

INSPIRED NEWS

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.

HOUSING PROGRAM MAKES BIG LEAP FORWARD

There has been a lot of talk about Inspiration Corporation's growing Housing Program lately. Inspiration Corporation has been providing scattered site housing for its homeless participants since 2001. Thanks to a new rental subsidy grant provided by the Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund, in partnership with the Department of Housing and the Department of Human Services, "our housing capacity will grow from 32 units to roughly 208 units in less than a year" says Housing Services Manager Faye Stauber.

The Rental Housing Support Services (RHSSP) grant began in August 2007 and provides funding for 160 units of housing for Inspiration Corporation. The 160 units are part of a larger grant slated to provide funding for a total of 400 units. The grant is split between Inspiration Corporation and Inner Voice, who act as collaborating partners in the endeavor. The housing provided is scattered site and Inspiration Corporation works with landlords and property management companies citywide.

The new housing program is welcome news for those individuals who have been in shelters and on the streets the longest. Applicants for the program had to document that they have spent a minimum of one year in homelessness for individuals and nine months for families.

The housing program is designed to provide intensive support to each individual and family in Inspiration Corporation housing. Once approved for housing, each tenant works with a Retention Specialist who provides ongoing support, assisting them in maintaining their housing as well as working on their goals towards improving their lives. The staff focuses on providing the guidance and support needed for 160 new tenants. Retention Specialist Dassin Wallace explains, "A homeless person who is newly housed can face a lot of barriers to being successful. We're here to assist them in overcoming those barriers."

Landlords and property managers interested in participating in the RHSSP program can learn more by contacting Faye Stauber at (773) 878-0981 ext. 236 or fstauber@inspirationcorp.org.



Ramon is a participant in Inspiration Corporation's Housing program and a graduate of Cafe Too. He recently began working at Great Lakes Naval Air Station.

Before entering the Cafe Too culinary skills training program, Quantrell Taylor was an ex-offender struggling to make ends meet. Relying on friends and family for shelter, Quantrell was determined to turn his life around. When a social worker told him about Cafe Too, he jumped at the opportunity to learn a skill that could help him become self-sufficient.



Quantrell entered the training program in October of 2004 looking to learn a skill to help him improve his life, but he found much more than that. Quantrell quickly realized that cooking was his passion and graduated at the top of his class. He was immediately hired by Inspiration Corporation to assist in training the next class of students and soon after was hired at a north side restaurant. In 2005, Quantrell received an offer to become one of the first cooks at Inspiration Corporation's new restaurant, also called Cafe Too. He eagerly accepted and in less than a year was promoted to sous chef.

"Chef Q", as he's known, has been instrumental in helping a multitude of Cafe Too students achieve their potential. More than simply cooking, Quantrell is committed to teaching: "I like helping people reach their goals in life ... just like the staff at Cafe Too helped me"

Today Quantrell is looking to advance his career by pursuing an associate's degree in the culinary arts at Robert Morris College with financial assistance from Inspiration Corporation's Lori Jericho Memorial Scholarship Fund and our Working Poor Fund, supported by the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

MEET QUANTRELL

Always preparing for the future, he is already thinking about obtaining a bachelor's degree. Thinking about how far he's come over his years involved with the Cafe Too training program and restaurant, Quantrell says, "I think this is the best thing that's happened in my life."

Your support of Inspiration Corporation helps people like Quantrell exit poverty. Thank you for giving!



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Dear Friends,

At Inspiration Corporation, the cold winter months make us mindful of the rising need for our services and grateful for the community of support that allows us to help more than 2,000 people each year.

Thanks to you, we can offer our participants a rich array of services and resources to help them overcome the root causes of their homelessness and poverty, serving as a catalyst as they work to transform their lives and increase self reliance.

This year, the staff and volunteers of Inspiration Corporation are raising the bar even higher as we provide more employment services, more housing (175 new units with rent subsidies and case management this year!), more nutritious meals, and more small grants for our participants.

Winter is the hardest time of year for the men, women and families we serve. The cold weather, holiday blues, short gray days, difficulty of getting to and from – all of these burdens add to the challenge of overcoming homelessness.

But with your partnership, we'll keep the light of hope burning bright, and motivate our participants to make the most of the opportunities we provide.

Thanks for your support of Inspiration Corporation!

Best wishes for a warm winter,

John W. Pfeiffer
Executive Director & CEO

INSPIRATION CORPORATION CELEBRATES 18TH ANNIVERSARY!

On Saturday, November 17, 65 friends and supporters of Inspiration Corporation gathered together for an intimate evening of camaraderie, culinary fireworks and collective support for Inspiration Corporation's programs. Dominique Tougne, executive chef of Bistro 110 and Inspiration Corporation board member, prepared a delicious and memorable multi-course French meal at Inspiration Cafe.

Southern Wine & Spirits generously donated the wines that accompanied the meal, and French Pastry School at the City Colleges of Chicago created the breads and a delectable dessert as well as goodies for everyone to take home.

Guests purchased raffle tickets for chances to win a variety of packages including a "Pilot to Co-Pilot" one hour "flightseeing" opportunity and a "Taste of France" mini getaway which included dinner at Bistro 110 and overnight accommodations at the Sofitel Chicago Water Tower hotel.

As always, much of the success was due to the help of our committed volunteers. Their energy and professionalism helped insure flawless dinner service to accompany the fantastic meal.

Due to the collective contributions of our volunteers and staff, raffle prize and goody bag donors as well as the generous contributions of Bistro 110, LaSalle Bank, Mickey's Linen & Towel Supply, and The French Pastry School at City Colleges of Chicago, this year we grossed \$26,000 – a record for this event. It was a wonderful ending to a wonderful evening.



Dominique Tougne and Phillip Carroll, both of Bistro 110, with Jonathan Goldsmith and Cafe Too graduate Keith Will, both of Spacca Napoli



Mayor Richard M. Daley with Inspiration alumnus Keith Will and Executive Director John Pfeiffer. Mayor Daley held a press conference to review progress on Chicago's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness at The Living Room Cafe on August 9, 2007.

WHO MAKES IT POSSIBLE: CATHYE ROSENGARDEN-O'HARA

Cathye Rosengarden O'Hara has been a donor to Inspiration Corporation since 1998. She was introduced to Inspiration Cafe by her mother, who volunteered at Inspiration Corporation with her temple during the 1990s.



The Cathye Rosengarden O'Hara Fund provided a security deposit to allow Rosie and her two children to find an apartment.

Over the years, Cathye shared with us her desire to support directly the wellbeing of the most vulnerable people – to cover the needs that our participants can't always afford, like medical expenses, transportation to job interviews, rental assistance, and more.

In 2000, we worked with Cathye to create the Cathye Rosengarden O'Hara Fund, which makes the kind of grants that interest Cathye. This year, the grants from the fund have included everything from apartment security deposits to wheelchair repair.

This summer, Inspiration Corporation Executive Director John Pfeiffer visited Cathye to express his gratitude for her support. He invited Cathye to join the Board of Directors of Inspiration Corporation, and she was elected in December 2007.

At her meeting with John, Cathye shared her intent to include Inspiration Corporation in her will for a significant gift that will someday allow Inspiration Corporation to purchase a residential building and provide housing to participants regardless of ability to pay.

"I have always been attracted to Inspiration Corporation's approach to treating vulnerable people with dignity and respect," Cathye told us. "Inspiration Corporation's willingness to help me develop a way of giving that meets my philanthropic goals – through the Cathye Rosengarden O'Hara Fund – demonstrates that they are committed to helping individuals help one another. I'm very proud of this partnership!"

LISA NIGRO NAMED A BANK OF AMERICA "LOCAL HERO"

Lisa Nigro, the founder of Inspiration Cafe, joined other community leaders to be recognized by Bank of America as one of five Local Heroes on November 15, 2007.

Inspiration Corporation is grateful to have benefitted from Lisa's vision and dedication for nearly 20 years. Lisa volunteers to serve meals at Inspiration Cafe on a regular basis in addition to joining staff in representing Inspiration Corporation. From personally employing people who are homeless to providing shelter and support to those she believes in, Lisa lives her ideals.

With Rotary International, Lisa participates in projects such as rebuilding homes and helping students raise money for polio research. She teaches fitness classes to Girl Scouts and low-income youth at the Evanston Athletic Club. In addition, she coordinated a running team for a literacy charity and has been actively involved in a toy drive for a daycare center.



Janet Froetscher, President and CEO, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago; Lisa Nigro; John Pfeiffer, Inspiration Corporation Executive Director; and John Brennan, Illinois President, Bank of America

The Bank of America Neighborhood Excellence Initiative recognizes organizations, local heroes, and student leaders who are helping their neighborhoods achieve excellence. Such organizations and individuals champion causes vital to their communities and inspire others to get involved.

INSPIRING HOLIDAYS!

Inspiration Corporation once again celebrated the holidays in style! We served an early Thanksgiving dinner to 295 people at The Living Room Cafe. On Thanksgiving day, Sacred Heart Schools donated and served a traditional feast at Inspiration Cafe.

The Inspiration Cafe holiday party in Uptown has grown to include participants of Cafe Too, The Employment Project, and our Housing initiatives – about 200 people joined us for a party at Truman College, with live music from World Class Noise and Chicago Chamber Choir, terrific food and volunteers, and presents for all. At The Living Room Cafe, about 65 participants enjoyed holiday treats and gifts.

Thanks to those who volunteered and/or made donations to make the holidays special for Inspiration Corporation! To learn more about how you can get involved, contact the volunteer coordinator at volunteer@inspirationcorp.org or 773/878-0981, ext. 231.

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GREAT DINING DEALS AT CAFE TOO

Cafe Too is continuing its successful prix-fixe menu throughout the new year so come in and enjoy five courses for only \$19.50! We are also BYOB so bring your favorite bottle of wine.

If you live in the Lakeview/Andersonville/Uptown area keep an eye out for the Inside Chicago booklet in your mailbox for a fabulous dining deal. Otherwise bring in this newsletter for 15% off. We are also now serving brunch from 9am to 2pm on the weekend, to give those early birds a chance to enjoy our much-loved brunch. Go to Cafe Too's new website, www.cafetoo.org, to view specials and the complete menu.

The Cafe Too culinary skills training program will enroll over 100 students in 2008. We invite you to join us for memorable meals, friendly service, and the joy of giving hope and opportunity to students working to achieve self-sufficiency in our culinary program. Further details available at www.cafetoo.org.



Seeing You Forever, by Oscar Martinez, oil on canvas 16" x 20"

One Inspired Evening

ART AUCTION & DREAM JOB GALA

Save the Date FRIDAY, MARCH 14

River East Art Center, 435 E. Illinois Street, Chicago

Inspiration
CORPORATION

Tickets \$85 in advance; \$95 at the event Inspirationcorp.org or 773.878.0981, ext. 221