

Unemployment Foreclosure Eviction Debt
Depression Fear Barriers Convictions
Incarceration Dependence Transportation
Childcare Poverty Injustice Hunger
Ignorance Inexperience Recession Anger
Unskilled **Great Needs** Insecurity



Towards **Employment** | Annual Report **2009**

GREATER RESPONSE

Job-readiness Workshops Training
Coaching Pathways Encouragement
Advice Skills Support Resources Legal
GED Connections Attorneys Interviews
Credentials Placement Partnership
Communication Advocacy Preparation

Our Mission

Empowering individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment

Towards Employment has one, single focus – jobs.

Since 1976, we've helped more than 100,000 low-income and disadvantaged adults in Greater Cleveland prepare for jobs, get jobs, keep jobs and move up the career ladder.

In 2004, we accepted the challenge of helping clients with criminal records — and each year we've placed nearly 200 ex-offenders in full-time, permanent jobs.

IN A DOWN ECONOMY, JOBS ARE MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER.

In 2009, we saw crisis after crisis in the news - and in the lives of our clients, our families and our friends.

Companies downsized and businesses closed. Unemployment claims took a leap. Home foreclosures and evictions spiked. Food pantries were overwhelmed – from the inner city to the outer ring suburbs.

At Towards Employment, we served new people facing such situations for the first time – as the rollercoaster economy spared few.

The demand for our employment-related Supportive Services increased by 21%. These are the basic supports needed to get and keep a job - like bus tickets, child care, tools and uniforms. This greater need for supportive services tells a story of greater need in the Cleveland area in 2009.

But in this time of great need – we were able to provide greater response for those with barriers to employment. Our programs and services continued to provide training, support and resources. We stood by our mission - to put people on the road to self-sufficiency through employment.

Great needs. Greater response.

This is the story of Towards Employment success in 2009.

LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

We are pleased to report that Towards Employment weathered the storm of 2009. It was a year that hit hard for many Cleveland non-profits. Towards Employment remained strong - on our balance sheet and in our service to low-income and disadvantaged adults struggling with barriers to employment.

We collaborated with strong partners, like the Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga County and Tri-C. Our job-readiness programs and support services are recognized as vital to Greater Cleveland's economic strength – and we've maintained philanthropic and government support. Our partners and our donors recognize the success of our unique holistic approach throughout the "pathway to employment."

How will Towards Employment continue to provide a greater response to greater need in 2010? We recognize that people coming off welfare, out of prison or off the streets need a longer period of support.

With our 2010 strategic plan, Towards Employment is building partnerships in the community to address this need. We will provide resources that help our clients become more employable – with training for credentialed jobs, on-site GED preparation, financial literacy development, and more intensive help navigating the employment system.

2009 was a year of great need. But our ability to deliver quality services to those who needed them remained strong - as Towards Employment developed new sources of funding and new collaborative partnerships in 2009.

All our accomplishments served one end – empowering individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Rizika".

Jill Rizika
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelly Peet".

Shelly Peet
Nordson Corporation
Board Chair



The economic recession created a new wave of job seekers – some of them facing the challenge for the first time.

With a high school education, Kim had worked full-time since the age of 17 -- sometimes at two jobs. She thought her big opportunity for advancement had come when she quit her secretarial job to accept a position at the Cleveland Clinic.

But then a hiring freeze hit at the Clinic. Kim suddenly found herself without a job – and turned to public assistance.

“I did not know what it was like to try to take care of myself and a child on a very limited monthly income. And it was a real eye-opener when I saw people with masters’ degrees lining up at a job fair!

Until I was referred to Towards Employment -- I honestly had no knowledge of them. My initial reaction was WOW! I wanted to get back in the workforce and off county assistance. I’d rather earn my own check – and work for it.

I was given updated job lists, job leads, and access to a computer lab. I was also able to attend a computer training course to improve my Microsoft Office skills.

With a referral from Towards Employment, I interviewed for a job and have been working in the copy center at a law firm since September 2009. Also, I am currently preparing to enroll at Tri-C.

Everyone who is or has been on public assistance is not there simply because they don’t desire more out of life or just to be lazy. Many have been to college but due to our economy ... we all are struggling in some way. ”

Client Needs | Our Response

*Sudden Unemployment
Low Level Positions
No Network*

**Job Leads
Skill Improvement
Employer Referrals**

Kim Sudberry
Document Processer
IKON Office Solutions

“At Towards Employment, they have a genuine love and desire to help those who may be down on their luck and give them a hand UP -- not a hand OUT.”

Towards Employment is uniquely equipped to help clients with a criminal record address and overcome this serious barrier to employment.

It's hard to find a job after being laid off during a recession. It's even harder with a felony conviction in your past.

After five years of hard work and determination, Sonya had been promoted to assistant manager at a large grocery chain. But when 300 people were let go in October of 2009 – Sonya faced a battle tougher than most.

"I was on drugs and stealing to support my habit. Five times I had been in Marysville (Ohio Reformatory for Women). But I was tired of it and knew I didn't want to go back to my old life.

I made some big changes on my own and with my family's help – and got a good job at a major grocery store chain. But when I was laid off after five years, everyone said "they do background checks now – you'll never get another job!" At Towards Employment they told me "you can do it!" I went to their four-week workshop.

I learned interview techniques and how to have a firm handshake, good eye contact, speak clearly and precisely. They told me to be honest and explain, "Yes, I was an addict and in prison, but I have bettered myself. Here's what I am doing NOW."

I can't let my record determine who I am as a person. Ex-felons have to strive harder.

I had the opportunity to interview with Planned Parenthood ... and was hired and promoted within three months. I work with nurses and doctors and I love the challenge of teaching teens about STDs. I get in their shoes and on their level – I have good communication skills.

I have benefits and a 401K, a good marriage, a daughter in college and own a home.... I have a future now."

"Through Towards Employment, I had the opportunity to interview with Planned Parenthood... I have a future now."

Sonya Warren
Healthcare Assistant
Planned Parenthood



Client Needs | Our Response

Criminal Conviction
Lacked Interview Skills

Low Confidence

Emphasize Successes

Job-Readiness Workshop

Encouragement

A Critical Component on the Pathway to Employment

Eviction...credit card debt...unpaid child support...unpaid traffic fines that lead to warrants...past convictions. These are just some of the legal barriers faced by the working poor or those seeking work. To get a job or keep a job, legal issues like these must be resolved.

Towards Employment is the only Cleveland-area provider of employment training with a comprehensive legal component. As part of our holistic pathway to self-sufficiency, it makes us uniquely successful at removing barriers to employment.

Tackling Barriers | Opening Doors

We focus on legal issues low-income, disadvantaged adults commonly face. Our role begins as “troubleshooters” identifying legal barriers to employment during initial background checks for clients.

Civil cases, including credit issues, bankruptcy, foreclosures and evictions

We see many clients struggling with debt built up while unemployed, ill or in prison.

Our legal staff helps untangle complicated relationships with creditors – through counseling, mediation, debt relief or legal defense.

2009 was a tough year for many, as the number of clients we helped file for bankruptcy doubled from 12 to 24 – and foreclosures took a huge leap. In all, we discharged over \$1.5 million in unsecured debt.

The emotional impact of debt release is enormous – as daily stress from anxiety and bill collectors affects work performance, sometimes ending in job loss.



Bridget Peterson
Paralegal

Kathy Harlow
Staff Attorney

Mark Gallagher
Director of
Legal Services

Staci Wampler, an Achieve advisor, explains, “We had a client facing foreclosure after 18 years of home ownership. He was ready to give up – and used most of his money for basics like the water bill. When Legal Services helped him keep the house, his attitude changed completely – he got his life back in order and his energy back at work.”

Staff attorney Kathy Harlow understands the unique stresses facing clients with credit or debt issues. “Even when they ‘do the right thing’—like getting a bank account—without coaching, hidden bank overdraft fees can eat them alive. It’s an on-going crisis,” she says. “I try to keep their wages in their pockets to pay the rent and the car note and put food on the table.”

Criminal, traffic, landlord/tenant, child support and other issues

Many of our clients have felony cases on their record -- despite having been dismissed or found not guilty. Our staff asks the courts to seal these records so they do not appear on a background check and prevent employment.

Outstanding warrants are often the result of something as simple as failure to pay a fine on a traffic ticket or fear of going to court on a misdemeanor case. Our staff may ask the court to reduce the bond and recall the warrant, permitting the attorney to either advocate for a mitigation of sentence or litigate the matter properly.

“The courts understand that we’re trying to help our client get and keep a job so they can be self-sufficient,” says Legal Director Mark Gallagher.

“After their job-readiness workshop, I help clients take their new skills out for a spin. Every time I take a client to court, I require them to be on time, properly dressed and speaking on their own behalf. We’re all about getting clients ready for employment, in everything we do.”

“When we provide legal services, we always verify our clients are actively taking part in our job programs. They must take responsibility. I tell them ‘I’ll work as hard as you’ because we’re all about self-sufficiency.”

- Mark Gallagher, Director of Legal Services

GREATER NEED FOR LEGAL SERVICES

CLIENTS SERVED

2008  **773**

2009  **1,070**

CASES OPENED

2008  **1,204**

2009  **1,411**

Responding to the Need... through Collaborations

- *referrals to legal aid and public defenders*
- *pro bono assistance from other attorneys*
 - *two student interns every summer*



REACH PROJECT

makes a difference in Grant Year Two

- Resolved 87% of identified barriers to help employee keep a job or advance in career
- Resolved 95% of opened legal cases to retain employment
- Increased wages for 67% of Achieve participants after 6 months of services
- Of participants receiving services, 95% of those who applied were successful in receiving a promotion.

Even in a tough economy, Towards Employment is helping low-wage workers keep their jobs – and advance in a career.

The REACH project and its focus on the long-term care industry is one such example.

REACH is a three-year, employer-driven collaborative led by Jennings Center for Older Adults. It has the support of an array of funders, including the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Investment Board, the Cleveland Foundation, Deaconess Community Foundation, St. Luke's Foundation and Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation. Ultimately, the goal is a sustainable program that lives on after the grant funding.

The REACH objectives :

- **reduce turnover of low-wage and entry level workers**
- **create cost-savings**
- **implement a comprehensive and sustainable approach to screening, hiring, supporting and advancing employees in the long-term health care sector.**

REACH services are integrated into the employer partner sites, Eliza Bryant Village and The Jennings Center for Older Adults, and made available to employees on-the-job. A core component of the project is our well-established ACHIEVE program of on-the-job work/life support. In addition, our Achieve staff provide coaching to assist employees with career planning and continuing education.

Our REACH Career Coaches work on-site with employees to:

- **Identify and resolve barriers to keeping a job, such as credit problems, childcare, legal issues, evictions, foreclosures, financial literacy, etc.**
- **Pursue continuing education with a GED, technical training or community college to advance in their career.**

REACH Success Story

Briggett had been working fulltime at Eliza Bryant Village for four years – and also helping care for her grandchildren. She was successful in her work – but struggling in her financial life. Amy Cosgrove, Towards Employment REACH career coach, worked with Briggett on budgeting, handling money and getting a credit report.

The impact was life-changing for Briggett ...

"I would get bills and not open them. I got more and more into debt and wanted to get out! Sooner or later, I felt the debt would have been a threat to my job.

Through the REACH program – right at my job – I asked Amy for help on how to get the paperwork I needed, how to find out all I owed. She helped me start paying off the small debts first and make arrangements to pay what I could afford.

I'm paying my bills now and trying to get a computer. I'm interested in training at Tri-C as an x-ray tech or lab tech – and Amy helped me with the application. If not for Amy, I wouldn't be doing this – or paying off the debts."

"It made a big difference to have REACH right there at my job."

Briggett Martin
Lead Housekeeping Aid



Client Needs | Our Response

Lacks Financial Skills

Practical Budgeting

Burdened by Debt

Steps to Improve Credit

Low Income

Education Resources

THE PATHWAY

STEPS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Our entire mission is focused on jobs for people with multiple barriers to employment. Over the years, we've learned that a "quick fix" job placement mentality is not effective. Towards Employment developed a holistic approach – a "pathway to employment" moving clients toward stable employment and self-sufficiency.

STEP 1

PREPARE FOR THE JOB

Job Readiness Workshops provide training on:

- resumes
- applications
- mock interviews
- soft skills
(communication and attitude)
- credentialed training
(new in '09)

STEP 2 GET THE JOB

Our Career Consultants help clients:

- identify a career path
- connect with employers
- arrange interviews
- meet employer needs

STEP 3 KEEP THE JOB

After a client is hired, Towards Employment:

- keeps in touch to provide direction and encouragement
- offers job coaching
- provides ongoing Supportive Services
- ensures employers are satisfied with client performance

STEP 4 MOVE INTO A CAREER

We help clients advance by:

- building new skills on the job
- partnering with employers to provide on-site training and support- reducing turnover with programs proven to be effective

Towards Employment helped hundreds of people enter the world of work in 2009...

245 clients transitioned off welfare or overcame a criminal background to gain steady work

Our Supportive Services and Legal staff...

- *helped 1,939 disadvantaged youth and adults* overcome barriers to employment
- *provided 9,958* services to help clients start and keep jobs (bus tickets, child care, tools, uniforms, etc)
- *opened 1,411 legal cases* to clear criminal warrants, resolve child support cases, prevent evictions and foreclosures, and resolve credit issues

Achieve, our innovative worksite-based employee retention program...

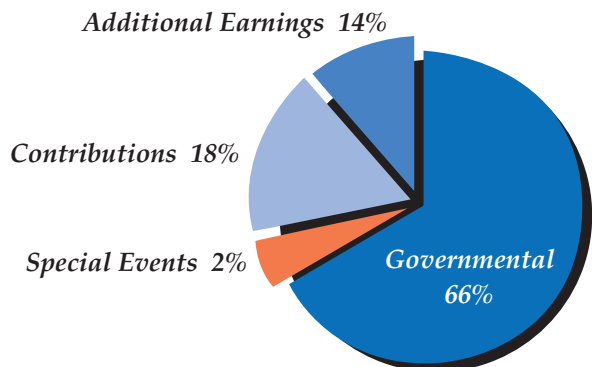
- *helped 776 low-wage workers* retain their jobs
- *provided 3,199 services* including job coaching, career counseling, and legal counsel to improve retention, reduce absenteeism, and build skills for advancement
- *partnered with 6 partner-employer sites* -- reduced turnover and increased productivity

Our Training Services Staff...

- *Helped over 300 people prepare for employment* with interactive workshops and/or case management in partnership with community organizations
- *Customized programs* focused on soft skills, job search, supervisory training, and work/life balance... including "Rhythm Rack," a simulated workplace training program using a record store setting
- *Partnered with local organizations* including CMHA YouthBuild, AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, North Point Transitional Housing for Men, and Greater Cleveland Literacy Cooperative
- *Helped clients gain "green industry" credentials* in partnership with Tri-C's "Pathways out of Poverty through Green Jobs"

SOURCES OF REVENUE 2009

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| GOVERNMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS | \$2,069,764.00 |
| Foundations and Corporations | 408,000.00 |
| United Way Services | 45,357.00 |
| Individual Contributions | 118,644.94 |
| SPECIAL EVENTS (NET) | 76,768.96 |
| ADDITIONAL EARNINGS | |
| Earned Income | 227,186.00 |
| Interest/Investment Income* | 128,992.00 |
| Other | 82,340.00 |
| TOTAL | \$3,157,052.90 |



USES OF REVENUE 2009

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Staffing | \$1,897,538.00 |
| Supportive Services | 606,943.00 |
| Other Program Costs | 265,731.00 |
| Occupancy | 245,026.00 |
| Other Operating Costs | 112,739.00 |
| TOTAL | \$3,127,977.00 |

*includes \$104,158 in unrealized gains from investments

Towards Employment is grateful for support from key donors in the Cleveland area. Their support allows us to focus on jobs for those in need.

Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services

Federal stimulus funds through the Urban Youth Works program supported job readiness workshops, credentialed training, job placement and GED preparation for 16 to 24 year-olds dealing with poverty, a criminal record, foster care or parents in prison.

Cuyahoga County's Office of Reentry

More than 5,000 ex-offenders face serious barriers to employment as they return to the Cleveland area from prison each year. In 2009, the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry awarded TE a \$500,000 contract to serve 160 ex-offenders through the program with customized job-readiness workshops, including GED and credentialed training.

"Towards Employment was selected for expertise in this population. They're well-versed in recruitment of ex-offenders and their workshops and training are high quality – which should lead to employment and retention."

- Luis Vazquez

Director of Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services Office of Reentry

The Cleveland Foundation

Towards Employment was pleased to receive a significant grant of \$160,000. Program support was directed to our "Networks 4 Success" job-readiness workshop for ex-offenders as bridge funding. Capacity building dollars provided crucial funding for strategic planning and advocacy.

"In a very tough economy, the Cleveland Foundation decided to invest in strong organizations that really matter in our community – like Towards Employment. They have a solid plan for where they're headed and a vision that includes advocacy to change and improve public policy. That makes Towards Employment stand out among direct-service agencies. And we've seen them in action ourselves -- because they play an essential role in recruiting and training employees for our own Evergreen cooperative business initiative."

- Jill Paulsen, Program Officer, Cleveland Foundation

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The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation
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