

Jobs for Life

An Opportunity to Learn Character and Community



When Fred Hubach, Jr., was assigned a Service Learning Project during his senior year of high school, he chose a project that many adults wouldn't have tackled. Interested in economics and mercy ministries, Fred ambitiously created a Jobs for Life site at his church, Reformed Presbyterian, in Ephrata PA.

Jobs for Life (JfL) is a Christ-centered ministry, utilized by several PCA congregations, that equips churches and community-based organizations to help unemployed and underemployed adults find and keep jobs. Classes are held at sites formed at churches and community outreach centers. Each site is given all the tools and training materials necessary to teach and mentor students.

Fred's venture was a success. Of the five adults with developmental disabilities who started the class, four completed all of the requirements with flying colors and graduated—each possessing both increased soft job skills and an enhanced confidence level. Of the four graduates, one was able to move out of a sheltered workshop environment into a community-based work environment. Fred was awarded the 2008 JfL Samaritan Award as Volunteer of the Year. "Our goals are to teach character and to connect people to their community," says David Spickard, President of JfL. "Character is taught through the Word of God, and community comes through God's people."



Steve Nash (left) with David Spickard

Steve Nash, Executive Director of Advance Memphis, says this philosophy is what makes JfL successful. "Jobs for Life is a great tool for churches to use in justice and mercy ministry," he says. Advance Memphis works to bring

economic revitalization to inner city Memphis, one of the poorest zip codes in the nation. Its first JfL class, offered in 2005, was unsuccessful, fizzling out by the second week. Advance Memphis turned to JfL for advice. "We told them to start another class," laughs David. Advance Memphis did, and by the end of 2007, over 275 people had applied. Currently, 82 people have graduated in 2008, with two more classes to be offered this year. In June 2008, Advance Memphis was awarded the JfL Site of the Year.



Church volunteers (left) with RPC elder Dwight McKay (center) and JfL graduates

Steve stresses that JfL requires long-term commitment and dedication: "If you see it as a good deed to do for the weekend, it's not for you." But Advance believes the results make the effort worthwhile. JfL is more than a handout; it's a way to empower historically marginalized communities, to bring justice and healing to the least of these. And maybe most importantly, in racially divided Memphis, it provides a forum for peer and mentor relationships between African American and white believers to flourish. As Steve often reminds donors and volunteers, "Rich and poor alike – we both have a lot to learn from each other."



Fred Jr. and Adam Dietze, a JfL graduate

The ability to customize the JfL program helps meet each site's needs. The lead teacher at Fred's site modified the program to teach adults who are part of the church's Special Needs Ministries. "Adapting JfL for the developmentally disabled is especially meaningful, as they are typically neglected and often experience chronic unemployment or underemployment," says Fred. "JfL provides a wonderful way to teach soft job skills as well as a Biblical work ethic to people with disabilities," adds Fred's mother Stephanie, MNA Special Needs Ministries Director.

After completing Fred's class, one man was able—for the first time—to look an interviewer in the eye and shake his hand. Understanding his value in God's Kingdom gave him the confidence he needed to begin transforming his life.

To learn more about JfL, including how to launch a site at your church or ministry organization, call Paula Bryan at 888-408-1565 x3 or visit www.jobsforlife.com. ■