Quarterly Progress Report Welfare Reform Liaison Project  
*September, October, November*

**Item 2. How many individuals has your pilot project served during the last three months?**

The August class of Welfare Reform Liaison Project (WRLP) was the organization’s 5th training class since its inception. Welfare Reform Liaison Project, held its third nine-week welfare-to-work training session for the reporting period of this grant. This class started out with 22 participants, and a total of 19 finished the program. This pattern has repeated itself for each session. Six people who completed the program were TANF recipients. Four were active and two still had time on the two-year clock, but the clock was off at the time of training.

The specific outcomes in this report will point to: (1) The progress of those six recipients on a range of items of importance, especially placement either in employment or our sheltered workshop. (2) The report will also provide information about the other 13 participants as well. Two of the remaining 13 students were former AFDC recipients. Two students this session were men and a total of eleven participants had not received welfare. One of the students in the class, an African woman who wanted to learn job skills, had a bachelor’s degree. This fact reinforces the point that we brought up in the last report, which noted that WRLP is, on one level, becoming a legitimate labor force training program and a welfare prevention program as well. (3) The remainder of this report will center on the broader influence of this program on the Greensboro community and the surrounding region, growing involvement of the African American Churches with Liaison Distribution Center, and anecdotal information about how former students are doing in the labor force.

In our last report we outlined the seven concerns, which serve as lenses through which the success of WRLP ought to be viewed. Our clients often bring an intertwined set of untapped skills, a deep desire to succeed along with so many distressing matters to the training. That along with those facts is the program itself, which is so complex that we are convinced that no single factor is the one that the hat of success can be hung. Briefly those seven concerns were:

- **(1) The complex and multiple problems of the clients.** Such as the lack of transportation or inadequate housing, which is often laced with their personal inabilities to manage time effectively or plan appropriately. Those problems in turn influence their attitude and comportment.

- **(2) The intense and complicated interactions the students have with the staff, which includes intense case management to address the above concerns, coupled with a no-nonsense educational program.**

- **(3) The unifying and supportive relationships the students have with each other.**

- **(4) The respect the staff has gained among the leaders and line staff of the other social service organizations with which it has had to form partnerships to deliver these complex services.**
(5) How this program and the students have become known and gained legitimacy in the low-income community in Greensboro.

(6) The increasingly intricate relationships the agency has developed with the institutional stakeholders in its sphere: (a) foundations, (b) businesses, (c) media, (d) United Way, (e) higher educational institutions; (f) Department of Social Services, (g) other nonprofit organizations, (h) religious congregations, and the intricacies involved in securing and maintaining all of these partnerships; and

(7) The blending of the Faith Factor and Professional Factor which takes much of its form in the deeds and professional approach to service delivery of the highly trained professional staff.

It was also noted in the last report that the establishment of intense personal relationships with the students, alongside the creation of lasting partnerships with its stakeholders in the community, was key to understanding the success of this organization. We stand by these points as the basis for accomplishing our mission.

As this report progresses, it is also important to keep in mind another key element that underscores (WRLP=s) success. That has to do with the fact that (WRLP) is Greensboro=s first major African American Multi-Service, Faith Based, Community Organization operating in the middle of the community=s social service system. Such positioning comes at a time when the policies that gave way to the increasing focus on local solutions, called out for leadership and vision to address the welfare-to-work challenge. It seems that (WRLP) has found a recipe that brings the community=s mainline white institutions into its sphere to form a partnership on an equal footing.

This in and of itself is admirable and somewhat different. More importantly, (WRLP) has done what only few mainline white institutions have been able to do, and that is to harness the energy, spirit, and respect of not just Greensboro=s mainline A white guided@ agencies and organizations, but it has created a venue that has unleashed the philanthropic energy of Greensboro=s African American Churches, and a number from the surrounding region as well. African American churches referred over half of the students who signed up for the 6th training class. One minister went so far as to take a prospective student to the orientation session for the 6th class, as she is disabled and lacks regular transportation. The same pastor referred 2 other prospective students as well.

Another fact is that we are working to distribute goods and teach about our program to African American churches in 7 other counties, which include: Chatham, Davidson, Forsyth, Henderson, Mecklenburg, Rowan, and Rockingham. Interestingly, a White church in Siler City has sought our assistance as well, as it is located in a poor section of its county and is increasingly addressing the constellation of issues surrounding poverty. More than one African American church in Greensboro and elsewhere has indicated to us that they would like to have their own smaller versions of our program or serve as satellites for our main effort.
Still others have used products from our distribution center to enhance their own outreach ministries. This has in turn increased those congregations= own commitment to their communities. Such an outcome is central for (WRLPs) long-term success in bringing in voluntary institutional partners to help in keeping people employed. We feel that broader community discussions ought to increasingly focus on what it takes to keep people employed. This is often referred to as retention part of the welfare-to-work continuum and the link in the welfare-to-work chain whose careful scrutiny is often neglected. Having an institution at the community level that is trusted on numerous levels, by both the majority and minority communities, appears to have the dual benefits of unleashing some of the energy and creativity of the African American church, and rallying major community institutions like businesses, DSS, Guilford Technical Community College, local Foundations, and the United Way to craft a unique partnership where all benefit and few lose.

The remainder of this report might best be viewed in two contexts: (1) The energy (WRLP) is expending in building and enhancing these new partnerships; (2) and understanding that this shaping of the service environment operates in tandem with the more specific educational, case management, sheltered workshop, job development, coaching services, and client follow-up that the agency=s staff are involved with daily.

**Item 3. Briefly describe the outcomes observed for these individuals.**

Of the 4 TANF recipients in the August Class: each successfully completed the Guilford Technical Community College certificate program as did the two former TANF recipients whose clock was off at the time of the training. Each of the TANF recipients this class, with the exception of one person who was still seeking employment at the time of this report, and each of the TANF recipients whose clock was off went straight from our classroom training program to a job. Another six of our students (non TANF) were placed in the distribution setting for further training, two of which went on to a job after a brief stay at the distribution center. Please note that the workshop setting is an option for up to 18 months, so those who have barriers in the workforce have the option to return.

Each of the TANF recipients experienced minor, moderate, and severe structural barriers during the course of the training, most of which were overcome or managed effectively through intensive case management. After five classes now completed, we come to expect that just about every student bring to the program, one or more problems like inadequate housing, and the lack of transportation or unreliable childcare. The social work staff has become extremely skilled in addressing the both the systemic barriers facing the student, and the psychological barriers that often go hand-in-hand. The staff moves easily back and forth from its three-pronged role of broker of services, advocate, and counselor, all the while successfully keeping the students from losing focus on the goal of the program. More importantly, the social workers manage to keep the students from getting lost in the morass of services they might need to move beyond the immediate problem, so that they can stay with the program. Of the 22 who signed up for the 5th class, 19 completed the program and 16 of those were either employed or in the workshop gaining more skills to prepare them for the workshop.
The problems included: Two students had slight a problem with transportation early in the training but it was solved by the end of the nine week classroom component of the program; One student had a slight housing problem which was dealt with effectively before the end of the training, and one student had a severe housing problem which was managed effectively. One student=s child had a moderate health problem that was managed effectively by the end of the training; One student had a minor criminal record which did not, but could have hindered gainful employment, and one student was a victim of domestic violence. There were similar problems as well with the TANF recipients who were off the time clock. This data looks much like the one from the previous class, which is shown below.

Of the eight TANF participants, 5 had experienced problems with transportation, and through program efforts or good problem solving skills; each person was able to do somewhat better with her transportation concerns. Two participants had health problems that were barriers to completing the program successfully, while one of those participants also had a child with health problems as well (Report for March Class).

3a. Observed outcomes for Non TANF Recipients.
Below are some briefly noted statistics about the barriers faced by the non TANF group, which interestingly faced slightly more barriers than the TANF group. Two members of this group had difficulties with child care. Three members of this group were victims of domestic violence and two brought severe educational limitations to the training. Six of the 13 had slight to moderate transportation problems, 3 had criminal records for minor offenses, 2 had slight to moderate problems with their children=s health.

As we have noted here and elsewhere, and will discuss much more fully in a final report, WRLP is a voluntary program that the community, be it the business community, the governmental social service community, the nonprofit community, the religious community, or members of what have been called the community of African American Churches, increasingly look to WRLP for quality job training and increased skill development for low income and low skilled workers. As such, we have a responsibility to both move people from welfare-to-work, to prevent dependency, and enhance skills of those in the workforce who want to improve.

Our system is comprehensive and we have a multiple customer base. If we are not successful with all of them -- student, employer, governmental funder, private funder, student interns, and the African American Church, then we risk losing the support and legitimacy that under girds our success and fuels our mission. Historically, the majority of welfare-to-work programs moved people into the work force and got reimbursed. The burden for success then rested on the worker. Our model is to give people who face multiple barriers, building blocks to develop skills and a mind set for career development, not just temporary jobs. It takes a community effort to change welfare-to-work patterns because our success means the community will be a better place to live.

3b. Observed employment outcomes for Non TANF Recipients.
Five of the non-TANF students found jobs after the class with the exception that one of them
went to the workshop and then to a job. Six of the non-TANF students went into the workshop environment after the classroom training. Two are what we call missing in action, but they have finished the program, chose not to go to the workshop - and we have not been able to locate them to determine their status.

4. Describe how these outcomes are in line with the goals and objectives of your pilot project? Welfare Reform Liaison Project=s major goals center on the assisting families with special problems that prevent them from obtaining immediate employment or long-term employment, and training them for employment. Accomplishing these objectives depends on solving, managing, or preventing the complex and multiple problems of the clients such as the lack of transportation, or inadequate housing, which is often laced with their personal inabilities to manage time effectively or plan appropriately that in turn affects their attitude and comportment. TANF recipient or not, students and staff work hard together to accomplish their common objectives of reducing the barriers and gaining skills that lead to successful employment.

Another side to this story is the interconnections that WRLP have increasingly developed with the stakeholders in the community and beyond. Helping families has become a community affair and WRLP has developed multiple partnerships. While one might think that the organizational aspect of the program is not an important factor in the successful outcomes we have reported, we are convinced that it is the combination of the strong case management, intense interpersonal work, and widening community support, especially in the African American Community, that has bolstered this program.

5. List any changes or modifications to the services you provide or the manner in which services are delivered as a result of these outcomes.

The only change is that we are moving back to an eleven week training session instead of the nine week session now currently in place. We have experimented with a 12-week session and while we felt that was ideal, a local funder thought we ought to consider increasing the number of students we served. One way to accomplish that request was to reduce the number of weeks from 12 to 9, so as to add one more class to the year. We did this. However, while we are becoming more skillful in our case management, thus eliminating or ameliorating some of the problems earlier on in the process, our students keep telling us that they need more time for work on developing skills in the area of retaining employment by using available resources to garner the support to stay employed. We have analyzed what they have told us and are changing to an 11-week session. We will need to do that for a couple of classes to determine the effectiveness of that change.

We recently spoke with an Executive Vice President of the United Way who was instrumental in working with us in establishing the Distribution Center where we have our sheltered workshop. The United Way employs two of our graduates full time and has had the opportunity two compare our graduates with two graduates of the standard DSS training. From this particular VP=s point of view, there is a world of difference in the knowledge and skill level that a WRLP graduate initially brings to the work environment compared to what he has experienced with
those two traditional DSS graduates.

We are fully aware that these are merely perceptions and not carefully done comparative evaluations. WRLP does not want to be in competition with any local welfare-to-work training program, nor do we wish to have an agency=s reputation for service delivery rest on two instances. We are saying that we are proud of what we do and are eager to place our graduates in the workforce because employers are giving us a thumbs up for sending them people who have knowledge, skills, and entry level abilities to grow and flourish in the work environment.

6. What percentage of your project funds have you expended during the last three months?

Nineteen percent (19%).