

Volunteers Make Connections to Success Thrive



By: Amie Bossi

What began in 1998 with the dream of Kathy Lambert to break down the barriers holding women back from entering the workforce, namely a lack of interview-appropriate attire, has since grown into an organization called Connections to Success (CtS). Through its programs and services, CtS assists men and women on their journey to self-sufficiency. The organization works to fulfill its vision of "breaking the cycle of poverty, one family at a time," and is only made possible through the dedication of committed staff members and volunteers.

"We are a community-based organization and are purposely small-staffed. We rely on our volunteers," says CtS Co-Director, Kathy Lambert.

Volunteers fill roles ranging from the front-desk receptionist to classroom instructors and everything in between. "We have been truly blessed by the time, talent and treasure our volunteers have provided. We couldn't exist without their support."

Volunteers played an integral role in renovating the new office building

located at 1701 N. 2nd Street in St. Charles. Once a school, then an antique mall, the building needed some remodeling to fit the needs of the organization. Over 400 people worked to spackle, plaster, paint, rip up carpeting, clean, move, etc. in the new location. Many volunteers came from Calvary Church, which hosts services out of the building.

CtS' Dress for Success Midwest program relies on volunteers to operate successfully. They sort incoming donations of clothing and accessories, organize the boutiques, schedule clients and serve as Personal Shoppers to the women who have appointments to receive work attire. The clients love the attention that the Personal Shoppers provide. Mary M. stated, "They helped me to look professional and now I feel confident for my interview." Angela W. said, "They were so nice and really cared about helping me look my best."

CtS is very proud to have had Angie Barton as a volunteer for over seven years. She came in every week with a smile on her face and full of energy to sort and organize the incoming donations of clothing. Sadly, Angie passed away at the end of 2009 at the age of 92. She loved her volunteer role and often brought homemade treats for the staff and other volunteers. Her specialties were vanilla cream puffs

and Italian Christmas cookies. The Barton family said of Angie's experience, "Mom enjoyed working here and all the friends she made." We

Monday night at the St. Charles location features the Connect Group. Participants and community members come to share a meal, work on the computers, play games or even watch movies. One Monday night even featured a scavenger hunt through the neighborhood! Participants and community members form relationships during Monday night activities and the mentoring happens in a more relaxed environment.

Events are another opportunity for volunteers to assist CtS. In 2009, volunteers planned and implemented "Cooking with Connections," an event that raised money for the CtS Culinary Program. Friends of the organization also planned in-home fundraisers, such as clothing collections, jewelry parties, wine tastings and more. To host your own CtS mini-fundraiser, contact Amie at (636)940-8027, ext. 110 or email abossi@connectionstosuccess.org.

To become a CtS volunteer, attend an upcoming volunteer orientation. Call Charlotte at (636)940-8027, ext. 104 or email cwienski@connectionstosuccess.org for more information. The donation of your time, talents and treasures can mean the world to a participant.

After receiving a suit for a job interview, Rachel M. stated, "The world needs more people like you...more people who are willing to leave things a little better than they found them, to reach out with compassion. People who are willing to put all selfishness aside to do the good, right and kind thing just because they know it will make a difference someday to someone. So what I'm saying is Thank You!"

You could make all the difference in the life of a CtS participant!



appreciate all of her hard work. She has left a heart print on all the lives she touched.

Other volunteers share the same dedication and passion that Angie demonstrated. The Computer Lab is monitored weekly with the help of volunteers. They assist participants with setting up email accounts, learning computer basics and doing job searches. They even teach the computer courses.

Volunteers also serve as mentors for the program participants. Every



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