

CONNECTS

CASEY

SUMMER 2005
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: KIDS COUNT Message Highlights Barriers to Employment; Report Calls Attention to Plight of Children Living on the Border; Resource Corner; INSITES



JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ

KIDS COUNT MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Millions of adults in the United States struggle daily to find permanent employment and support their families. In fact, according to the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* released recently by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, more than 4 million children live in households where the parent hasn't worked in the past year.

“The nearly 4 million children living in low-income households where neither their parent(s) nor any other adult in the household worked at all in the past year is an alarming

increase of more than 1 million children since 2000,” says Douglas W. Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The 16th annual *Data Book* shows a half million more children living in poverty in 2003 than in 2000, for

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Jose Morales, center, is working to overcome employment barriers related to an 11-month prison sentence with the help of the Center for Employment Opportunities in New York City.

REPORT CALLS ATTENTION TO PLIGHT OF CHILDREN LIVING ON THE BORDER

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.

In early 2005, the Las Cruces High School Community Health Center in New Mexico was at risk of being shut down—and many in the community didn't even know it. The decision to release the first-ever *Border KIDS COUNT* report in that setting was timed to make sure decision-makers, community leaders, and the broader public not only knew about the possible closure, but also understood why a community clinic mattered for family health outcomes. Before the event had concluded, the superintendent of schools had promised to try to reshuffle his budget to find \$50,000 to help keep the center open. In the end, the center received its funding and is set to reopen in the fall.

The *Border KIDS COUNT* report includes up-to-date data on indicators of child well-being such as health, parental employment, and education for the 1.8 million children living along the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. This project is an important adjunct to the Foundation's annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which provides comprehensive state-level data on child well-being and includes state-by-state rankings. By zeroing in on children living on the border, this new report sheds light on problems and issues that may be concentrated in these uniquely bilingual and multicultural regions of the country.

The actions taken to save the endangered Las Cruces health clinic—one of four in the border community targeting teen suicide, substance abuse, and other issues—exemplify how partnering organizations in the border region are already using *Border KIDS COUNT* data to advocate for better policies for children. New Mexico Voices for Children, which hosted the event at the school, seized the opportunity to highlight

the lack of affordable, accessible health care for children in the area. Besides the school superintendent, the mayor, state health officials, and others who had a stake in the center's future were also present.

“The event helped everyone refocus on supporting the existing sites with adequate and continued funding. It helped us make sure that everyone knew there was a problem and a solution,” said Howard Spiegelman, executive director of the New Mexico Assembly on School-Based Health Care.

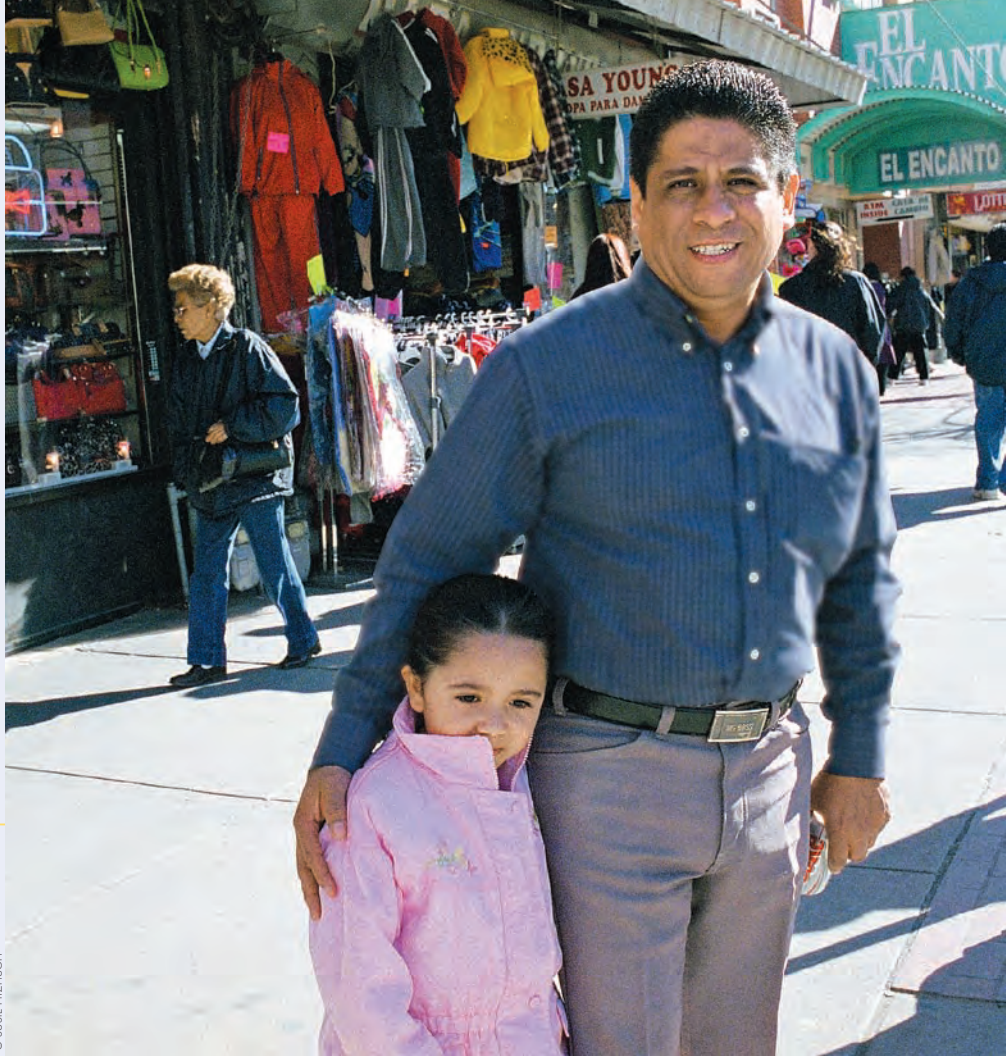
The other border states also have used the data to call attention to kids and families living in poverty along the Southwest border. At a standing-room only town hall meeting at the Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe in El Paso, Texas, County Judge Dolores Briones said, “The release of the *Border KIDS COUNT* feels like a birthday.” A native of El Paso and former Casey Fellow, Judge Briones has spent over 20 years “hounding people about the border,” as she puts it. “I had to pound and pound on them that there is a place called La Frontera. It represents the fringe on both sides and both sides offend and violate our families by trying to keep them on the fringe.”



A coalition of Casey staff members, KIDS COUNT grantees, and other child and family advocates familiar with border issues began work on this project by exploring with local communities how to define the border region, not just in geographical terms.

“These data help direct our efforts based on a more accurate representation of assets as well as needs,” said Bob Stark, executive director of the New Mexico Community Foundation. “Getting a more accurate picture allows us to mobilize the resources around what matters most.” *Border KIDS COUNT* materials are available online at www.kidscount.org, in print, and on CD-ROM by request.

Bottom left, two children at El Jardin de los Niños, a child care center in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Right, a father and daughter walking by a marketplace in El Paso, Texas, not far from the Mexico border.



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KIDS COUNT MESSAGE

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a total of nearly 13 million. The study also concludes that five out of ten child well-being indicators have worsened since 2000. In addition to the rise in child poverty, there was an increase in the percentage of low-birthweight babies between 2000 and 2002; an increase in infant mortality for the first time in 40 years, having reached an all-time low in 2001; and a slight rise in the teen death rate between 2000 and 2002.

A sluggish economy may be partially responsible for the large number of households where no parent worked in the past year. But the *KIDS COUNT* essay, entitled “Helping Our Most Vulnerable Families Overcome Barriers to Work and Achieve Financial Success,” digs deeper and focuses on four particularly daunting obstacles: domestic violence, substance abuse, prior incarceration, and depression.

“Depression makes finding a job difficult for a single mother but not impossible,” says Nelson. “But if that mother also has an abusive partner or suffers from substance abuse, she’s highly unlikely to get a job. Should she have a history of incarceration, her chances are slimmer still.”

Serious addiction to drugs and/or alcohol is one of the most significant barriers to employment. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than 19 million adults abused or were dependent on alcohol or illicit drugs in 2003. While 77 percent worked full or part time, substance abuse often sets up a vicious cycle of termination, leading to further abuse, leading to deeper levels of addiction and decreased chances of reemployment. Drug screening and substance-abuse-related criminal records also lock abusers out of many service sector jobs that would otherwise be available to them.

Research shows that domestic violence is another serious barrier for many women trying to secure a permanent place

in the workforce. One federal study found that up to 50 percent of women who have experienced domestic violence have lost a job, at least in part because of their domestic violence experience. Several studies have shown that from 35 percent to 56 percent of battered women who are employed have been physically harassed on the job by their partner. Other studies show that abusive male partners often oppose a female partner's efforts to go to work and stay employed. A Massachusetts study found that compared to women who did not have an abusive partner, abused women were ten times more likely to have a current or former partner who objected to their going to school or work.

Formerly incarcerated parents face even more intractable barriers to employment. A whole host of state and federal laws preclude or prohibit parents with criminal records from getting the support available to other struggling families. For example, felony convictions and many lesser drug-related offenses may preclude a parent from receiving welfare benefits, food stamps, subsidized housing, or tuition assistance. State laws in many jurisdictions prevent those with criminal records from working in a variety of industries, such as child care, health care, finance, and security. And the Center for the Study of Urban Poverty found that only 40 percent of employers would even consider hiring someone who had been incarcerated.

depression to work 20 hours per week. Conversely, a national evaluation of welfare-to-work programs in 2001 showed that welfare recipients who did not suffer from depression had higher earnings than recipients who did.

The *KIDS COUNT* essay emphasizes that the cumulative effect of all four barriers is what makes a challenging employment situation nearly impossible for many families and says addressing these barriers will require a multifaceted approach. Service providers and systems need to do a much better job of screening people for multiple barriers and providing appropriate services, for example.

The Casey Foundation advocates a call to action that includes improved screening and assessment of low-income adults to uncover hidden barriers, improved collection and analysis of data on adults with serious barriers to employment, increased emphasis on case management support and services that address multiple employment barriers concurrently, and increased support for the formerly incarcerated who are making efforts to transition back into the community.

“Too many parents want to work their way out of poverty, but are unable to do so,” concludes Nelson. “The futures of too many kids, as a result, are severely compromised. As a nation

As a **NATION** we can and must do a better job in helping tear down the most formidable **BARRIERS** and help the parents of nearly 4 million kids connect to a job, become **SELF-SUFFICIENT**, and find a path out of poverty.

While the connection between depression and unemployment is less obvious, mental health researchers have consistently found that those in low-income homes are almost twice as likely to suffer depression as those in more affluent households. A national evaluation of the Early Head Start Program found that 48 percent of low-income women who were pregnant or had infant children were depressed, along with a third of women with toddlers.

In Michigan, current and former welfare recipients who suffered from depression were significantly less likely than those without

we can and must do a better job in helping tear down the most formidable barriers and help the parents of nearly 4 million kids connect to a job, become self-sufficient, and find a path out of poverty.”

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* with state-by-state rankings, supplemental data, and the essay, “Helping Our Most Vulnerable Families Overcome Barriers to Work and Achieve Financial Success,” can be ordered by calling 410-223-2890 or visiting www.kidscount.org.

RESOURCE CORNER

All publications listed below can be ordered from the Foundation's website (www.aecf.org), or by calling our publications voice line at 410-223-2890, unless otherwise noted.

• THE ROAD TO GOOD EMPLOYMENT RETENTION: THREE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS FROM THE JOBS INITIATIVE—

This report, by David Jason Fischer at the Center for an Urban Future, examines programs in two cities involved in the Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative that have succeeded in keeping low-skilled workers in good jobs for more than a year. Drawing on case studies of two programs in Seattle and one in St. Louis, the author discusses the strengths of various approaches and what makes for a successful program. Dedicated to helping young, low-income workers find and keep jobs with career ladders and family-supporting pay potential, the Jobs Initiative has supported more than 40 projects that together have placed more than 9,500 participants in jobs, with an overall 12-month retention rate of more than 54 percent.

• FES LOCAL ACTION HANDBOOK FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS TEAMS—

This new policy handbook focuses on improving results for families by strengthening the structures that lead to family economic success. The handbook follows the three strands of Family Economic Success—workforce development, family economic supports, and community investment—and identifies “top-tier” policy action agendas within those strands common to many *Making Connections* communities. The authors, Ann Woodward, vice president for Community Supportive Services at Lakefront Supportive Housing in Chicago; Amanda M. Fernandez, an economic advisor with the Agency for International

Development; and Janet E. Raffel of J.E. Raffel & Associates, highlight ideas and examples of policy and regulatory actions that can be promoted by residents and implemented locally. The handbook also cites useful websites and organizations for more information.

• MANY THINGS WE NEED CAN WAIT—THE CHILD CANNOT: BALTIMORE'S FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SCHOOL READINESS—

Since its launch in September 2003, the Baltimore Leadership in Action Program has worked to accelerate the city's efforts to ensure that all Baltimore City children enter school ready to succeed. This March 2005 report, supported by the Casey Foundation, spells out Baltimore's goals and five-year action plan for making measurable gains in the school readiness of the city's youngest children, from birth to age five. An average of 6,500 children will enter kindergarten in Baltimore City public schools each year over the next five years. Over that time, the plan aims to increase to 52 percent or better the percentage of kindergartners entering school with good physical and mental health, curiosity, enthusiasm, a willingness to get along with others, the necessary cognitive skills, and a hunger to learn. Data released in April show that school readiness in Baltimore has already increased 13 percentage points from 27 percent in 2004 to 40 percent.

• **PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD—** One in a series of resource guides produced by the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC), this publication details the core principles and elements of effective programs to help provide fathers in disconnected neighborhoods with the knowledge, support, and skills they need to fulfill their parental responsibilities.

The guide discusses strengths, challenges, and missing pieces in the field of responsible fatherhood and lists resources for additional support. This guide is designed particularly to help sites involved in the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative. Copies of *Promoting Responsible Fatherhood* are available to order or download from the TARC website (www.aecf.org/tarc).

• FOUNDER TRANSITIONS: CREATING GOOD ENDINGS AND NEW BEGINNINGS—

Part of a new monograph series by the Casey Foundation on what happens when founders or long-term executives of non-profit organizations leave, this report offers clear advice for executives and their boards in confronting the complex challenges these transitions present.

• INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS: THE POWER IN THE MIDDLE—

This monograph from the same series explores the benefits and basics of using an interim executive director in a leadership transition. It discusses issues nonprofits should consider when weighing the use of an interim director and provides case studies illustrating how this specially trained leader can ease difficult transitions.

• UP NEXT: GENERATION CHANGE AND THE LEADERSHIP OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS—

This monograph is based on two studies by the Building Movement Project examining differences and similarities in how Baby Boom and Generation X leaders view leadership, transitions, and their work in nonprofit organizations. The report delivers a series of recommendations on how a variety of key players can improve the hand-off from this generation of leaders to the next.

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RESOURCE CORNER

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• **ENGAGING RESOURCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**— Ideal for *Making Connections* sites and other cities looking to build momentum in the trend toward campus-community collaboration to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, *Engaging Resources in Higher Education* outlines the reasons for, and benefits of, investing in community/higher education partnerships. This guide, produced by the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center, addresses the challenges, barriers, questions, and multiple approaches that come into play in designing effective partnerships between higher education institutions and the communities around them. *Engaging Resources* is available to order or download from the TARC website (www.aecf.org/tarc).



ROBERT MAASS FOR CASEY FAMILY SERVICES

CELEBRATING FOSTER PARENTS

From left, Clifton Below and Cindy Obika, both foster parents, and Shameika Moncrief of the Bridgeport Division of Casey Family Services enjoy a workshop on the performing arts and social skills at Casey's 2005 Foster Parent Conference in Boston last spring. The conference, "Children, Families, Communities: Connections Count for a Lifetime," drew more than 500 attendees and honored longtime foster parents. May was National Foster Care Month.

KEEPING GOOD WORK GOING

At a meeting in Chicago in June, the Casey Foundation brought together organizations recognized in the FAMILIES COUNT National Honors Program since 2000. Bethel New Life, a Chicago faith-based organization and 2002 honoree, co-hosted the meeting, which focused on how to sustain exemplary work to strengthen families and neighborhoods. From left, Reverend Maxine Washington, pastor of the Bethel Lutheran Church, and Marcia Turner, director of external relations for Bethel New Life, at a reception for the FAMILIES COUNT honorees and Chicago-area Casey grantees at the Garfield Park Conservatory.



BEN SUSSMAN

INSITES

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PROGRAMS OPEN DOORS TO EMPLOYMENT WHILE ALLEVIATING OBSTACLES

The well-being of too many American children is in jeopardy because of the persistent unemployment of their parents, as this year's *KIDS COUNT Data Book* illustrates. Over 4 million children live in households where no parent or adult has worked in the past year—a troubling increase of over 1 million children since 2000.

The *Data Book* examines four particularly challenging barriers that can hinder parents from finding or keeping jobs—substance abuse, prior incarceration, domestic violence, and depression. But it offers hope by highlighting programs that use a multifaceted approach to chip away at these obstacles, including screening people to identify barriers, providing them with temporary part-time employment, and offering supportive services like skills training, educational opportunities, counseling, and supportive case management.

Here are just a few examples of programs that have helped parents find employment and support their families.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

For years, Barbara Wolfe was a married, stay-at-home mother. Then her husband left. Suddenly she was a single mom on welfare, struggling to find a job despite a long history of substance abuse and a short history of employment.



Barbara Wolfe, left, worked hard to overcome job hurdles with help from her caseworker, Heather Peterson, of the Community Jobs program in Washington State. The program made her feel "like there was hope for me," Wolfe says.

Required to job hunt while receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Wolfe couldn't figure out how to use the computers everyone else used to search. She didn't know how to write a resume. And she was trying to kick her drug and alcohol addiction.

"I was just failing and I was going to get penalized because of my inability to keep up," says Wolfe, 45, who lives in eastern Washington State and has four children ages 13, 15, 16, and 18. "I was going to outpatient treatment also."

What made the difference was Community Jobs, a transitional employment program offered to "hard to employ" TANF recipients who haven't found work through the welfare office. They spend 20 hours a week in on-the-job training at a nonprofit worksite, earning \$7.35 an hour and gaining work skills. This frees up 20 hours a week to work intensively with a caseworker to remove other employment barriers via education and training, plus search for a permanent job.

"They helped me do everything and find everything," notes Wolfe. At Community Jobs, she first attended a 30-day motivational workshop, learning job readiness skills ranging from proper hygiene to filling out a job application. "They put me in a classroom with other women like me. I realized I wasn't alone, and I supported the other gals too," says Wolfe. When she heard other women talk about finding jobs, "I felt like there was hope for me."

The program found her a job stocking shelves at a Goodwill retail store. Each week, a job retention specialist dropped by to make sure the arrangement was working for both Wolfe and her employer.

After a drug and alcohol assessment, Wolfe also was placed in an outpatient program. And her caseworker, Heather Peterson, helped boost her self-confidence by working to improve her appearance, which had suffered from years of addiction. Peterson got Wolfe vouchers to pay for shampoo and makeup and helped her get work-world clothing.

Wolfe also got dentures. Employers "don't want somebody with their teeth all rotten in front," Wolfe says. "Now I have new teeth, so that's not a factor anymore."

A part-time work schedule was a key to Wolfe's success. "She couldn't work 40 hours a week and try to go to treatment and get her teeth pulled," says Peterson. "She wasn't just shoved into a 40-hour-a-week job. She would have failed."

After completing on-the-job training, Wolfe was hired to work 30 hours a week at the Goodwill store. She's almost

completed outpatient treatment and continues to attend a 12-step program. She hasn't used drugs or alcohol for over nine months. She also obtained a driver's license and has overcome most of her medical and mental health issues. "She's doing really well," says Peterson.

Wolfe hopes to soon earn more money. "We're struggling," she says. "But I'm supporting myself. I'm not collecting a dollar from welfare, and that is really great. It's an accomplishment. The future is open for me now. To just have a job and start being a productive part of society instantly made me feel so much better, and that shows in how I raise my children," she says. "It makes me a different, a more positive, parent."

SUPPORT FOR FORMER PRISONERS



Jose Morales, left, pictured with his mother, Flora Diaz, and son, Shaquel Morales, got help getting a job and becoming a good role model for his son through the Center for Employment Opportunities' Responsible Fatherhood Program.

After Jose Morales completed an 11-month prison sentence last year, he was determined to find an honest job that would enable him to help support his young son. But with little work experience and a criminal record, he needed a leg up.

He got it from the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), a New York City nonprofit that helps ex-prisoners prepare for and find a job by providing immediate temporary work and income, plus the skills training and

placement help needed to land a better-paying, more permanent job.

“It was very helpful,” says Morales, 26, of the Bronx in New York City, who works two jobs, including as a custodian—a job that could become full time. “Without that steppingstone, I’d have still been stuck. And I needed CEO to keep going.”

Morales, who has a high school diploma, was required to participate in CEO’s employment program after leaving an upstate New York boot camp for low-level drug offenders. He chose to participate in CEO’s Responsible Fatherhood Program, an optional class covering parenting, nutrition, finances, court advocacy, and values.

“It gave me a lot of good positive insights as far as dealing with my son,” says Morales, whose 10-year-old son lives nearby with his grandmother. “You can’t get angry and frustrated or give up on them. You can’t let them see your bad side, even when things aren’t going too good.”

He’s really **WORKING** toward success. His **MOTIVATION** came from his child. He’s very into **HIS SON**.

People who have been incarcerated face “pretty steep barriers” to employment and are especially fragile just after release, says Mindy Tarlow, CEO’s chief executive officer. Many have little or no work history and face other obstacles such as substance abuse issues, limited education, and a lack of positive support in the community, Tarlow says.

Their ability to work is also complicated by requirements to visit their parole officer or other obligations such as substance abuse treatment. Then there’s the sheer unsettling challenge of reentering their community.

CEO works to make ex-prisoners job ready, providing them with subsidized work so they’re more experienced and marketable and teaching “soft skills” such as how to interact with coworkers.

The first week, ex-prisoners attend a job readiness class where they learn how to explain their conviction to a prospective employer, how to get the documents required to work legitimately, and how to create a resume. Then they work four days a week on a work crew overseen by a CEO site supervisor.

Once a week, they meet with a CEO job coach and a job developer who work to improve job readiness and serve as intermediaries between an ex-prisoner and a prospective employer. CEO also provides post-employment follow-up services.

After working on a CEO temporary maintenance crew at the Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, Morales got a full-time \$6-an-hour job through CEO as a messenger for a courier service. Six months later, he also started work as a part-time custodian at Medgar Evers for \$11.85 an hour—a job he hopes will become full time in the fall, with union membership, full benefits, and a pension plan. In the meantime, he has landed an \$8-an-hour full-time messenger job with Trump Model Management.

“He’s really working toward success,” says Gilbert Rodriguez, Morales’s counselor at CEO. “His motivation came from his child. He’s very into his son.”

Going straight also sets a good example for his son, who he sees most weekends. “I’m trying to see him grow up and make sure he grows up right,” says Morales.

ASSISTANCE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

When Kari Tyler-Tucker married an older man at age 17, she planned “to have children and let him take care of me.” She had two sons, but the rest of the plan collapsed. She ended up in an abusive situation.

“I could not take it anymore, and I wanted more for my children,” says Tyler-Tucker. “If they continued to watch this, they would repeat the same situation. So I had to run away.”

Fleeing her hometown of Pittsburgh with her two young sons, Tyler-Tucker rode a bus to Atlanta—a city of strangers where she suddenly had to support her family. “It was hard to find a job because I didn’t know anyone to keep my children. I didn’t know the area or have a car or know how to get around,” she says.

Tyler-Tucker found low-paying jobs selling toys at a department store, cleaning airplanes, and then working as a bartender and waitress at adult entertainment clubs. But she felt increasingly uncomfortable working at the clubs. “I finally decided to just go and apply for assistance,” says Tyler-Tucker.

After 30 months of receiving TANF, Tyler-Tucker was eligible to enroll in GoodWorks, Georgia’s voluntary program offering temporary jobs and intensive support services to people nearing the 48-month benefits limit. Participants work intensively with an employment specialist to overcome job barriers identified after a thorough assessment. They are assigned a temporary job for up to six months, overseen by a job coach and worksite supervisor. Then they get help finding a permanent job and receive follow-up services.

“I was at my wit’s end. I just needed some help,” says Tyler-Tucker. “The violence was truly at an end. But now I had to have a stable, respectable job for me and my children. I was depressed and very, very alone.”

With help from GoodWorks employment specialist Deanna Stinson, she worked to remove employment barriers including low self-esteem and a criminal record resulting from her domestic violence struggle and from relationships formed at the adult clubs. She joined a domestic violence support group. She got her criminal record expunged.

Domestic violence, with its often intense psychological control, becomes an employment barrier by sapping a person’s self-confidence and autonomy, says Stinson. “You’re actually just a puppet. You’re not making your own decisions or doing what is important for you,” she says.

Tyler-Tucker was assigned to work temporarily as a data-entry clerk at the Georgia Department of Labor. “That was fabulous for me,” she says. “It was an eye opener—that I was worth more than the jobs I had been working. It gave me motivation to do even more.”

In May 2004, she was offered a position working for the GoodWorks program provider that had helped her. She has since been promoted, earning \$26,000 a year working 40 hours a week as a community resources coordinator and job coach.

“We’d gotten a good look at her performance, dependability, and eagerness to work,” says Jayne Stinson (Deanna Stinson’s mother) of J. Stinson and Associates, an Atlanta occupational skills training firm. “She’s just an outstanding young lady who needed a chance.”



In her job with a GoodWorks program provider, Kari Tyler-Tucker enjoys helping women who face the same employment obstacles she once confronted. “I truly, truly love it because this is where I started,” she says.

She’s just an OUTSTANDING
young lady who NEEDED
A CHANCE.

On the job, Tyler-Tucker enjoys sharing her hard-won knowledge. “I truly, truly love it because this is where I started,” she says. “It’s rewarding when I see a young lady coming in and I see myself in her and then a year later I see her employed. That’s my way to give back.”

Tyler-Tucker has also helped women who’ve experienced domestic violence. “Because I went through it myself, I’m able to identify signs with the young ladies we work with,” she says.

Today, at age 33, Tyler-Tucker’s relationship with her ex-husband has improved. She’s remarried and expecting another boy. Her sons, ages 12 and 14, are doing well. “They’re a little extraordinary,” Tyler-Tucker says. “My children understand. They know where we came from and that we didn’t always have this or that. They’re very giving.”