

helping PEOPLE help THEMSELVES

break the cycle of poverty

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CCHD HELPS WOMEN CREATE A NEW IMAGE

BY BETH GRIFFIN

Cynthia Jerry went looking for a few good women to fill retail jobs in the Virgin Islands and ended up developing a hugely successful training program with 225 graduates to date. Here's how Cynthia and her New Image Foundation (NIF) turned a labor shortage into an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty for hundreds of low-income women. NIF receives funds from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

When she relocated her fragrance business from Washington, D.C. to St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Cynthia tried to hire articulate, professional customer service representatives for her promotion team. Despite a high unemployment rate throughout the Virgin Islands and many potential workers, Cynthia found that would-be employees lacked work experience. Some had never worked fulltime at career-based jobs. Others had dropped out before graduating from high school. Still others had been laid off from one sector of the economy and had not yet found productive work elsewhere.

With initial encouragement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Cynthia wrote a job training program, Women Excel, which grew into the New Image Foundation in 1999. The first group of 25 trainees were moving from welfare to work in the retail and hospitality industries. Their program covered topics as diverse as computer basics, building a business wardrobe on a limited budget and relating to



Photo courtesy of the New Image Foundation

WOMEN ARE COMMITTED TO BUILDING NEW FUTURES FOR THEMSELVES WITH THE HELP THE NEW IMAGE FOUNDATION

peers in the workplace. "We integrated many issues in the first 120-hour course and helped the women develop confidence that they could determine their future," says Cynthia. "We let them take time to envision themselves as professionals."

New Image has modified the program to reflect its experience and meet the changing needs of its clients. With CCHD funding, the Excel Core is a basic 72-hour course and other New Image programs focus on upgrading current employment and getting started in entrepreneurship. Potential trainees sign a document committing themselves to the program. "There's nothing we can do to change a person if they're not

continued on page 3

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of CCHD:

Anna had difficulty finding employment and thus relied on public assistance throughout her adult life on the island of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. She came to the **New Image Foundation** when she didn't have a good answer to her five-year-old child's question, "Why don't you go out to work like those people on the TV?" She completed the New Image program and applied for a hotel job. When she arrived for the interview, she was told that the position was filled. Looking around, she saw a maintenance garage and assured the interviewer she could do engine repair. Now, she's the supervisor at the garage and has put down a deposit on her own piece of property.

Without your support, people like Anna can get trapped in a cycle of poverty. Your ongoing generosity to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development helps individuals and entire communities break the cycle of poverty for a lifetime. They are able to take control of their lives and create more secure futures.

Speaking of the future, what are your summer plans? CCHD is taking its message on the road—literally. By the time you read this, twenty-three committed individuals will have begun a two-month bicycle tour across the United States. They are part of ***Brake the Cycle***, a poverty awareness and education event of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The riders, ranging in age from 19-73, will travel through 12 states and 34 Catholic dioceses in an effort to call attention to the increase in poverty in America. The riders started off in San Francisco on June 1 and will cross the country, stopping at parishes along the way, before they end on August 1 in Washington, D.C. We are very excited about this outreach. Read more about it on page four.

I am deeply appreciative of your ongoing support of CCHD's work. May the Lord bless you for your solidarity with our low-income sisters and brothers. Be assured of my grateful prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Robert J. Vitillo
Executive Director

WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed more than \$260 million to more than 4,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective and so that CCHD's investment will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between the poor and non-poor.

USCCB/CCHD COMMITTEE

Most Rev. George V. Murry, SJ, Chairman
Bishop of St. Thomas, VI

Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany

Most Rev. Dale J. Melczek
Bishop of Gary

Most Rev. Joseph A. Pepe
Bishop of Las Vegas

Most Rev. John H. Ricard, SSJ
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Most Rev. Terry J. Steib, SVD
Bishop of Memphis

Most Rev. George L. Thomas
Aux. Bishop of Seattle

CONSULTANTS

Rev. David E. Baldwin
Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Daniel Curtin
Washington, D.C.

Most Rev. Nicholas A. DiMarzio
Bishop of Camden

Sr. Annette M. McDermott, SSJ
Springfield, Mass.

Ms. Kerry Robinson
New Haven, Conn.

USCCB PUBLISHING



Printed on recycled paper.

CCHD HELPS WOMEN CREATE A NEW IMAGE continued from page 1

willing,” explains Cynthia. “In the initial screening, we do placement testing, but we also try to get an indication of whether the applicant can see herself making a change in her life.”

Excel Core is weighted heavily toward computer literacy, but significant time is devoted to career planning and development, social graces, communication skills, interviewing, customer service, peer mediation and the basics of entrepreneurship. This would include banking relationships, employer/employee issues, marketing and community involvement.

“The real measure of our success is that people have taken charge of their lives. The poor must be engaged in the solutions to their problems.”

—Cynthia Jerry

As the welfare rolls have been reduced, Cynthia says that New Image is seeing more interest in its career-based training programs, such as Hospitality Excellence and Retail Merchandising. “These are for people who are stuck in entry-level jobs or whose companies want them to take on more responsibilities,” she explains.

The Excel Plus program is an entrepreneurship training module for people who are committed to starting their own business. “We’re not teaching them the talent for the business; that’s their gift,” says Cynthia. “We’re teaching the disciplines to set up the business and be successful.”

Excel Plus covers the how-to’s of setting up a business, government compliance, writing a business plan, recruiting and training employees, cost analysis and marketing strategy. The program is given twice a year and participants attend evening classes for eight weeks or daytime classes for four weeks.

New Image trainees are offered job placement. The 74% placement rate and the high rate of job retention are models in the island community. “The real measure of our success is that people have taken charge of their lives,” says Cynthia. “The poor must be engaged in the solutions to their problems. At New Image, we’re always working toward self-sufficiency, but it can be a slow process.”

The process involves a policy board comprising Excel Core graduates and volunteers from other organizations, who meet every month to monitor the program and provide feedback. “They give us a true perspective

of the challenges our trainees face,” says Cynthia. “They found that the high cost of opening and maintaining a bank account here discouraged some of the students. By meeting with our partners in the business community, the policy board was able to effect a reduction in the minimum deposit and fees.”

New Image stays in contact with its graduates to offer support and additional training. “We follow up every four to six weeks to make sure they don’t fall through the cracks,” says New Image graduate and Administrative Assistant Connie Meyers.

Connie had a successful 22-year career as a travel agent before the bottom dropped out of that once-secure industry. “When I started, I was sure I would be booking people on the space shuttle before I retired,” she recalls. “When I lost my job, I thought my life had come to an end. I had never been unemployed since I was 16 years old and I had never had to look for a job. I was devastated.” Connie says, “For the first time in my life, I felt I could be a street person.”

Looking at her options, Connie realized she would have to change her profession. “I could book a trip around the world on a travel agency computer, but I couldn’t produce a decent letter in Microsoft Word,” she says. A newspaper ad led her to the Hospitality Excellence program at New Image. “What the class really did for me was to teach me that I do have marketable skills. It helped me get back my self-confidence and manage the anger I was holding in.”

Connie completed the hospitality and computer courses and was offered on-the-job training as the Administrative Assistant at New Image. “I’ve decided that I’m not starting at the bottom—I’m starting at the beginning,” she says. “New Image helped me realize that I can change at any time in my life and they’re preparing me for a better job in the future, if I choose.”

CCHD’s first grant to New Image supported its job training program and networking sessions for women-owned businesses. A recent grant is being used to track the progress of the trainees and better measure the impact of New Image’s programs. “It’s allowing us to develop a database for ourselves and eight cooperating local agencies to give us deeper insights into how we can best serve people who are ready to make a change in their lives,” explains Cynthia.

The New Image Foundation is a dynamic example of CCHD’s efforts to help women empower themselves and improve their economic situations.

CYCLISTS PUT THE BRAKES ON THE CYCLE OF POVERTY



On June 1, 2003, a team of 23 bicyclists left San Francisco, embarking upon a cross-country journey that will take them two months and nearly 4,000 miles. Later this summer, a smaller team of ten cyclists from St. Bridget parish will ride from their hometown of Manchester, Conn. to meet the cross-country team in Baltimore, Md., where together they will cycle into Washington, D.C. The goal of the Brake the Cycle tour is to raise awareness about poverty in the United States, to engage more Catholics in the Church's work to break the cycle of poverty, and to support the work of community-based, self-help efforts that address the root causes of poverty.

The cyclists are a mixed group of committed Catholics: men and women, lay people and religious, 19 to 73 years old. They will stop in parishes in 12 states and 34 dioceses and present interactive educational programs. At each stop, cyclists will encourage Catholics to *think about* poverty in the United States; *talk about* the Catholic Campaign for Human Development's response of supporting low-income people with their empowerment strategies to permanently break the cycle of poverty; and *take action* by building communities that

are sensitive to and inclusive of poor and low-income people.

Along the route, people will be asked to take the *Break the Cycle of Poverty Pledge* and to spread the word about poverty, its causes, and solutions.

The need for education about the expansiveness of poverty in this country is clear: most Americans believe that there are between one and five million people living in poverty in this country. Actually, nearly 33 million people live in poverty in the United States—including one out of every ten families and one out of every six children.

Parishes and dioceses across the country will be hosting the cyclists, participating in poverty education events, organizing solidarity rides, and working with the media to promote this education effort. Maybe the riders are coming through your town, or perhaps your diocese is hosting a solidarity event. Visit www.brakethecycle.org to find out. There you will find route and schedule information, rider profiles, and local event information. The website is updated regularly with daily diary entries and pictures of the people, places, and events of the day.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET INVOLVED!

- Meet the riders when they come to your area. Offer them fruit, energy bars, or sports drinks. If you are interested in supporting the riders, contact Jarda Hiatt-Booker at 202-541-3124.
- Participate in a local solidarity ride or education event and encourage your parish priest to do the same.
- Take the *Break the Cycle of Poverty Pledge* in person or online, and encourage your friends and family to do the same (visit www.brakethecycle.org and click on "Take Action" or order pledge cards by calling 202-541-3124). If you are on the cyclists' route, sign the pledge banner that they will present to the bishops of the United States.
- Pray for solutions to poverty.
- Ask your pastor to talk about poverty and CCHD in his homilies.
- Support the Church's collections for programs that address poverty, including the CCHD collection.
- Join a legislative advocacy group and urge elected officials to enact just social laws.
- Visit brakethecycle.org to find more ways to get involved.

INVEST IN PEOPLE HELPING THEMSELVES

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways. Our annual parish collection is the Sunday before Thanksgiving in most parishes. You can support the work of CCHD with a cash or check donation. You can also support CCHD with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer. Consider a lasting legacy to help people help themselves—remember CCHD in your estate planning.

For more information about CCHD, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365/mcampbell@uscgb.org.