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Center for Urban Research and Learning

CURL

Information on CURL University/Community Partnerships

Vol. 5 No. 2 Fall 2000



Recipients of the Spirit Award:

C. Steven McMillan, CEO, Sara Lee Corp.; Cheryl Kobetsky, Board President, Deborah's Place; Patricia Crowley, Executive Director, Deborah's Place; Robin S. Tryloff, Executive Director, Sara Lee Foundation; Michael E. Murphy, President, Sara Lee Foundation

CURL to Work With Deborah's Place

By Lin Von Dreele, Associate Director

Last May, Deborah's Place, whose mission is to provide the fundamentals for quality of life to women in Chicago who are homeless or formerly homeless, received the Sara Lee Foundation's Chicago Spirit Award. In addition to the \$100,000 award, the Foundation provides support for CURL to partner with each year's recipient to undertake a specific research project that will enhance the organization's effectiveness. Last year, CURL worked with the 1998 Spirit Award winner, Erie Neighborhood House.

At the award ceremony at the Art Institute of Chicago, Deborah's Place received recognition for its far-reaching impact on homelessness by the Foundation which specifically

noted the "sensitive approach to helping women, as evidenced by the way the agency includes participants in programming and agency planning."

The CURL/Deborah's Place partnership is underway to examine the organization's unique history, a priority articulated by Pat Crowley, Executive Director of Deborah's Place, and her staff. The qualitative research will lead to a document that will portray the core values of this progressive agency. Through this document, Deborah's Place hopes to communicate the essential elements of its heritage both to new staff, board members, volunteers, and to the public at large.

Over the past 15 years, Deborah's Place has grown from a volunteer-run overnight shelter to the city's largest provider of supportive housing for women who are homeless. In its four sites, 200 women are served each day with an array of residential programs and supportive services. The Spirit Award contributed to the completion of its newest facility, the 90-unit Rebecca Johnson Apartments, located on Chicago's West Side.

Every Block a Village Online Wins Awards

By Christopher Masi, M.D., Project Director

Every Block a Village (EBV) Online, a collaborative project to enhance access to health and safety information and positively affect the health of community residents in Austin, was recognized as a unique strategy at Harvard University's Health and Internet conference in May. In addition, EBV Online was named one of six "Models That Work" in a national competition conducted by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

EBV Online is a partnership between West Suburban Hospital Medical Center, Westside Health Authority, and CURL. The project provides Internet access to block leaders in a 57-block region of Chicago's Austin community. Funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Technology

continued on page 2

Director's Corner

As CURL approaches its five-year anniversary (in January 2001), we are as active as ever in a broad range of projects throughout the metropolitan area.

We have more than 20 active projects. This issue of the newsletter documents some of this involvement in a number of innovative areas--from evaluating the impact of internet access in the Every Block a Village project to helping to shape successful welfare to work programs. In the course of this work community organizations are gaining access to university resources while undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty are able to engage in research projects that produce usable outcomes.

As our newsletter goes to press, we have just received word of funding for two additional projects. The Woods Fund of Chicago will support one project examining the link between community-based organization activities and regional decision-making. As more and more policy decisions are made at the regional, state, and federal levels, the question of the extent community-voice in the policy making has become very important. How do successful community-based initiatives get communicated to regional decision makers? How can we bridge what some see as a disconnect between neighborhood and regional leaders? We will be working with a broad array of community-based, regional, and national organizations on this project.

The second project, also supported by the Woods Fund, will be completed in cooperation with the Roosevelt University Institute for Metropolitan Affairs. It will involve the collection of existing knowledge on impediments and opportunities related to the preservation and expansion of affordable housing opportunities in the Chicago metropolitan region. What makes this project different from other research efforts is its intention to work with key decision makers in corporate, religious, civic, and other sectors of Chicago in using this collected existing knowledge to address the pressing shortage of affordable housing in the region.

As work on these and other projects progress, we will certainly keep everyone informed of developments. Updates will be provided on our web page www.luc.edu/depts/curl. If you have an interest in becoming more closely involved in either of the new projects, please contact me either by e-mail (or by phone (312-915-7761)

Phil Nyden

continued from page 1

Opportunities Program (TOP) and West Suburban Hospital, the three-year project began in October, 1998.

CURL's Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, PhD (Department of Psychology) and Leah Kinney, a graduate student from Psychology, are using a participatory evaluation model to assess the impact of EBV Online. Since EBV Online is one of the few projects which places Internet access in the homes of community residents in the country the documentation has national significance as it attempts to bridge the digital divide. Disparities in access to technology is a growing priority for local and national leaders. President Clinton recently announced an increase in funding for TOP from \$17.1 million per year to \$45 million per year.

The Westside Health Authority began Every Block A Village in 1996 as a community strengthening initiative. The strategy of EBV is to identify community assets and enhance the capacity of community residents. Since its inception, EBV has identified and trained over 30 community residents to serve as block citizen leaders. Each month, the citizen leaders convene to discuss challenges facing the community and ways to address them. By sharing their success stories and strategies, EBV helps citizen leaders improve their community block by block.

Every Block A Village Online adds the power of the Internet to EBV. The addition of Internet access has resulted in increased communication and collaboration among citizen leaders. It has also allowed citizen leaders to obtain important health and safety information for themselves and their neighbors. EBV Online's Home Page includes links to several resources important to the community, including a directory of area health clinics, a telephone number for 24 hour nurse triage, access to family physicians via e-mail, several health information sites, contact information regarding local, state, and federal representatives, information on spirituality, profiles of local schools, contact information for city services, monthly maps of local crime, and area job listings.

To assess the health impact of EBV Online, staff from West Suburban Hospital and its College of Nursing are monitoring birth outcomes in the target area, including rates of low birth weight, trimester of prenatal care initiation, and maternal medical conditions which complicate pregnancy. Recently released 1998 birth certificate data from the Illinois Department of Health serve as the baseline for evaluation of these outcomes. West Suburban staff are also monitoring Emergency Department (ED) utilization by residents of the 57 block EBV area. It is hoped that increased access to health insurance and health provider information will result in decreased ED utilization for primary care services.

Crime statistics in the 57 block area are also being

monitored. Data comparing the year prior to EBV Online to the first year of operation indicate index crimes decreased 21% from 17.6 per block to 13.9 per block. Narcotics arrests also decreased in the first year of EBV Online.

To assess Internet access via WebTV and communication patterns among residents of the target area, Dr. Suarez-Balcazar and Leah Kinney, along with two community surveyors, Patricia Wright and Sandi Tanksley, have been interviewing citizen leaders and their neighbors. Prior to receiving the WebTV equipment, citizen leaders are queried regarding their experience with Internet technology, use of e-mail, communication with neighbors, and perception of community strength and safety. The citizen leaders are interviewed monthly after they receive the WebTV equipment. Other residents of the target area are also interviewed to establish a baseline of technology use before EBV Online reaches their block. Results from these interviews reveal interesting patterns of Internet access and neighbor-to-neighbor communication.

Since January 1, 1999 the Every Block A Village Online Home page has received over 40,000 "hits". Of the over 6,000 hits in March, 2000, over 80% were from .net domains. So

many of the .net domain hits are likely from WebTV citizen leaders. Telephone interviews revealed 19% of topics searched by citizen leaders were health related while 15% of topics searched were related to civic events. School related information and financial resources each comprised 10% of searched topics while entertainment was 9%, housing was 7%, and religion was 5%. Family related issues were searched 4% of the time while miscellaneous constituted 21% of searches.

When citizen leaders were asked who was using the WebTV units, they reported performing searches for themselves 51% of the time and performing searches for neighbors 16% of the time. They also indicated their neighbors came into their homes to find information for themselves 12% of the time.

In the past several months, attendance at the monthly Every Block A Village meetings has more than doubled. Many citizen leaders attribute this to increased awareness of EBV and its meetings as a result of e-mail announcements and reminders.

In the months since EBV Online began, WebTVs have been placed in 30 citizen leaders' homes and in 10 community locations, including the Westside Health Authority, John Hay School, LaFollette Park, and Circle Family Care.

Milestone for New Loyola Graduate Program: Chicago Studies

By Maureen Hellwig, Graduate Program Director

On August 9, the charter class of Chicago Studies, a new Loyola graduate program housed in the Center for Urban Research and Learning, completed the three courses that make up the program's core requirements. Mary Dunneback, a Morgan Park resident who works as a librarian in the Oak Lawn system, was the first recipient of a Chicago Studies Certificate, awarded to those who complete the core but do not plan to pursue the Master's Degree in Chicago Studies. The rest of the charter class is moving on to take their three electives and complete a capstone project. We hope to see most of them in the January graduating class of 2002.

"The Chicago Studies program is particularly welcoming to the mature student returning to school to secure a professional degree as they continue to pursue their career," observes Maureen Hellwig, Graduate Program Director for Chicago Studies. "The interesting mix of students in this first class is evidence of this characteristic."

Among the students enrolled this first year, we find Ginger

Rugai, Alderman of the 19th ward and long time resident of the Beverly community. She is joined by Trish O'Shea, a veteran public school teacher from the same neighborhood; Juan Andrade, Executive Director of the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute; Eddie Welch, a Chicago police sergeant; Dan Tully, a Catholic high school teacher; Anne Datullo, who works for the Mayor's Office of Tourism; and Sylvia Lottie an employee of Loyola's Office of University Research Services.

An innovative and integral part of Chicago Studies is the Chicago Fellows program. Loyola Chicago Fellows are community-based experts who receive tuition scholarships covering the cost of the core courses. They co-teach one of those core courses with Loyola faculty. The first Chicago Fellow for 1999-2000 was Juan Andrade. For the 2000-2001 school year, long time Rogers Park resident and community activist, Kathleen Hogan, has been named as our second Chicago Fellow. Ms. Hogan teaches for Associated Colleges of the Midwest and is co-owner of The Heartland Cafe.

The goal of the Chicago Studies program is to understand how the urban setting interacts with human life and culture. Chicago is viewed as a paradigm of the Midwestern urban experience and serves as a case study for interpreting urban life in general. For more information, contact Maureen Hellwig at 312-915-8624 or visit the Chicago Studies Web page at www.luc.edu/schools/grad/chicagostudies.

Implications of Welfare to Work

By Christine George, CURL Faculty Fellow

Recently, CURL and STRIVE/Chicago Employment Service, a community-based employment training agency, completed analysis of data about the welfare to work process. Gathered in a collaborative research project, the analysis explored the transition of 130 Illinois TANF mothers referred to STRIVE from a South Side office of the Illinois Department of Human Services. All the women were expected to find employment after participating in STRIVE's program. The research set out to understand better the factors that contribute to the successful attainment of employment and what programmatic services and public policies are needed in the welfare to work transition.

We found that half of the women were successful in gaining and maintaining employment. 68% found employment, and, at the termination of the one-year study, 65 individuals were currently employed. Three-quarters of the women were still working for their same employer. While most found employment at the low end of the wage scale, we found that the wages ranged from minimum wage \$5.50 to \$13 dollars per hour, with the average wage being \$6.60 per hour. Although close to one-third (31%) made \$7.50 an hour or more, most wages clustered just above minimum wage.

Successful participation in the STRIVE program was an important indicator of further success in the job market. The women who were most successful in the STRIVE program were those who were most likely to be successful in their employment. 75% of the women who went straight through training found jobs. Among those who had difficulty complying with program requirements (but did ultimately complete the program), only 1/3 found jobs. Interestingly, we could not identify other characteristics, such as having older children, having a high reading score, or having had some job experience, that signaled success at finding and keeping a job.

Additionally, we found that educational skills alone are not a good predictor of employment success for this group of women. In fact, individuals who were successful in training and hence employment were likely to have lower reading scores. We are not sure why this is the case. Most likely what brought individuals to welfare in the first place was not lack of educational skills, but something that we do not have the data to measure, such as level of family resources and support, chronic physical and mental health issues of individuals or family members, or family violence.

We did find that drug use had a deleterious effect on employment success. Individuals who could not pass

STRIVE's (and hence employer's) drug test had, not surprisingly, a difficulty finding employment. But, the drug use in no way explains the negative relationship between skills and success (in other words, it wasn't that the drug use was higher among those with higher skills).

While all of these findings point to future research tasks, we have a much clearer idea of what women need to successfully negotiate the welfare to work transition. We learned that:

- Women benefit from completing the STRIVE training program. Whatever a person's skills and experience, those who completed the program were better off than those who did not.
- An individual's difficulty in a job preparation or training program is an indicator that she needs additional services and support in her welfare to work transition. Such behavior should signal increased emphasis on counseling and support services.
- Welfare recipients transitioning to employment need support, advice and counseling to ensure employment whatever their skill levels.
- Immediate job placement will not provide a livable wage. A higher minimum wage and improved low income tax credits are critical components of any welfare to work strategy.

Trainers need Training Too: CURL Collaborates to Train Trainers

By Lucia Orellana-Damacela, Joseph Hoereth, and Michael Rohrbeck

CURL, The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA), and the Chicago Mutual Housing Network (CMHN) co-sponsored a four-day Training for Trainers (T4T) workshop at the end of July. Hosted by CURL and facilitated by T4T trainers Rob Sadowsky of JCUA and Michael Rohrbeck of CURL, the workshop was intended to introduce trainers to the Small Group Activity (SGA) method. This innovative training and teaching method allows and encourages participants to apply their own knowledge and experience to the learning or training.

Participants in the T4T sessions included: Eva Booker, Community Economic Development Association; Carlos Colón, Charles Daas, and Doug Schenkelberg, CMHN; Rae McRae, Ginger Ridge Mutual Housing Association; Mark Fick, Stone Soup Cooperative; Tom Pigman, Family Matters; Brian Gladstein, JCUA; and Lucia Orellana-Damacela and Joe Hoereth, CURL. Some participants hoped to add to their training and teaching skills, while others hoped to apply the SGA method directly to their work with community-based organizations.

The intensive sessions culminated with the trainees producing a training session of their own with residents of Kenmore Plaza,

a Mutual Housing Association (MHA) building. The workshop participants developed and facilitated training for leaders of a 340-unit north side building that had recently converted from apartment rentals to a resident-controlled MHA. The building's leaders were facing the challenges of building trust among the residents, improving the management of the property, and establishing stable and effective leadership. The activities coordinated by the trainers were intended to help the residents overcome these challenges by understanding the importance of team building in an MHA.

The SGA method was developed by the T4T Co-operative, which was created to serve organizers and trainers in the field of resident-controlled housing. The approach borrows from methods developed by the Institute for Labor Education & Research in England. The method is learner centered, very active, and based on the notion that adults remember 20% of what they hear; 40% of what they see and hear; and 80% of what they do.

The adult learning theory on which this method is based suggests that the training goals, topics, and activities should be built around the participants' needs and interests. A pre-training needs assessment could effectively match the content of the training with what the participants' need. In addition,

the approach should be life or work-centered, and the skills developed and information provided should be directly applicable to real-life situations.

The method is especially appropriate for those training situations that involve participants with diverse educational levels, communication skills, and cultures. T4T trainers learn how to foster and moderate small and large group discussion. The method promotes teamwork and leadership development, engages all participants in work and discussion, and capitalizes on their collective knowledge.

The SGA method offers potential applications for CURL's work with community-based organizations. CURL staff and students could use the SGA method to help participants improve and realize the value of good communication, cooperation, and teamwork. It can also be useful for learning about specific policy issues such as helping participants understand how a particular legislation or regulation affects their lives, or to help trainees navigate a welfare-to-work program. Using the SGA approach, CURL partners engaged in strategic planning and evaluation can learn and apply technical skills such as developing goals, action plans, and evaluation indicators. The method is a valuable addition to CURL's toolbox for building the capacity of community-based organizations.

Project Summary: The Chicago Community Food Security Roundtable

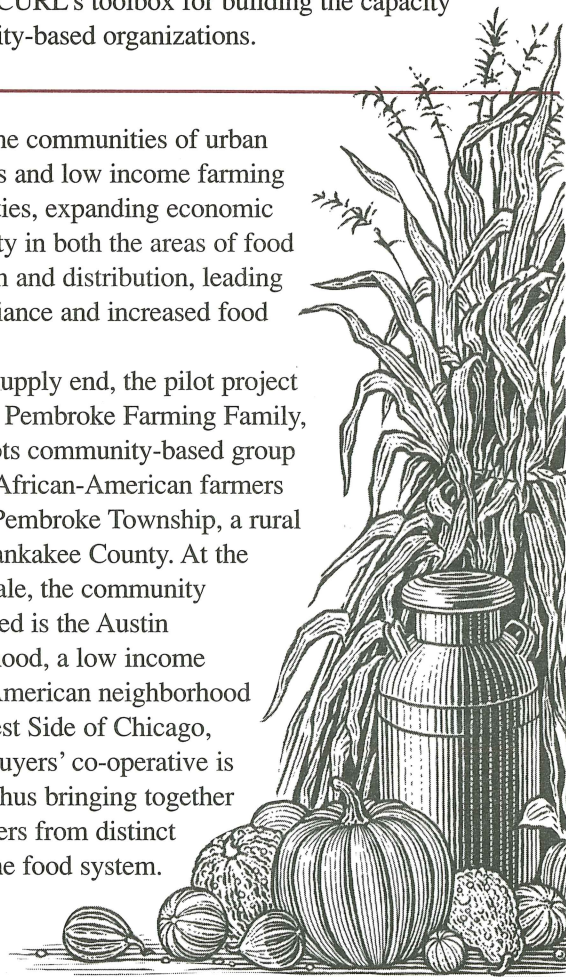
By Kale Williams, Senior Scholar

The Chicago Community Food Security Roundtable (CCFSR) is a diverse consortium of community-based organizations, universities, faith-based organizations, and technical assistance providers. Loyola University Chicago will serve as the fiscal agent and formal applicant on behalf of all the collaborators involved in the CCFSR. Philip Nyden, Director of the Center for Urban Research and Learning and Professor of Sociology, serves as principal investigator, in a university liaison function. Maureen Hellwig of the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG) serves as project director.

The consortium proposes looking at the issue of community food security as it affects low income communities on three levels. First, the CCFSR intends to develop the capacity for addressing this issue over the long term through the formation of a Chicago Food Policy Council. Secondly, the consortium is mapping out a community food security research agenda to help shape policy proposals to be pursued by the CCFSR. Thirdly, it proposes a pilot project to demonstrate a comprehensive response to food security problems facing both

low income communities of urban consumers and low income farming communities, expanding economic opportunity in both the areas of food production and distribution, leading to self-reliance and increased food security.

At the supply end, the pilot project will serve Pembroke Farming Family, a grassroots community-based group of small, African-American farmers living in Pembroke Township, a rural area in Kankakee County. At the point of sale, the community to be served is the Austin neighborhood, a low income African-American neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago, where a buyers' co-operative is planned, thus bringing together stakeholders from distinct parts of the food system.



Friday Morning Seminar Schedule, Fall, 2000

Informal CURL Friday Morning Seminars are held regularly on Friday mornings during fall and spring semesters from 10:30 until noon in the CURL classroom, Lewis Towers 10th floor. Loyola faculty and students, community activists, and guests are welcome. Please note: an update of this schedule will be available by mid-semester. *Phone 312-915-7760 or 7762 for details.

Date	Topic/Presenter(s)
Sept. 15	“Community Development in Southern Africa” Kim Fox, Service Learning Coordinator, and Chris Giangreco, CURL Graduate Fellow
Sept. 22	Fieldtrip: “Understanding the Chicago’s Southeast Side” Bill Peterman, Blum Neighborhood Center, Chicago State University (Meet at Pearson St. entrance to Lewis Towers at 8:30 a.m.)
Sept. 29	“Sustaining Stable Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Urban Communities” Phil Nyden, Director, CURL
Oct. 6	“Doing Research Across Boundaries of Diverse Realities” Joe Hoereth, Lin Von Dreele, and Lucia Orrellana, CURL staff; Rena Luna, Access Living
Oct. 13	“People with Disabilities in Slovenia” Ann Davis, School of Social Work and Public Policy, University of Birmingham, England
Oct. 20	“Using Research Findings to Impact Policy” Christine George, CURL Faculty Fellow and St. Sen. Carol Ronen
Oct. 27	“Economic Development on Chicago’s South Side” Brian Banks, Research Action Coordinator, PRAG
Nov. 3	TBA
Nov. 10	“What Does the Election Mean for Chicago and Illinois?” John Pelissero, Professor, Department of Political Science
Nov. 17	TBA
Nov. 24	No seminar, Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 1	No seminar, Second bi-annual Conference on Chicago Research and Policy at UIC
Dec. 8	No seminar, exams begin

Seminars will resume in January

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