

Remaking our Resources

W O R K F O R C E , I N C / R E C Y C L E F O R C E , L L C

MAURER: Workforce Inc. recycles people

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- IBJ Article
- Director of Sales: Ed Stites
- Sallie Lyon's Saving Grace
- Girls Scouts go Green!

Now that football season is over for most central Indiana fans and the adoration of No. 18 has temporarily abated, I suggest we turn our attention to a real hero, Gregg Keesling, CEO of Workforce Inc., an organization that populates practically its entire work force with ex-offenders.



COMMENTARY

Mickey Maurer

Workforce Inc. is a social enterprise business. A social enterprise business is one that not only strives to make a profit, but has a social purpose. Goodwill Industries is another example. (I have often thought what a wonderful idea it would be if every corporation adopted a social enterprise goal as part of its mission.)

Workforce Inc. recycles electronic waste. On a typical day, a pleasant and polite army of modern-day miners using drills, pliers and wrenches deconstructs electronics into their basic components. These components are sold to metal processors who remake the materials into new products. Established more than seven years ago with only two employees, Workforce Inc. has grown to an operation grossing nearly \$2 million a year with a payroll of 50 employees. They have processed in excess of 10 million pounds of TVs, computers, monitors and the like.

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Employment is the foundation for successful re-entry. Most ex-offenders have no work history and, left to their own devices, will take the easy path and do what they are proficient at—committing crimes. Workforce Inc. addresses that problem. Since its inception, Workforce Inc. has employed more than 380 formerly incarcerated individuals. The recidivism rate for these individuals has been tracked at 15 percent, a dramatic improvement over the national norm of more than 60 percent. Workforce Inc. recycles human beings. It retains its employees only six months, during which time they are provided counseling, training and encouragement. It is a haven where knowledge, self-respect and confi-

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Maurer, continued from front page

dence are fostered. Workers who have completed their transitional jobs at Keesling's company have moved into positions in construction and labor unions. Some have become managers for local commercial and recycling businesses, and some work for human service agencies that assist ex-offenders and low-income residents.

In an ironic twist, Workforce Inc. is in the old RCA plant, the one that made television sets. Now, like salmon swimming upstream to spawn, the old TVs come back to the RCA plant to die. But out of the pile of metals harvested from discarded electronic devices, arising like the phoenix, are a host of redeemed lives.

Shawn Hendricks (introduced to you in my June 4, 2007, column) and I have been working through a number of barriers related to his re-entry experience. In an effort to assist Shawn with these challenges, I investigated city and state government and non-government agencies, including faith-based institutions. I concluded there was little interest in placing ex-offenders who have served time for violent crimes—until I met Gregg Keesling. Keesling is a battler, and battle he has. His innovative concepts have, at times, created conflicts with prosecutors, judges, parole and probation officers and other entities dealing with a seemingly broken system.

The reincarceration of hundreds of thousands of felons each year who have served their time has become a recognized policy issue for national, state and local governments. In Indiana, Gov. Daniels is investigating proposals and ideas. I suggest the creation of an adequately funded state government organization in charge of recidivism.

As part of its mission, it should use Workforce Inc. as a template to establish like enterprises throughout the state. It should also provide financial incentives to employers that reconnect ex-offenders to the world of work and assistance to employers that successfully out-place those employees. Recidivism is a heartbreaking and expensive problem that affects law enforcement, prison administration, social service agencies and much more. Solving this dilemma will not only help society, but will also save the souls of our fellow men. Salute with me a person who is doing just that, Gregg Keesling. •

Maurer is a shareholder in IBJ Corp., which owns Indianapolis Business Journal. His column appears every other week. To comment on this column, send e-mail to mmaurer@ibj.com.

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Director of Sales; Ed Stites



WorkForce, Inc. is proud to introduce the newest addition to our staff, Edward Stites.

Ed Stites joined RecycleForce in February of 2011. He hit the ground running with many project ideas and new clients in the works. With his passion for social justice and ecological living, RecycleForce is a great place to use his talents. As the Director of Sales, he works to set up new collection events, pickups of recyclable material, and expand the visibility and scope of Workforce and RecycleForce in Indiana.

He hopes to utilize this workforce to develop the capability to “recycle” houses, to reuse the building materials in ways that are profitable and environmentally beneficial. His personal waste minimization plan includes recycling or composting everything that he possibly can, including taking his lunch scraps and coffee grounds home for the garden compost. He is practicing the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle triangle in his everyday life.

Ed is the driving force behind many local projects and believes in doing good to make his world a better place. On the first and third Saturday of each month, he hosts and cooks for the Pay What You Can (PWYC) Dinner. Along with dedicated volunteers he seeks to grow community through food. He invites everyone to invite him when he shares the hospitality regardless of someone’s ability to pay. Diverse people socialize and enjoy the restaurant quality meal and can pay as much or as little as they want or can. This provides the dignity that he saw missing in some homeless food programs prior to beginning Pay What You Can nearly two years ago.

Slow Food Indy is another way that he works to make stronger communities by helping to provide a basic necessity – good food in a sustainable way. His network of friends that work in other organizations throughout the city act as resources for information and skills to improve Indianapolis.

A decorative blue ribbon graphic with a white outline, featuring loops and a star-like end, positioned at the top left of the page.

Sallie Lyon

Article by; Angela Wheatley

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Sallie Lyon rarely drank alcohol, and only tried marijuana on a few occasions, but never cared for it. She believed that she would never become addicted to drugs because she was immune to their effects, but while at a party one day she decided to try crack cocaine, a decision that changed her both physically and emotionally.

The drug claimed her life that day, and held it for 12 years. Soon she became obsessed with the substance, as many addicts often do, and was only ever thinking about the next score. She began a life of prostitution to pay for her habit, even resorting to theft. She became distant from her family, and soon became hated by them as well. The Sallie they knew was gone, and in its place was a 70 pound woman they did not recognize. Her physical appearance changed dramatically, the drug aging her beyond her years, and had altered her personality as well. She became agitated and even aggressive; all she knew and cared for was her drugs.

12 years and 10 crimes later; Sallie decided to get clean, but without any support she failed miserably. She was arrested for public intoxication and sentenced to 9 months of Liberty Hall, an Indianapolis based work release center for women.

“It was that relapse that was my saving grace, because it brought me to WorkForce, Inc.”

It was through Liberty Hall’s director, Barbara Overton, that she was referred to WorkForce, Inc. This was to be her first legitimate job in more than 10 years. As with all clients, Ms. Lyon went through the normal job readiness training and various certification courses offered through WFI. It was during those 6 months that everything about her began to change.

“I lived by the street for so long, I thought I would die by it too, but now I know there is a better way.”

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Sallie Lyon continued



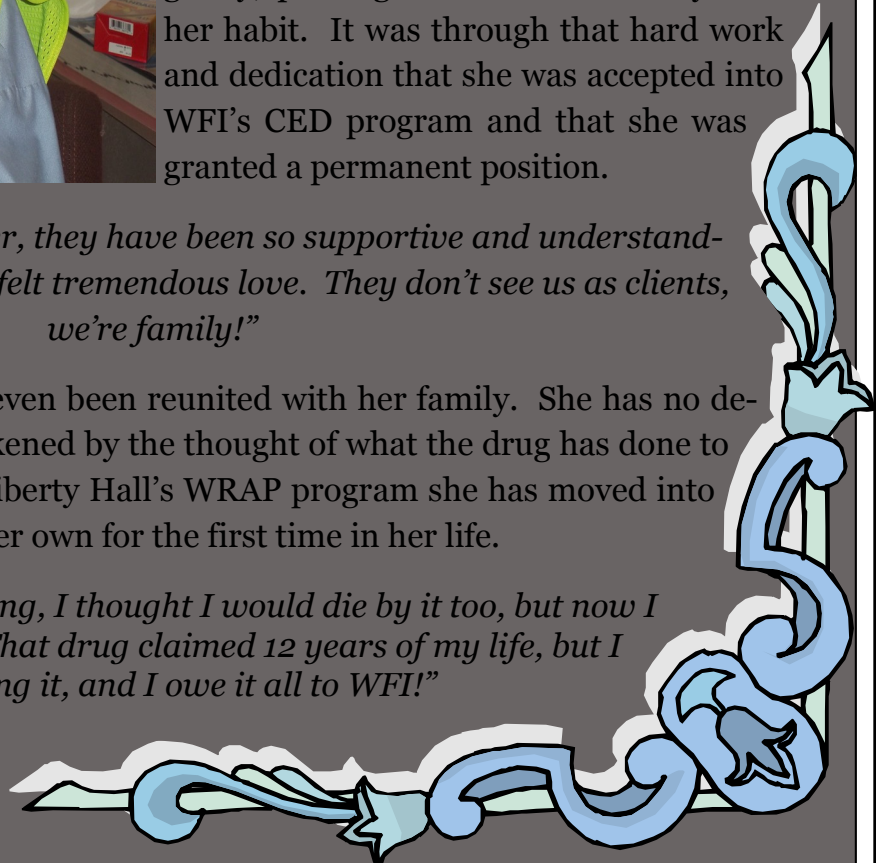
“After just 3 weeks of working at WFI, I decided to try crack again. I had the pipe in one hand, a lighter in the other, but I just couldn’t do it. I couldn’t disappoint all those people that believed in me. I will never allow a drug to control my life again!”

Sallie’s outlook on life began to change after that day. She worked hard and diligently, proving that she could truly kick her habit. It was through that hard work and dedication that she was accepted into WFI’s CED program and that she was granted a permanent position.

“WFI has helped me stay sober, they have been so supportive and understanding, and through them I have felt tremendous love. They don’t see us as clients, we’re family!”

Sallie is sober now, and has even been reunited with her family. She has no desire to relapse again, and is sickened by the thought of what the drug has done to her. Having graduated from Liberty Hall’s WRAP program she has moved into her own apartment, living on her own for the first time in her life.

“I lived by the street for so long, I thought I would die by it too, but now I know there is a better way. That drug claimed 12 years of my life, but I am slowly regaining it, and I owe it all to WFI!”





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**Work, Responsibility, Reward
Remaking our Resources**

March 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Orchard Girl Scout troop shows its true color—Green!

Indianapolis, IN – Indianapolis Girl Scout Junior Troop 1292 has big plans to celebrate the anniversary of the first American Girl Scout meeting, which took place on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia. On Saturday, March 12, 22 fifth-grade Girl Scouts from The Orchard School in Indianapolis will host a city-wide e-Waste Recycling Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the school's parking lot at 615 W. 64th Street in Indianapolis. The girls will collect old computers and other household electronics, which will be dismantled and sold for scrap by a local nonprofit, Workforce, Inc. The troop will also sell Girl Scout cookies throughout the day to help fund this service project and other Girl Scout activities.

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