

Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities

The Extension Connection—Life Skills Training

Issue

The Extension Connection is a major part of the “Project S.T.R.I.D.E.” (Successful Training Resources for Individual Development) program, a ‘job linkage demonstration project’. Stride’s mission is to assist unemployed, low skilled, and disadvantaged Phoenix Enterprise Community (low-income) residents with training which promotes job readiness and self-worth to overcome barriers to entering the world of work and achieving job stability and advancement, and job placement. It is one of the first projects directed at employment for the very hard to employ.

What has been done?

The Extension Connection provided a six-week life-skills program with components designed to help families become more conscious of healthy and nutritious meals; aware of food safety; self-sufficient; equipped to handle their families need and concerns; better at understanding that work is a means to achieving goals not the end all;

Funding

City of Phoenix/EFNEP—federally funded program

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more able to take better charge of their lives; more valuable to their community; acclimated to employment and education and better able to budget and plan their money.

Participants in the program ranged from former gang members to newly arrived immigrants to the United States whose lack of English and American job skills caused significant barriers to employment. Ninety-five percent of the program graduates were members of racial or ethnic minorities, 40% had less than a high school education; many had criminal records.

Impact

Of the 50 people who completed the program in 1999, twenty-eight were female heads of households. Job placement was a part of the program; 45 of the participants secured jobs. Positions paid from \$5.50 to \$12.60 per hour. Participants reported that the program helped them regain their self-esteem, get on track to a job and career and open the doorways to continue their education. Hadco, the first company

to work with Project S.T.R.I.D.E., has gained 12 employees in its manufacturing facility, with four working more than a year thus far.

Testimonials from participants: Forty-one-year-old Yan Aung immigrated to Arizona with his family nearly 3 years ago from Burma. Forty-year old Khin San Myint was already employed at Hadco of Phoenix, which manufactures circuit boards, but she sees S.T.R.I.D.E. giving her skills to someday obtain a promotion, “We can now face everything before employment, what are the requirements, how to prepare for an interview, how to write a resume. We had to practice these things everyday before the group.”

“Because of the differences from our country I have had to start from the beginning and only now, after S.T.R.I.D.E., have a factory job performing electronic assembly. We learned how to live in American society, how to pass over difficulties and achieve our goals. We are very thankful for Project S.T.R.I.D.E. and the Extension Connection and would highly recommend it to anyone.”