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Deborah's Place eUpdate

Volume 1, Number 2, September 2009



Notes from Home

Dear Elizabeth,

Welcome to the second edition of our monthly eUpdates, Notes from Home!

With Labor Day just behind us, we thought it appropriate to highlight the Employment Services Program of Deborah's Place and the employment-related issues that affect the women we serve.

Currently, Illinois is experiencing the highest level of unemployment in more than 25 years. It is a difficult time for all job-seekers, but especially for the women of Deborah's Place.

For many of the women we serve, conquering the homeless experience and obtaining employment also require overcoming a history of sexual, physical, or emotional violence; debilitating mental and physical disabilities; chemical dependence; and a host of other obstacles. The greatest barriers to employment for these women exist at both an individual and systemic level, with personal barriers that have resulted from years of living on the streets and systemic barriers resulting from a challenging economy and the stigma placed on the homeless experience.

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With limited options in Chicago for women who are homeless or formerly homeless and searching for a pathway to stability through steady employment, your support is critical to ensuring that the Employment Services Program continues to provide the services they need to achieve economic security and independence.

Please consider [a gift to Deborah's Place today](#), and help continue to break the cycle of homelessness for women in Chicago.

Thank you for your support,

Audrey Thomas
Executive Director

A Woman's Words

Every month we will share a poem, story, or perhaps a few short sentences from a woman of Deborah's Place who has allowed us to share a piece of her life with you.

Regina, a Deborah's Place housing program participant, was having a problem finding a job because she had a criminal background. At that time, she was working as a temporary receptionist for a company. Regina said that even though she had only been working there for two months, her supervisor told her she was doing a great job and they would love to hire her as the permanent receptionist for the company. Regina was so excited! Later that week she received a call saying she did not get the position because of her criminal background.

Regina was hurt and dispirited. She began meeting with the Employment Services Coordinator several times a week to complete applications and practice interviewing skills. But when Regina filled out the applications, she was always truthful and answered 'yes' when asked if she had a criminal background. After looking desperately for more than six months, she continued to receive rejections. She had skills, experience and motivation, but no one would hire her.

One day, a supporter of Deborah's Place called to say they wanted to give a woman at Deborah's Place a chance to earn some money. The assignment was to be a two month temporary position in a Human Resources office, doing mostly clerical work. They needed the woman to have good verbal skills because she would be interacting with most of the employees in the company.

Regina was afraid of being rejected, but decided to interview and tell the truth about her background. Regina was hired for the position and started her first day of work on August 7, 2007. Regina's supervisor is so pleased with her work that they want to bring her on full time as an assistant to the Chairman of the agency.

Help us spread the word about our programs and services.

Become our fan on Facebook, follow our updates, and suggest us to your friends!



Did You Know?

Deborah's Place is named after the female judge, Deborah, in the Bible's Book of Judges.

Although Deborah's Place is a secular organization, the Deborah's Place Founding Mothers wanted their new organization to be named after a woman of the Bible who was strong and capable, and Deborah was just that; she was a strong, independent judge who was faithful to her people.

The term 'place' was chosen because it connotes a location to rest while gathering strength to take control of one's life.

From stories and words that mean strength, independence, and renewal arose the name *Deborah's*

As demonstrated by Regina's story, Deborah's Place caters to a hard-to serve population of women. Deborah's Place participants, in addition to homelessness, struggle with issues including unemployment, lack of healthcare, inadequate education, isolation from friends, family and the community, and a variety of other barriers to stability, safety, health and well-being. Often times these issues are further complicated by addictions, mental illness, and physical or mental disabilities.

Regina was able to overcome the barriers she faced because of her criminal history and is now a shining star in her job. She is on the road to reaching her goals of stable housing, sustainable income and greater self-determination.

Earning an Income, and Inner Strength

Deborah's Place Employment Services Program Helps Hundreds

The Employment Services Program of Deborah's Place was created in 1994 in order to offer our participants the opportunity to define themselves as something other than "homeless." Each year, the Employment Services Program impacts over 100 women through one-on-one employment counseling, job preparation workshops, job search assistance and referral, and a variety of other services that help women to obtain and maintain employment.

This past fiscal year, with our support but as a result of their own relentless efforts, strong will, and self-determination, 32 women obtained or maintained sustainable income through employment.

The Employment Services Program of Deborah's Place assists women who are homeless or formerly homeless in obtaining and maintaining productive employment so that they can move toward economic security, income stability, and independence and permanently end their experience with homelessness.

"Judy", one Employment Services participant who was recently hired by a local business, describes the impact of the program: "[Deborah's Place] helped me to focus on my assets, to feel better about myself... to get a job so I can support myself." Like Judy, women seek Employment Services for assistance finding a job and discover not only the tangible reward of steady income, but also their inner strength and capacity to recover from the experience of homelessness.

Beyond benefits to individual women seeking jobs and a pathway to self-sufficiency, the Employment Services Program has had a positive impact on the community of women at Deborah's Place. Participants not only report improvements in skills and knowledge, but also gains in self-esteem and motivation that have had a ripple-effect throughout the building. Women who obtain employment, who are earning a steady income, who are climbing toward self-sufficiency and who are overcoming the traumatic experience of homelessness provide a motivating example for others who are struggling with daily challenges on their road to recovery.

Place.

Upcoming Events:

Fall Fashion & Talent Show:

Put on by the participants of Deborah's Place

Thursday, 9/17/09
4:00 PM - 6:30 PM

The gym at the Rebecca Johnson Apartments - 2822 W. Jackson Blvd.

Please call (773) 638-6539 if you plan to attend

Dolores' Safe Haven Kitchen Shower:

To see and furnish the newly renovated kitchen at DSH. Hosted by the Deborah's Place Advisory Council

Saturday, 9/26/09
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

****The event is full at this time, but we welcome you to help us fill the kitchen with new supplies. We are registered at the following stores:**

Target: TargetLists ID # 012399101191526

Bed, Bath & Beyond: Registry # 5278303

Needed items that are not in the registries:

Job leads and referrals are always welcome. If you'd like to list a job opening, please contact Gail Lewis, Employment Services Coordinator, at (773) 638-6397. You can also make a contribution directly to the Employment Services Program by [clicking here](#).

How to Balance a Low-Income Budget

Volunteer and Finance Expert Sheds a Light on Money Issues

For the women of Deborah's Place who face multiple barriers to employment, finding a job and earning a living wage is a big step toward self-sufficiency and stability. However, once they find a job, they must also have the skills to be able to manage their income and maintain a stable lifestyle.

That's why we, and the women we serve, are so grateful to have the support and guidance of Ann Marie Klingenhagen, a volunteer in the Education & Employment Services Programs. Several times a month, Ann Marie holds financial workshops in the Learning Center at the Rebecca Johnson Apartments that teach women about money and credit management, budgeting and saving.

Ann Marie is a professor of Finance at DePaul University, a Certified Financial Planner, and has a wealth of information to share with the women of Deborah's Place. Her workshops include information on creating a personal budget; how to build a savings when earning a low income; and spending tips, such as weighing wants vs. needs and how to shop smart.

When needed, Ann Marie also meets with the women one-on-one about confidential financial matters.

We are so grateful that Ann Marie is able to share her time and knowledge with us as a volunteer. She is truly helping women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness regain control of their lives.

Did you like what you read? Help support the women, programs and services highlighted in this issue by making [a gift to Deborah's Place](#).

With your support, we can break the cycle of homelessness for women in Chicago.

Two serving carts
One flatbed cart
2 inch hotel pans
4 inch hotel pans
18 quart brazier
20 quart brazier
12 quart stock pot
20 quart stock pot
24 quart stock pot
Two large stainless steel mixing bowls



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