

## **POVERTY TO PAYROLL**

### **Economic Justice for Women and Girls**

In search of economic justice for women and girls, especially those arriving at shelter, who have escaped from domestic violence and/or sexual assault, Hands of a Friend seeks to empower this population to become entrepreneurs of their financial futures.

### **Target Population, Strength Characteristics & Root Causes**

The population of domestic violence and/or sexual assault victims arriving daily to our shelter has shown to be either under educated, lacking employable skills or both. This does NOT mean that domestic violence or sexual assault victims in general are under educated or lacking employability. Traditionally women and children, who seek shelter long term in situations of abuse, do so because they have no other avenue available to them.

Many of these victims were not allowed to work outside of the home and did not or were not allowed to participate in the financial contributions or decisions in the relationships they fled. A great many of these women have no extended family available to them to either lend comfort, emotional support or be a source of empowerment for them. For some arriving to shelter, the history of abuse has been generational and they have known no other life from their own childhood, to their now own adult relationship.

Many who return to abusive relationships do so because they cannot support their financial survival independent of the abuser. In today's economy, it can often take two incomes to support one household. For the woman fleeing abuse with three small children in tow and without as much as a high school education, it is virtually impossible to meet the financial obligations to support a family of four on a minimum wage job. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, many women if they do not return to the abuser will become a victim of a life on government aid and poverty.

### **Indirectly Affected Population**

Without the tools of knowledge to ensure their own success in both escaping abuse and moving forward as an independent financial head of household, they leave open the door of opportunity to perpetuate the abusive relationship history with their own children's futures. Either directly, or indirectly this perpetual dependency on either their abuser, or living on government aid and poverty adds to the ever growing burden of the tax-payer to not only support their own households, but those of their neighbor and their neighbor's children and generations to come.

### **Shift in Behavior (produced change)**

Hands of a Friend seeks to change the education level and successful sustaining employability as head of household for domestic violence and/or sexual assault shelter residents. Through additional education offerings, residents will be afforded the opportunity to remove financial concerns from the recidivism rate of equation involved with domestic violence and/or sexual assault victims returning to the abusive relationship because they cannot support themselves or their children.

### **Strategy/Program Design**

Residents of shelter are offered opportunities at all levels of continued education. For some, that may begin with learning English as a second language, completing their GED and/or vocational courses.

Hands of a Friend has invited the professional and business community in the surrounding area to become involved in the continued education process of our shelter residents in our new program called "Poverty to Payroll." Twenty-four businesses and/or professionals were selected in the community for the program, based on their ability to lend their knowledge to a field of employment that would afford the shelter residents the opportunity to find employment or create business opportunities for themselves that would allow them the greatest earning capacity as head of household.

**Action used to cause shift of Behavior**

A large room in shelter has been converted to a 4 bay (soon to be 8) computer/education/training/media center. The classroom includes a beginning professional/business library complete with vocational information, grease boards, plasma TV, DVD player, LED projector and screen for power point presentations.

The professional and business partners will donate their time once a week to conduct instruction in the shelter classroom. Also, some of the business partners have agreed to include internship and part-time employment when possible. An on site paid instructor will offer additional computer instruction two days a week.

Field trips to visit on site employment/business opportunities will include, but not be limited to:

- Apollo College
- Apria Health
- Artistic Beauty College
- Brown Mackie College
- Chaparral College
- Green Valley Dental Laboratory
- Mariposa Community Health in Nogales
- Pima Community College
- Tucson Animal Shelter
- Tucson Board of Realtors
- Tucson Court House
- Tucson Sector Border Patrol Offices
- Wells Fargo Banking Institute of Tucson

Hands of a Friend shelter, Genesis House, is a transitional domestic violence and/or sexual assault shelter. A resident may reside in shelter two years with an additional six months with board approval; Thus allowing a resident to be at home in shelter for as long a period of time as thirty months. This length of stay will enable them to make maximum use of the educational and employment opportunities provided to them with the program "Poverty to Payroll." As an example, a resident entering in January could under normal circumstances complete her English language immersion course (when applicable), GED (when applicable) and a twelve-week course of our program, within the first six months of her arrival.

Should the resident, at the end of the six months and completion of the program opt to become a licensed \*Nail Technician, the course could be completed in 15, 40-hour weeks. A number of service clubs and organizations in the local area have agreed to offer scholarship funding to those qualified for some advanced education and vocational courses and licensing. (Course funding is available for but not

limited to: \*Nail Technician, Medical Assistant, Dental Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, and select others.)

Following completion of the \*Nail Technician course, the resident would have then been in shelter less than one year. Allowing additional time for the resident to secure employment in her chosen occupation, become employed and begin saving for her transition to her own residence outside of shelter would be accomplished within the remaining 12-18 month time period she would have available to her in shelter.

Research shows us that a licensed nail technician could be expected to make approximately \$25.00 per customer, achieving completion of 16 customers per day average would create an income on a five day work week of \$104,000.00 per year, before costs and taxes. This income would certainly allow a single mother with three children to live independently. This is achievable income for a qualified nail technician one year in the industry.

### **Methods of Outreach and/or Participant Recruitment**

To maximize the use of the classroom and the generosity of the professional and business community, non-resident victim/survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault in the local and surrounding communities are also being recruited (along with shelter residents) to attend the program, through outside agency advocates.

### **Number expected to reach**

The program is being delivered in 12-week sessions, with a class capacity of 16, four times a year the first year. The expectation is that we reach a minimum of 64 women and children, in this critical population within this first year.

### **Staffing and Resource Procurement/Utilization**

Staff will consist of the Program Manager, program coordinator, computer instructor, 24 professional and/or business management volunteer instructors, two volunteer administrators and four multi-purpose volunteers. Local businesses and or service clubs have donated some office supplies, business library additions and misc.

### **Second and Third Year Expectations**

The second and third year may see changes in course selections and introduction of new business partners and internships. As well as establishing a mentorship program. Based on the success rate, participant recruitment may branch out to include at risk high school girls.

### **Evaluation and Collection of Information**

Each participant signs a program agreement, which language includes post program 3 month, 9 month, 18 month and 36 month oral interview on progress achieved. Written exit reviews will be conducted at completion of course. Business instructors will also participate in written evaluation of the course and the success of the participants they employ as interns. The ultimate success determination will be the number of participants successfully employed and living free of an abusive relationship.

\*Nail Technician chosen for purpose of example career choice only.