

# The Atlanta Enterprise Center

Providing Employment Opportunities to Atlanta's Homeless since 1982



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## The Enterprise Update

### AEC Partners with the Gateway 24/7 Homeless Service Center to Provide Transitional Housing

The Atlanta Enterprise Center Employment Program is pleased to announce that as of June 2006, AEC and the Gateway 24/7 Homeless Service Center have formed a partnership to provide transitional housing for selected male AEC/Gateway program members who are participating in the AEC Employment Readiness Training and Placement Program. Under the operational guidance of AEC, three separate programs are being offered: The AEC/Gateway Substance Abuse Recovery Program, the AEC/Gateway Residential Employment Assistance Program and the AEC/Gateway Ex-offender Re-entry Program. Each program is allocated 22 beds. A person enrolled in any of the programs will have a bed and a private room.

The substance abuse recovery program lasts 90 days, although some participants may stay longer in special circumstances. During the initial 30 days, the participant focuses upon stabilization and staying sober. Then he enters the AEC Employment Program which includes the week-long AEC Employment Readiness Training Program, followed by the development of an Individualized Service Plan focusing upon his barriers to employment. Next is the job search.

Since the participants have limited financial responsibilities (room and board are free) they are not under pressure to take the first job available but rather to look for a job that suits their skills and interests and that supports their recovery program.

As the program matures, we anticipate significant success rates from this approach. Clinical Coordinator Ron Santos is highly encouraged by the progress so far. Ron cites as an example of success, the case of George, a long-term substance abuser who has just completed his 90 days. Shortly after completing the Job Readiness Training he landed a job as an event coordinator at the Georgia World Congress Center. George is from South Carolina where his family now lives. His next step is to reunite with his family and transfer from Atlanta to a treatment program in South Carolina. We wish George well as he moves to the next stage of his recovery.

The same formula applies to the Employment Program; however the participant enters the AEC Employment Readiness Training Program immediately upon entering Gateway. The Employment Program participants generally are persons who, while sober,



Grady Bridges and Ron Santos  
AEC/Gateway Counselors

are experiencing major barriers to employment and may need additional time to stabilize and obtain employment.

In May, AEC was awarded a contract by the Georgia Department of Pardons and Paroles to provide housing for parolees. According to Georgia law, a parolee must have a *place to live* upon parole. AEC/Gateway has 22 beds designated to support this program. The parolees are expected to go through our Employment Program as part of their terms of release. While this program has not gone as fast as we would like it to, we believe that over the next several months we will see the beds fill up as we help ex-offenders return to the mainstream of society. More than 100 ex-offenders will obtain permanent jobs through AEC in 2006.

#### The AEC Mission:

The mission of the Atlanta Enterprise Center is to provide opportunities for self-sufficiency to Atlanta's homeless and those who are at risk of becoming homeless.

## AEC-TechBridge Pilot Program Deemed a Success

In the fall of 2005, the Atlanta Enterprise Center was privileged to be selected by TechBridge to partner in a pilot advanced computer training program, "Microsoft Unlimited Potential". The 13-week training course is sponsored through a grant from Microsoft and includes: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Internet, and World Wide Web Fundamentals (Microsoft Outlook).

This comprehensive advanced training course draws most of its students from the AEC Basic Eight Week Computer Training Course, sponsored by Fulton County Office of Workforce Development.

Originally a pilot program, the program is nearing the end of its third cycle and in the opinion of Mitchell Ford, AEC Computer Training Facilitator, "It is an out-



Mitchell Ford instructing a student in the computer class.

standing success." Since its inception, 32 students have taken advantage of the course.

We would like to express our appreciation to TechBridge, Microsoft and especially the team of volunteer instructors from Atlanta businesses who have made the course possible.

Our partner, TechBridge, is a non-profit specializing in providing technical assistance to other non-profits in the Atlanta area and hosts the AEC website: [www.atlantaenterprisecenter.org](http://www.atlantaenterprisecenter.org).

## AEC/Gateway Support Group Grows!

For the past two months at the Gateway 24/7 Homeless Service Center, something special has been happening every Wednesday night. Dr. Henry Braddock, Ph.D., has been facilitating a support group addressing the multiple issues facing a homeless person. Dr. Braddock, a psychologist, has more than 25 years experience working with persons with special-needs: ex-offenders, sub-

stance abusers, and those with mental health issues to name a few. The overriding message is the importance of personal responsibility in the recovery process. Originally conceived as a small group session, weekly the group has grown and at last count more than fifty men are participating in the sessions. In Dr. Braddock's words, "The purpose of life is to live a life of purpose. Our purpose at the Gateway is to reclaim, restore and re-direct as many people as possible back to society



Dr. Henry Braddock  
AEC/Gateway Psychologist

as well functioning, contributing citizens." We thank Dr. Braddock for his contribution.