



INSPIRED NEWS

WRAPAROUND SERVICES EXPANDED WITH LIFE SKILLS TRAINING

Inspiration Corporation recently began offering Life Skills Training at Inspiration Cafe and The Living Room Cafe; the classes are lead by the Supportive Services Manager at each site, Israel Vargas and Frank Lowe, respectively.

The classes are designed to help participants address the basic skills needed to gain and maintain self-sufficiency. Israel, who initiated the training, states, "In order to empower somebody, you must first teach what being empowered means. In essence, being empowered means to understand yourself, understanding your surroundings, and lastly how the two interact to have a positive outcome."

The curriculum serves as a starting point in coping with internal and external obstacles that may deter the process of becoming self-sufficient. Topics include: attitude, behavior, anxiety, emotions, conflict resolution, decision making, goal setting, and the four stages of change (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action).



The Life Skills Training is 11 weeks for one hour each week. The first 15 minutes of each session is devoted to teaching technical definitions, followed by a 30-minute activity. The final 15 minutes is devoted to reflection, explanation of homework assignments, and answering questions.

Participants are highly encouraged to attend the life skills training, and eight clients on average attend at each site each week. The facilitators report seeing positive change in Training participants and how they interact with others. Frank Lowe states, "The Life Skills Training has revealed options to guests and alumni that were believed to be unavailable. It has also provided inspiration, motivation, and encouragement to overcome adversity."

If you have experiences that you think could help participants in the Life Skills Training, and are interested in sharing them, please contact Israel (773/878-0981, ext. 208, ivargas@inspirationcorp.org) or Frank (773/643-6018, ext. 203, lowe@inspirationcorp.org).

MEET JAMES

James grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and moved to the city in 1998. He struggled with "not having a job or a place to go" off and on, and because of his difficulties finding permanent employment, also experienced homelessness. He first heard about The Employment Project through a friend and enrolled in their four-week employment preparation training.

While James had been involved in other employment programs, he decided that this was something he was not going to give up on. James knew that by completing the training program, he was much more likely to find employment after graduation. James says he found The Employment Project to be different than other programs because the course was more "hands on" and the staff was more personal, like family. "I was not just a number."

INSPIRATION CORPORATION'S MISSION:

In an atmosphere of dignity and respect, Inspiration Corporation helps people who are affected by homelessness and poverty to improve their lives and increase self-sufficiency through the provision of social services, employment training and housing.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Dear Friends,

It's been more than two months since Chris Persons left Inspiration Corporation and I moved from Deputy Director into the role of Executive Director & CEO. At the same time, our other Deputy Director, Shannon Stewart, moved into the role of Chief Operating Officer, overseeing all of our programs and partnerships. Chris's legacy is a proud one: with his leadership, Inspiration Corporation grew from its first program, Inspiration Cafe, to a comprehensive array of supportive, employment and housing services benefiting more than 2,000 men and women each year.

Over the past months, Shannon and I have met with many of Inspiration Corporation's key partners to thank them for their contributions to the organization's work, and to share our vision for the future. Inspiration Corporation's strategic plan for 2006-2010 calls for continued investment in the organization's three areas of programmatic focus – supportive services, employment training & career services, and housing – and renewed emphasis on building the administrative infrastructure necessary to sustain this program growth.

At the heart of this wonderful organization are its talented and dedicated people. I continue to be inspired by the more than 800 volunteers who bring their caring and energy to Inspiration Corporation's programs, helping to create the atmosphere of dignity and respect that makes our programs so special and successful. I am pleased to announce that the Chicago Mercantile Exchange is the 2007 recipient of the Jennifer Kihm Visionary Award for its staff members' volunteerism at The Living Room Cafe and Inspiration Cafe, and that Karen Skalitzky is the 2007 recipient of the Lisa Nigro Spirit Award for her extraordinary work to record the stories of our participants and volunteers in her wonderful book, *A Recipe for Hope*.

As I embark on this new journey, I'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to send me a message at jpfeiffer@inspirationcorp.org or call me at (773) 878-0981 ext. 206.

Thank you for helping Inspiration Corporation create hope and opportunity for men and women affected by homelessness and poverty.

All the best,



John W. Pfeiffer
Executive Director & CEO

JENNIFER KIHM AND LISA NIGRO AWARD WINNERS

Long-time volunteers Karen Skalitzky and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange have been chosen as this year's winners of the Lisa Nigro Spirit Award and the Jennifer Kihm Visionary Award, respectively.

The Lisa Nigro Award is given to an individual volunteer and the Jennifer Kihm Award is presented to a group of volunteers. Each award is given to volunteers who provide support to the mission of Inspiration Corporation in treating participants with dignity and respect. Candidates for the awards are nominated by staff, and the winners are chosen by a small committee of Inspiration Corporation staff members.

Karen has been volunteering at meals at both The Living Room Cafe and Inspiration Cafe for several years, and guests and alumni of the Meals Program are always happy to see her. In 2006, Karen took volunteering to a new level and published a book called *A Recipe for Hope*, a collection of stories of Inspiration Corporation participants.

Chicago Mercantile Exchange has volunteered with the Meals Program at Inspiration Cafe for several years and also provides financial support for special events such as the Black History Month dinner and the summer picnic as well as the Meals Program.

The awards were presented to Karen and representatives from Chicago Mercantile Exchange at One Inspired Evening on March 16.



Lisa Nigro, Founder of Inspiration Cafe; Karen Skalitzky, Winner of the Lisa Nigro Spirit Award; and John Pfeiffer, Executive Director & CEO of Inspiration Corporation

ONE INSPIRED EVENING ART AND DREAM JOB AUCTION



On behalf of the 2007 One Inspired Evening Art and Dream Job Auction committee, Inspiration Corporation would like to thank the generous sponsors who made this event successful again this year. Our 2007 One Inspired Evening Dream Maker Sponsors include: **LaSalle Bank, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Food For Thought, and the Smithburg Family Foundation.** We would also like to thank The Private Bank, Hispanic Housing Development Corporation, M. Fishman & Company, Bridgeview Bank, Westbrook Financial Services, BBJ Linens, Real Life Weddings, Botanicals, Halls Rental, Rose Ann and Ned Anschuetz, and Barry and Rebecca Friedland for their generous sponsorship and continuous support. We would like to thank Steven Gross of Real Life Weddings for his photographic services and Terry Dowd, Inc., who assisted in the preparation and care of all of the art generously donated by Chicago's local artists.

The catering professionals at Food For Thought, with the aid of Hall's Rental delivered delightful refreshments and superb service. BBJ Linens created a wonderful ambiance for the evening, accented by floral arrangements by Botanicals. The Andreas Kapsalis Trio provided live musical entertainment throughout the evening as Inspiration Corporation supporters and art lovers participated in live and silent auctions. Thank you to Janet Davies, who served as mistress of ceremonies, and auctioneer Jeff Brown for bringing enthusiasm to the live auction. One Inspired Evening grossed nearly \$100,000 this year. This event is an increasing success after 14 years because of the dedication of staff, volunteers, the board of directors, the event committee, and steadfast supporters.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WHO MAKES IT POSSIBLE: BARRY FRIEDLAND

For years, Barry Friedland has attended One Inspired Evening. He loves this event and he loves what he continues to learn about Inspiration Corporation. Barry became an enthusiastic volunteer and board member, and we recruited him to co-chair One Inspired Evening this year.

What keeps Barry coming back is the memory of his sister, Debi Friedland Leib, who passed away six years ago. It was Debi's caring and compassion that inspires Barry to help others.

Debi and daughter India

"Inspiration Corporation – its people and the mission – is an organization that Debi would have really cared about. She was always offering to lend a hand to those most in need, and I can think of no better way to celebrate her life and her values than by supporting this organization," Barry has said.

Barry worked with the staff of Inspiration Corporation to create the Debi Friedland Leib Memorial Fund, which helps us provide Supportive Services to guests and alumni at The Living Room Cafe and Inspiration Cafe.

With the help of the Inspiration Corporation staff, he sent out letters to friends and family, telling them about the fund and asking them to join him in donating. In two months, Barry was able to raise over \$12,000 to help serve people in need – and he knows his sister would be proud.

A fund at Inspiration Corporation can be a wonderful way to remember a loved one, celebrate a special occasion, or honor someone's achievements. If you would like to learn more, please contact Diane Pascal at 773/878-0981, ext. 204 or dpascal@inspirationcorp.org.

FIGHT HOMELESSNESS

RUN FOR DIGNITY RUN FOR RESPECT



Are you looking for a way to get into shape, enjoy the Chicago spring and summer air, and support the mission of Inspiration Corporation? If so, consider joining Team Inspiration in the 30th Anniversary LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon on October 7, 2007. Team Inspiration provides benefits to both new and experienced runners who are motivated to run 26.2 miles to show their support of ending homelessness in Chicago. While fundraising on behalf of Team Inspiration, you will receive a discount on the CARA (Chicago Area Runners Association) marathon training program, your own personal website, a network of other runners, and several other perks. And remember, you can still register to run the Marathon for Team Inspiration after registration closes. Please contact Angela Brown at abrown@inspirationcorp.org or (773) 878-0981 ext. 222 to sign up or for more information.

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CAFE TOO CATERS TO YOUR TASTEBUDS

You may know about Cafe Too, which provides participants with real-life work experience at our restaurant at 4715 N. Sheridan Rd. But Cafe Too also provides catering, to provide students with more hands-on experience and to help support the program.

Inspiration Cafe, which has a brightly lit, warm atmosphere, is available for rental, and Cafe Too catering is an option. In addition, the award-winning Cafe Too Restaurant is available for afternoon and evening private parties of up to 30 people. Cafe Too Restaurant is the perfect location for intimate parties, meetings, and showers.

Lunches and appetizers for parties of 40 people or less can be prepared at Cafe Too and be made available for customer pick-up. Please contact Chef Sean Cunneen at (773) 275-0626 or scunneen@inspirationcorp.org for additional information.

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