



## Agency Happenings

### Making an Impact in a Columbus Neighborhood

**I**MPECT Community Action Agency has been, well, making an impact on the Weinland Park neighborhood outside of downtown Columbus with its workforce development initiative, Employment Plus Program (EPP), as part of a broader community revitalization project.

The Weinland Park area was originally built as a working class neighborhood for employees of several nearby factories. But when those factories closed and jobs left, the neighborhood began a decline that lasted for many years. The area is now seeing a resurgence thanks to the Weinland Park Collaborative (WPC), a group of 20 agencies



that is focusing on improving and sustaining the quality of life in the neighborhood through renovating homes and providing educational and employment opportunities to the 4,800 residents.

The JPMorgan Chase Foundation (Chase) is one of the principal funders of the WPC. Recognizing the importance of investing in programs that will help individuals and families achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency through well-paying and higher skilled jobs, Chase invested \$100,000 in IMPACT Community Action's EPP. The intent of the grant is to assist the chronically unemployed or underemployed who may require additional support with obtaining the necessary



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skills and training required to secure better paying jobs or positions that offer opportunities for advancement. The goal of the 12-month grant, which ends on December 31, is to recruit, enroll and train 50 program-eligible candidates from the Weinland Park community, maintain an 80 percent graduation rate from the five-week program, with 60 percent of participants finding and maintaining full-time employment for at least 90 days.

After nine months of the program, IMPACT has trained 37 participants, with 31 successfully completing the program and 24 of those graduates securing employment for 90 days and counting! IMPACT is well on its way to meeting or exceeding the goals of the project.

IMPACT's EPP assists participants with developing the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to find and maintain employment. It features a customized curriculum that leverages best practices from two nationally-recognized work-readiness programs: Equipped for the Future (EFF) and the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS) Literacy Link.



EFF was developed by the National Institute for Literacy and features 16 standards that define the core knowledge and skills adults need to carry out their roles as parents, citizens and workers more effectively. Similarly, PBS' Literacy Link reinforces core competencies through reading, math, employment skills and communication/writing training modules.

EPP is an intensive five-week program that models a traditional work week; Monday through Friday from 8:30

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a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Participants who meet attendance and performance standards receive a stipend of \$100 per week to help bridge small financial gaps while in training.



EPP graduates are paired with a job coach to assist them with their job placement and may earn an additional stipend of \$60 per week if they meet the performance standards for job searching.

Michael, a 55 year-old man who lost his warehousing job is just one successful graduate of the Weinland Park EPP program (read his story in our blog) who now has a full-time security guard position where he says, “I make a livable wage and have great hours!” Michael explained, “When I graduated from the Employment Plus Program, I felt so uplifted. I felt confident and my self-esteem improved... You will never know how good it feels to be able to pay my bills, provide food, clothing and shelter for my family, and to save money for the future... IMPACT is a part of me now and I will always recommend Community Action when others need help. They saved my life!”