

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

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Taking the Initiative

In Job Training

Tom Owens began his career with IBM. He subsequently was a top executive with XL Datacomp, a computer products firm. Along the way, he and Mary Owens started a family foundation. By the 1990s Owens gave full attention to the foundation and made training the underemployed its priority. His Cara Project (237 S. Desplaines St., Chicago, IL 60661; www.carachicago.org) soon moved into Old St. Patrick's in the West Loop. With rigorous sessions, on-going support and extensive business contacts through Old St. Pat's and Cara's networks, participants get steady jobs.

The Cara spirit quietly inspires the entire Old St. Pat's congregation. In 2011 its human concerns committee invited Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, author of *Barking to the Choir: the Power of Radical Kinship* (Simon & Schuster, 2017; \$26), to speak. Thereafter Old St. Pat's started a Kinship Movement (Vince Guider, OSP, 711 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60661; www.kinshipmovement.org) to foster encounters between its parishioners and residents of North Lawndale neighborhood.

Now the Kinship Movement has a North Lawndale Works project. It taps Old St. Pat's parishioners "to identify entry level jobs and provide financial assistance for women and men...who are looking for the dignity and stability that work provides."

Specifically, the Kinship Movement connects people from North Lawndale Employment Network (906 S. Homan Ave. Chicago, IL 60624; www.nlen.org) with Cara Project. Employment contacts in the following areas are needed: In food service, maintenance, product assembly, technical support and customer service. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 7/18/19)

Economic Mobility Corp (50 Broadway #1604, New York, NY 10004; www.economicmobilitycorp.org) evaluates job training programs. Two reports (26 pgs. and 58 pgs.) assess Project Quest (515 SW 24th St. #201, San Antonio, TX 78207; www.questsa.org).

Quest has "the largest, sustained earnings impacts ever found in a rigorous evaluation of a workforce development program," writes Mark Elliott of EMC.

How does Quest succeed? It emerged as a project of two community organizations affiliated with Industrial Areas Foundation (1106 Clayton Ln. #120W, Austin, TX 78723; www.westsouthwestiaf.org). With skillful discipline those organizations, starting in the

mid-1970s, formed extensive public relationships, including several with area businesses. In the early 1990s the IAF leaders decided to use their social capital on behalf of the underemployed. Job training should match the actual needs of known employers, the IAF leaders thought. Plus the trainees deserve sustained ancillary service, including financial planning.

Quest's employer-driven model of job training has been exported to other Texas communities, plus to Tucson and Monroe, LA. Recently, another IAF group, DuPage United (41 N. Park Blvd., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137; www.dupageunited.org), launched a Quest-like job training program.