewed him as doing well and continually complemented him and his progress.



U-Turn graduate, Allen Florence

After settling into this lifestyle, Allen was looked upon as the guardian of his family. His aunts would always come to him when they had a problem. When

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Please join NLEN for our Membership meeting on Wednesday April 12th 9:30AM-11:30AM at the Sinai Community Institute from

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Former Offender Employability Policies

The Governor's Community Safety and Reentry Working Group developed a new branch called the Employability, Education, and Training Subcommittee. The role of this subcommittee is to evaluate the current methods and programs used to assist former offenders to enter the workforce. The North Lawndale Employment Network participated in this committee along with several experts in the field. The committee conducts research at public hearings in Rockford and Rock Island. The culmination of the research is a report that presents the findings of the committee's research in the form of a listing of the challenges that face former offenders, policy recommendations and suggestions on implementation.

The recommendations made by the committee focus on the four stages of reentry, 1) reception and classification; 2) prison-based reentry; 3) post-release case management and 4) community-capacity building and sustain-

ability. The committee's proposals focus on promoting an attitude of successful reentry that begins not when an individual leaves prison but the day that they enter prison. The purpose of taking such an approach is to reduce the rate of recidivism by attempting to ensure the successful employment of former offenders. Research shows that recidivism is reduced among populations that have some education or training, and among groups that have completed postsecondary academic and vocational training recidivism is 50% lower.

During the stage of reentry, Reception and Classification, a key component to making the process of reentry successful is the assessment of educational levels and past employment history. This can be achieved through testing and screening for learning disabilities.

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Hitachi Foundation Social Change Forum

This fall the Hitachi Foundation hosted a Social Change Forum for which a few select grantees were invited to attend, including the North Lawndale Employment Network. At the meeting a report called *The Business of Social Change: Meeting Business and Community Goals through Partnerships* was presented. This report discusses the increasing trend among business to become more directly involved in community based development by forming partnerships with non-profits.

The Hitachi report describes these partnerships between non-profits and businesses as relationships that require mutual resource expenditure and a common value system. In order for partnerships to be successful, the report recommends that a non-profit have a very clear mission statement along with a history of commitment to that mission. Another suggestion is to make sure that both sides of the partnership have committed leaders who are willing to expend the time required to ensure that the partnership is successful.

The advantages to such partnerships are present for both parties. On the business side, one obvious advantage is being a part of a social change that impacts community development. Companies have the benefit of access to a new supply of workers that can satisfy the need for hard to fill positions that usually have a high turnover rate. Businesses can also gain access to subsidized training programs for their workforce through partnerships with non-profits. This increases promotion from within and reduces the costs of recruitment and a high turnover rate. Lastly, businesses have the opportunity to enhance employee benefits through partnerships. By

providing employees with human resource and benefits, which might otherwise be unaffordable, companies are gaining employees who have stabilized personal and financial lives which increases worker productivity, reduces the amount of absenteeism, and turnover. For non-profits, partnerships with businesses provide a new source of income. It can also enhance the visibility of the non-profit organization and offer an innovative strategy of accomplishing their mission.

In this report the North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) is presented as a success story of this type of partnership. NLEN's partnership with Advocate Hospitals has been hailed a success because of the benefits that both parties gain. NLEN is able to place former offenders who face stigma when searching for employment and Advocate Hospitals are able to staff the hard to fill positions in maintenance and food service therefore reducing the costs of high employee turnover. Part of the reason that this partnership has been a success is that the missions of the two partners are allied and therefore allows for an understanding and a great working partnership, plus both companies are having a business need met.

This new prospect of business-nonprofit partnerships demonstrates an innovative new method of involvement in philanthropy and community development. These collaborations provide a way of enhancing the lives of the economically disadvantaged while simultaneously aiding a business in advancing its goals. These partnerships are a way of improving communities and business and are therefore beneficial for all groups involved.

(U-Turn, Continued from page 1)

Allen was nineteen he got into a conflict with his aunt's boyfriend, which ended with Allen shooting the boyfriend and a few of his friends. Before Allen turned himself in, he found out that only one of the injured men were pressing charges and the rest were willing to forget the incident. He served four and a half years of a nine year sentence.

Allen calls prison at that time "college for criminals." He says that the same things that were going on in the streets were going on in the prisons and that inmates were able to continue with the life they were living on the street. When he returned home, his mother had passed away and people were messing with his nieces, nephews and sister so he took over 15th St and set up shop as a method of protecting his family. As a re-

sult of Allen and his sister selling the same product his sister and her boyfriend turned him in with product that wasn't his.

This time when Allen returned home he had no fight left. He was discouraged but he couldn't be mad at his sister because it was a part of the life he lived. A feeling of hopelessness set in and when the police, having nothing against him but knowing his history asked him to trade himself for someone bigger he was returned to prison on a possession charge. Allen fought this injustice for two years but in the end had to returned to prison for seven months.

After spending so much time in prison Allen began to feel a sense of hopelessness for a life that had been spent mainly within prison walls. His frustration served as a source of motivation for Allen. He found employment and began to feel secure and comfortable with his new life but then he was laid off and stayed on unemployment for awhile. The feeling of helplessness in obtaining a job soon returned and Allen felt that without connections to employers and support from employment networks he was at a dead end. At this point in his life the fear of the unknown set in. The temptation of the street provided a sense of security.

Reflecting on his life now, Allen is amazed at the large period of his life that has passed while he was in prison. He knows the value of education and he is regretful of the fact that he didn't complete the educational programs he started in sociology, computers and the arts that were offered while he was incarcerated. After completing the U-Turn Permitted (UTP) program Allen was placed at Accuslab. Allen's performance and positive attitude has been noticed and has served as an example of the graduates from UTP. His supervisor was so impressed by Allen that he gave him a key to the store within the first month of employment. His conduct has also impressed his su
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Sweet Beginnings Tea

This inaugural fundraiser is featuring the products of NLEN's Beeline honey. The Executive Pastry Chef from the NoMi Restaurant will be customizing the tea menu using the Beeline honey. For those interested in sponsoring the event, there are several levels of donation possible. First the Apiary level for \$25,000; Honey Comb level for \$10,000, Queen Bee for \$5,000 and lastly the Worker Bee level at \$2500. The various levels of sponsorship offer tables of ten at the Sweet Beginnings Tea and combinations of gift tins, cases of honey, a link on the NLEN website and some other benefits. Lastly, all sponsors will enjoy a feeling of social responsibility helping to positively impact society and community by supporting NLEN's efforts of reducing crime, increasing public safety, job creation and local business expansion. Individual tickets are available for \$125 of which \$90 is tax deductible.

Windy City Harvest

Windy City Harvest is a year long transitional jobs program. Windy City Harvest has two product lines—trained, ready-to-employ workers and crops such as lettuce, tomatoes, honey and bedding plants.

During the first five years of operation, Windy City Harvest will provide pre-employment training, case management, literacy programs, basic skills training, transitional work experience, and job placement services to 30 trainee-workers each year. After five years, Windy City Harvest anticipates expanding to provide these services to 60 trainee-workers each year.

Over a ten year period, approximately 450 hard-to-employ Chicagoans will be trained and employed through Windy City Harvest. Trainee-workers will receive an average wage of \$8/hour for 30 hours per week at Windy City Harvest. One senior trainee-worker will be hired for every nine trainee-workers. Senior trainee-workers will receive an

average wage of \$10/hour.

Skills Gained: Trainee-workers will learn to grow lettuce, tomatoes, other vegetables and fruits as well as bedding plants and to process, package, distribute, and sell the crops directly at retail markets and wholesale to companies such as Aramark. They will receive basic skills certifications in areas such as food safety, customer service, horticulture and materials handling.

Governance: Windy City Harvest will be incorporate as a non-profit 501 (c) 3 charitable organization. The Board of Directors will consist of between 20 and 25 members including the three sponsoring funders of Windy City Harvest—the Steans Family Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, and Nancy Searle. Board members will also be recruited with expertise related to farming, food processing, marketing and sales, and key business skills such as accounting and finance.

Partner Organizations and Core Responsibilities

Chicago Botanic Garden—Executive Director including contract management, fundraising, accounting and financial, board development, overall program coordination and development, community relations and marketing.

Chicago Christian Industrial League/Aramark—Business Manager including production of crops, meeting sales and revenue targets, supervising worker/trainees, structuring and providing skills training for trainee-workers and job placement.

North Lawndale Employment Network—Employability Trainer including trainee recruitment and screening, pre-employment training, case management and literacy training and accounting and CFO responsibilities.

Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation—Land Owner including property owner and manager.

Location, Investment and Timing

Windy City Harvest will be located at Cermak and Kostner Avenues in the North Lawndale Community. Windy City Harvest will lease and renovate an 8,000 square foot building owned by the Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation which will serve as its headquarters.

The indoor growing space includes greenhouse bays totaling about 21,500 square feet and about 53,500 square feet of hoop house facilities. The remainder of the site will be used as outdoor growing space, to house the NLEN's Sweet Beginnings/Beeline Apiary, for materials handling and circulation, as a pathway from the Blue Line stop at Kostner to the Windy City harvest headquarters building and the Armory building proposed for redevelopment by LBLDC, and possibly for a composting operation if regulations permit.

Windy City Harvest plans to begin the training program and construction of the hoop houses in the spring of 2006 and to start construction of the greenhouses in the summer of 2006.

Annual operating costs begin at about \$1.6 million and reach \$3.2 million a year over a ten year period. They average \$2.4 million per year.

Overall, 73% of Windy City Harvest projected operating revenue will come from the sales of crops and 27% will come from training-related grants and contracts. When capital costs are included, 65% of projected revenue will come from the sale of crops and 35% will come from capital grants and training-related grants and contracts.

Employment Projections

In addition to the trainee-workers, six FTE staff will operate Windy City Harvest's program. This will increase to eight after the expansion. NLEN's Sweet Beginnings, an apiary which produces and sells honey and bee products under the brand name Beeline. The apiary will have an additional eight worker-trainees on the site and two staff.

(Employability; Continued from page 1)

In the stage of Prison Based Reentry, while individuals are actually incarcerated, it is recommended that there is a much higher emphasis on education and training. The committee recommends that counselors create a transition portfolio for each client, which would outline the education and employment plans for both the short and long term. The problem with the current system is that the access to education and training is very limited and transfers sometimes interrupt the educational opportunities that are offered. The committee also feels that it is important for job-readiness training to be made available while incarcerated that should be presented at least three months before release and would offer focused and intensive employment preparation. Another recommendation is that cost-effective transitional reentry models should be implemented with at least on ATC available that would allow inmates to receive work-related training off site. Lastly, the committee recommends that a specialized education prison should be created and used as a model for innovative new practices and curricula that would implement a variety of educational models that would allow for an increased understanding of effective methods.

For the third state of the reentry process, Post-Release Case Management, the committee addresses the issue of punishment after release in the form of reluctance to hire former offenders. The committee process that this attitude be changed by the State formation of a Joint Council with leaders from business and labor markets, directors from IDES, IDOC, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and community groups who could all implement the recommendations from the Employability, Education, and Training Subcommittee. In addition during post-release the number resources that are available to former offenders such as transitional jobs and employment programs needs to be increased by IDOC. Also the technical and financial support that is offered to businesses that hire former offenders as well as the

former offenders themselves should be increased. In terms of working in concert with each other, community agencies and parole agents should have access to information in the IDOC database to improve services that former offenders receive.

The recommendations for the stage of reentry know as Community Capacity-Building and Sustainability lacks coordination, capacity and clarity among key participants in the reentry process. One problem facing community-based organizations serving former offenders is related to the fact that they are often not equipped for the volume of need that is required. The State developed Joint Council should make it a point to build the capacity of these agencies so that they can better serve their clients. Another recommendation is that incentives for employers hiring former offenders, such as wage subsidies or tax credits, should be explored by DCEO, the Governor and the General Assembly. A barrier in terms of policy change is the slow implementation of laws requiring employers to consider hiring those with backgrounds. Expungment, sealing of records and certificates of Rehabilitation/Good Conduct laws are also, in the belief of the subcommittee, necessary to permit qualified former offenders to obtain professional licenses.

Some recommendations that the subcommittee had made in terms of policy interventions refer to the extension of federal funding such as pell grants to former offenders. Also the cost of child support and educational debts compound while incarcerated and should be examined so that upon release individuals will not be discouraged from entering into higher education. The recommendations of this subcommittee emphasize the employment and education as a means of increasing the number of options that former offenders have access to when release from prison. The approach is one of community based development as a method of providing individuals from personal attention and the resources to deter former offenders from the path that put them in prison and to allow them to choose an alternate route.

(U-Turn, continued from page2)
 pervisor to the extent that he requested another UTP graduate and has now hired a second UTP graduate. Allen is grateful for the support and guidance that NLEN, especially Client Service Manager Elaine Austin and the rest of the staff, have given him and he is happy with the progress his life is making, but he is also aware of the fact that for him this is a continual process. He says that NLEN and programs like it have saved his life but that it is also up to the individual to persist on the never-ending journey toward making a U-Turn in life. Allen encourages anyone who is at the end of their rope to embrace programs like NLEN as a positive force in their life and move forward on a positive path toward progress and personal development.

UTILITY BILL RELIEF

SPONSORED BY:

North Lawndale
 Employment Network &
 Triedstone F.G.B. Church

Offering Energy Assistance to
 qualifying families for on-site
 Registration

No Appointment Needed
 Monday & Wednesday
 9:00am – 4:00pm

If seeking assistance bring:

- Proof of income for household (for past 30-days
- IDPA Card (Illinois Department of Public Aid Medical Card
- Heating and Electric bills
- Social Security Card for the entire household

Feel Free to Contact Allen
 Flanagan for additional information at
 (708) 268-8110

Going Home Holiday Party

On Thursday, December 8th, participants in the Illinois "Going Home" Project, their children and other family members enjoyed a full-scale holiday meal together. "Going Home" is Illinois' designation for the federally funded "Serious and Violent Offender Re-entry Initiative" and its participants are young men returning to the North Lawndale community after incarceration in state correctional facilities.

Opportunities for positive social activities with families are critically important to the adjustment of returning inmates, and this event was an unqualified success in promoting family reintegration and positive re-

engagement with children. Walls Memorial Church, at 200 South Sacramento, was the site for this event and its hosts were the partner agencies that constitute the service-provider team for the project. These include TASC, the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Westside Adult Transition Center and the North Lawndale Employment Network.

A lavish dinner of turkey, ham, macaroni, greens, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls and a variety of deserts was contributed by the service-provider team and prepared by volunteers from the Walls congregation. Age and gender-appropriate gifts for all the children were also donated, as were books and school supplies. The best gift of all was the chance for these men to socialize with their families

(for the first time in a long while, for most). Approximately 150 guests attended, despite the first major winter storm of the season.

Special thanks are due to Walls Memorial Church and to all the volunteers and donors who made this event possible. You can help to make the New Year an eventful one for "Going Home" participants through the offer of viable job opportunities. Their commitment to a successful return to law-abiding self-sufficiency in our community can only be realized through the chance to earn an honest living. Please help by calling North Lawndale Employment Network (773-265-7945) with employment opportunities or job leads.

Volunteer Spotlight

Through the Pyramid Partnership, NLEN has been fortunate to receive a volunteer, Sheila, who has always been energetic, kind hearted and eager to please. Her time at NLEN is spent assisting with administrative tasks that are essential to the daily functioning of the Resource Center. Sheila comes with a background in customer service which explains her desire to work in direct service with clients at NLEN and in her future. Part of the reason that Sheila is interested in working with NLEN is because she has the desire to work with

former offenders.

Sheila's ultimate goal is to start a non profit transitional living facility for recently released female former offender that would complement programs such as U-Turn Permitted. Sheila states that her focus is on women because she says their burden is complicated by issues of abuse and neglect that are not as prevalent when working with men. This interest was instigated by the fact that Sheila discovered that there is only one such transitional center in Chicago for women that she knows about. Overall Sheila says she is grateful for the things she has learned while at NLEN



which will help her in future endeavors. Sheila has commented on the wonderful atmosphere created at the NLEN Resource Center by the people that work here.

Cook County Re-Entry Employment Program

The Cook County Board of Commissioners has enacted Cook County Re-entry Employment Project Ordinance (04-O-16), as amended on February 1, 2005 to establish a Re-entry Employment Demonstration Pilot Program as a strategy for increasing public safety and reducing recidivism with the goal of removing barriers to County government employment opportunities and encouraging participation by County Officers and by private sector employers. The North Lawndale Employment Network is glad to be a part of this initiative to enact this ordinance.

Town Hall Meeting

3333 W Arthington Ave
6PM Conference Room D
January 24, 2006

Come and hear interesting facts on the opening of the coming Hawthorne Cook County Warehouse on Cermak

For more information contact:
Vera Bonds
773-722-0140

Quarterly Program Statistics

Referrals.....	142
Client Assessed.....	68
Total Job Placements.....	53
Resource Center Placements.....	13
Building & Building Placements...	12
Going Home Placements.....	10
30 days on the job.....	20
90 days on the job.....	14



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

Ron Tonn
Chief of Operations
773-265-7948



Aletra Nicholson
Director of Workforce Program Services
773-638-1820

Victoria Cammon
Operations Manager
773-265-7947



Darrin Evans
U-Turn Permitted Client Services Manager
773-265-7941
UTP-Orientations-1st and 3rd Fridays 10 AM
United Baptist Church 4220 W Rossevelt Rd

Julian Macklin
Manager of Employment Services
773-265-7945



Anthony Elliott
Retention Client Services Manager
773-638-1806

Cleophus J. Lee
Building Beyond Program Manager
773-638-1814



Elaine Austin
Resource Center Client Services Manager
773-265-7940
3726 W Flournoy St
9-5pm Appointments

ElShadey Bekele
Chicago Public Interest Program Fellow
WIA Adult Program
773-265-7942



Community Announcements

NLEN WISHLIST

- In an effort to create a workplace literacy library we request donations of books ranging all reading levels.
Also, donations of magazine or news paper subscriptions for the library
- Weekly bus passes
- DVD/VCR Combo
- Coffee, sugar and cream
- Bookcases
- Snow shovel
- Pens
- Please consider making donation to NLEN at nlen.org/donation.htm

Request for Proposals

The North Lawndale Employment Network is requesting proposals for job readiness workshop services. The workshops should be 1 week in length and three hours daily. The topics to be covered should include but are not limited to conflict resolution, teamwork, filling out an application, designing a resume and cover letter, business etiquette, dressing for success, interviewing techniques, and work ethic. Please submit a proposal which includes lesson plans for each day of the week. Lesson plans should include session title, materials needed, objective of the concepts, activities, and evaluation of mastery. Additionally the fee for service should be included. Please submit all proposals to Aletra Nicholson, Director of Workforce Development, by February 3, 2006.

Request for Applications

North Lawndale Employment Network is seeking experienced case managers. Must have bachelors degree in related field or equivalent experience. Must be able to work with hard to serve populations. Please send resumes to Ron@nlen.org.



North Lawndale Employment Network

Creating a Community That Works

Date of Application: _____

Yes! I want to become a member or renew my membership with the North Lawndale Employment Network!

I have enclosed a **\$100** check payable to the North Lawndale Employment Network for dues.

Please complete the following information to update our records

Name _____ Title _____

Organization Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name of other agency representatives. Please include their titles.

Name Title

1. _____

2. _____

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Elaine Austin, Resource Center Client Services Manager

Julian Macklin, Manager of Employment Services

EIShadey Bekele, CPIP Fellow

Ronnie Allen, IT Consultant

Please contact EIShadey Bekele at (773) 265-7942 if you would like anything included in future newsletters!

NORTH LAWNSDALE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

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