

Inspiration Cafe, Living Room Cafe Announce Merger Social Services Organizations Help Men and Women Exit Homelessness

CHICAGO (July 10, 2003) - Two of Chicago's most creative social services organizations that have helped hundreds of men and women exit homelessness with dignity and respect, announced they are merging. Inspiration Cafe, located in the city's Uptown neighborhood, and The Living Room Cafe, located in the Woodlawn neighborhood, have merged under the Inspiration Corporation umbrella.

The Cafes are natural allies, each serving meals in a restaurant style setting as well as providing other supportive services designed to help individuals and families on their journey toward self-sufficiency.

"The merging of Inspiration Cafe and The Living Room Cafe marks the beginning of a new era for Inspiration Corporation," said Christopher Persons, executive director of Inspiration Corporation. "By combining our two organization, we will realize greater collaboration, innovation and success, while continuing to provide much needed services in our communities."

Both organizations will maintain their names, however, volunteer coordination, administrative services, supplies purchasing, information technology, etc. will be combined. Administrative services will be based at Inspiration Cafe.

"This merger will benefit our clients-the homeless men, women and families in our communities-by providing economies of scale that will enable us to provide current and expanded services," said Laura Singer, formerly executive director of The Living Room Cafe. With the merger, Singer became associate director of Inspiration Corporation and will oversee the social services of the agency. The Boards of each separate organization have been combined to form the Board of Inspiration Corporation.

According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, more than 60,000 people in the Chicago area find themselves homeless during the course of a year. The Cafes help by providing professional counseling, case management, and meals served in an environment of warmth with a strong sense of community.

Inspiration Cafe and The Living Room Cafe operate like restaurants, with personalized service and respectful treatment to all guests, place settings and a volunteer wait staff that offers guests a menu of freshly prepared items from the menu board. The Cafes provide meals every day in Woodlawn and Uptown, providing a framework for guests, alumni, volunteers and staff to live each day on a positive note. This year, the Corporation will serve over 16,000 meals to guests and alumni.

In addition to case management, meals, support groups and healthy living services, Inspiration Corporation sponsors the Cafe Too program, a comprehensive 12-week culinary and foodservice job-training program. The program assists homeless individuals obtain career-track employment in the food service industry. Students receive pre-employment instruction, restaurant training with hands-on experience, sanitation certification, internship experience and job-placement services. Students practice their skills by cooking and serving meals in the restaurant, which is open to the public for lunch on Thursdays and Fridays at Inspiration Cafe.

A special fundraiser for the combined organization is planned for Friday, July 11 at the Grant Park Music Festival. The outdoor event will feature hors d'oeuvres and beverages from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., followed by a concert by the Grant Park Orchestra. Tickets are \$30 in advance for individuals and \$50 for a pair of tickets. Children under 12 can attend for free. For more information, contact Angela Bowen at 773-878-0981, ext. 204 or abowen@inspirationcafe.org.

For more information contact:

Clarus Communications

Mara Conklin, 847-816-9411

mconklin@teamclarus.com

Linda Muskin, 847-432-7300

lmuskin@teamclarus.com