

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities The Extension Connection–Life Skills Training

Issue

There is a need in the Phoenix metropolitan area for “welfare-to-work” type programs. The Extension Connection is a major part of the “Project S.T.R.I.D.E.” (Successful Training Resources for Individual Development) program, a job linkage demonstration project. S.T.R.I.D.E.’s mission is to assist unemployed, low skilled, and disadvantaged Phoenix Enterprise Community (low-income) residents with training that promotes job readiness and self-worth to overcome barriers to entering the world of work and achieving job stability and advancement, and job placement. It is one of the first projects directed at employment for the very hard to employ.

What has been done?

The Extension Connection provided a six-week life-skills program with components designed to help families become more conscious of healthy and nutritious meals; aware of food safety; self-sufficient; equipped to handle

their families need and concerns; better at understanding that work is a means to achieving goals not the end all; more able to take better charge of their lives; more valuable to their community; acclimated to employment and education and better able to budget and plan their money.

Participants in the program ranged from former gang members to newly arrived immigrants to the United States whose lack of English and American job skills caused significant barriers to employment. Ninety-five percent of the program graduates were members of racial or ethnic minorities, 40 percent had less than a high school education; many had criminal records.

Impact

Of the 146 participants who completed the program in 2000, to date 115 have secured employment. Positions paid from \$5.50 to \$12.60 per hour.

Participants reported that the program helped them regain their

self-esteem, get on track to a job and career and open the doorways to continue their education. Hadco, a firm in Phoenix which manufactures circuit boards, and was the first company to work with Project S.T.R.I.D.E, has gained 25 employees in its manufacturing facility. Hadco managers have commented, “The people that went through the S.T.R.I.D.E. Program were better prepared than most people, and they [the graduates of S.T.R.I.D.E.] had more stability than people [we have] hired off the streets.” This important statement is key because Hadco also declared that most of the S.T.R.I.D.E. graduates would not have qualified for job placement if they had just walked in off the street.

Forty-year old Khin San Myint was already employed at Hadco, but she sees S.T.R.I.D.E. giving her skills to someday obtain a promotion: “We can now face everything [we need to do] before employment: what are the requirements, how to prepare for an interview, how to write a resume. We had to practice these things everyday before the group.”

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Contacts

Ruth Jackson, extension agent, EFNEP, Family and Consumer Sciences,
Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
4341 E. Broadway Road
Phoenix, AZ 85040-8807
Tel.: (602) 470-8086, FAX: (602) 470-8092
Email: rjackson@ag.arizona.edu