



## Director's Message

### RefugeeWorks Inaugurates Youth Employment Initiative

With a sense of great excitement we present this "sneak preview" of our soon-to-be-released manual on **Refugee Youth Employment**. Since last summer RefugeeWorks has been hard at work gathering information from mainstream and refugee-specific programs across the nation that offer employment services to adolescents and young adults aged 14-21. We have conducted site visits, attended youth workshops and conferences, tracked down leads, researched articles, and made innumerable telephone calls to find out who's been doing what in the field. These intensive efforts have led us to discoveries that we can't wait to share with you. The manual is filled with a wide variety of programming models and some amazing outcomes, such as this issue's lead article about the St. Louis police training program and the impact it is making in the life of Sanela Konjevic.

Although the manual is still in production, this newsletter issue serves as an official kickoff for our new training and technical assistance youth employment initiative. As we welcome the thousands of Sudanese youth now arriving in the United States from the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, our efforts seem particularly timely and crucial. As stated in ORR's State Letter of January 11, "Resettlement agencies will enroll those refugees eligible for high school and will encourage all over 18 to seek employment as soon as possible...States should arrange intensive employment services, targeted towards early self-sufficiency with a view to job upgrades after initial success at entry-level employment."

Please know that RefugeeWorks' staff and its roster of peer experts are standing ready to assist the network as it guides this population, as well as other refugee youth, to self-sufficiency. To that end we have included in this newsletter a fax-back sheet for readers to order copies of the manual and to request technical assistance from us. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Career Pipeline in Police Work Succeeds for St. Louis Refugee Youth

Exploring, a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America, is a national career-based program for youth that provides work experiences in various fields. Law Enforcement Exploring has become so popular that there are now as many Police Explorers as there are Boy Scouts. The south St. Louis chapter is, however, the only International Police Explorers post in the nation, specifically targeting and training refugees to become law enforcement officers.

Now in its fourth year, the 35 refugee youth who make up the program's current squad are between the ages of 14 and 21 and come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Bosnian, Croatian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Iraqi, Somali and Eritrean. Together, they represent more than a dozen languages. Most are in high school and have been in the United States from one month to four years.

Police officers serve as mentors and skill builders. "We did not realize how well it would work out," says Officer Lisa Pisciotta, who coordinates the program. "Working with these



Sanela Konjevic, Squad Captain

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## Career Pipeline in Police Work Succeeds for St. Louis Refugee Youth

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International Police Explorers Post #9003

youth is the most rewarding thing I've ever done as a police officer. They have enriched my life so much." Pisciotta went into the St. Louis Public Schools' International Studies Magnet Cluster to recruit participants and collaborated with such resettlement agencies as the International Institute of Metropolitan St. Louis which provided translation and referrals. The program provides the following services: mentoring, career development, unpaid internships, college preparation, job shadowing and service learning. In addition, the youth travel with on-duty officers in "ride alongs" and receive training in CPR, making arrests and emergency preparedness.

The squad captain is Sanela Konjevic, who arrived from Bosnia four years ago. She won the Explorer of the Year award at the National Law Enforcement Explorers Conference for her translation support work with the city's

police officers. Now in college, she is also a full-time employee of the St. Louis Police Department where she works as a 911 Dispatcher. Ms. Konjevic, whose goal is to become a special agent with the FBI, is currently awaiting an appointment to the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Academy.

In setting up a Police Explorers program, Pisciotta recommends partnering with a resettlement agency, approaching local police who are interested in working with youth and forming a good relationship with the Boy Scouts. The local Police Department provides uniforms and volunteer personnel to serve as mentors and the Boy Scouts provide insurance for the youth. For more information write to 3rd District International Police Explorers, Post #9003, 3157 Sublette Ave., St. Louis MO 63139.



### Youth Manual Order Form

RefugeeWorks is making available one complimentary copy of the *Refugee Youth Employment Manual* to readers of our newsletter—by request only!

Please use the inserted Fax-Back to (1) place your order and (2) request technical assistance, consultation or training on youth employment and other employment issues. We have also included on the sheet a short readership survey to help guide future newsletter topics. Thank you for your continued feedback!

*If the insert is missing from your copy, please request one from Karen Heist, 202/293-9826 or [kheist@refugeeworks.org](mailto:kheist@refugeeworks.org)*

# Mix of Housing, Incentives, Counseling Leads to Independence for Emancipated Youth

Bakersfield, Calif., has developed an intensive program for emancipated foster care youth that may have transfer potential for unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs) who have “aged out” of the URM program and for other refugee youth populations such as the newly arriving Sudanese youth from the Kakuma camp.

Statistics show that within eighteen months of emancipation at 18 years of age, fully half of the foster youth are still unemployed, a staggering 40 percent end up on public assistance and many become homeless. Kern County’s Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) and its CalWorks Employment Services Department have partnered to create a comprehensive, intensive program designed to help these at-risk foster youth become productive, responsible and self-sufficient.

## A Housing Complex All Their Own

Working with the Housing Authority, ILSP purchased an eight-apartment transitional housing complex with seven two-bedroom apartments for recently emancipated foster children, 18-21 years old, and one apartment for a manager. Nonprofit community agencies have worked to furnish and equip each of the apartments at no cost to the program or tenants.

When the youth move in, Section 8 vouchers will pay part of the rent and the remaining \$100 will be contributed by the youth.

According to Maria Bermudez, ILSP’s program coordinator, the housing component mirrors a similar one established by the Orangewood Children Foundation in Orange County, Calif., where 10 apartments in an 80-unit complex were purchased by local business owners for foster youth.

## Incentives from Kmart to Help Employment Process

As the map pictured on this page shows, the employment component comprises six interrelated phases: pre-assessment, job search preparation, workshops, job leads, job search and retention. For every workshop attended and each completed task—such as a résumé or job application—the youth receive a monetary reward in one of two forms:

- a Kmart Cash Card, which can be used to purchase household items, or
- a trust fund account of \$600, which Kmart will match by an equal amount for a maximum total of \$1,200.

Youth are escorted by the CalWorks counselors to job interviews. Once a youth is hired, CalWorks supplies a bus pass and an intensive “Keeping the Job 101” approach kicks in. The counselors continue coaching and begin to work on a new set of goals and career planning. Michelle Humecky, one of the two CalWorks employment counselors assigned to the youth sums up, “We celebrate the first job but let’s move on to the next goal.” For more information, contact Maria Bermudez at 661/631-6095.



Reprinted with permission from the Kern County Department of Human Services.

## Refugee Youth Hired for Census Outreach

In 2000 the U.S. Census staff approached the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) of Greater Lowell, Mass., and asked for outreach assistance to the immigrant and refugee communities of Lowell. In collaboration with the Lao Family Mutual Association and Latinos en Accion, and with funding from the Parker Foundation and the Census Bureau, the CMAA hired six adult team leaders and 15 youth outreach workers to provide information about the census to residents of low-income and minority neighborhoods. The youth outreach workers worked in teams of four and provided census information in English, Laotian, Cambodian and Spanish. Youth outreached in high traffic areas for refugee and immigrant community members, such as ethnic plazas, grocery stores, shopping centers, laundromats, car washes, parks, temples, churches and clinics. Besides having fun, these youth learned about the census, developed outreach skills, received stipends and were actively involved in an invaluable community initiative.

The census assignment was but one of many career exploration opportunities in CMAA's Community Internship Project. "Our youth have multiple challenges with language, culture and trying to fit in. Often they are not prepared for the world of work," says Samkhann Khoeun, executive director. "There are few employers from their own ethnic groups in the community. The CMAA acts as a liaison between youth and employers. On the one hand we provide references for the employers and on the other hand we support youth in securing employment. We selected a subsidized employment program, called the Community Internship Project, because we found that there were not a whole lot of employers that were otherwise willing to invest in our children. So we partnered with employers to subsidize the youth salaries if they would give the needed training. This community partnership helps us spark our youths' interest in their future careers." CMAA also runs a subsidized Community Service Employment program for adults as well, with 3-year funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Modeled after the Mount Holyoke College Internship Program, the Community Internship Project placed at-risk youth in 8-week internships requiring eight hours of work per week. Interns, who receive stipends for their work, are



Participants of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell's youth programming

matched with opportunities related to their career aspirations in settings within walking distance of Lowell High School and the CMAA. They are required to maintain attendance in school or if they are out of school they are required to make an effort to re-enroll in the high school or enroll in a GED program.

## UAW/General Motors Partner for Apprenticeships

The Manufacturing Technology Partnership (MTP), a cooperative effort among General Motors, United Auto Workers, Jobs Central, Mott Foundation, Genesee County (Mich.) High Schools, Mott Community College and Baker College, is one of this year's National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet Awardees (see OnLine Connection to access program profiles of all awardees). The mission of the partnership is to create a curriculum that provides high school juniors, typically 16-year-olds, the skills necessary to pass the United Auto Worker/General Motors (UAW/GM) apprenticeship test. The program especially targets minorities and girls.

MTP is a 2-year school-to-work transition program whose purpose is to help prepare students for a skilled trades career. It blends traditional academic achievement

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## WIA Expands Youth Services, Shifts Focus, Creates Youth Councils

As reported in the Fall 2000 issue of RefugeeWorks (“New WIA Funding Stream Now Flowing”), the delivery of federally funded workforce preparation programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) has gotten underway. To those interested in meeting the specific employment needs of refugee youth, the new legislation is of particular importance. It greatly expands the range of services that must be provided to young people and mandates that one-third of all local WIA youth services funding be used on programs for out-of-school youth. In most communities this new emphasis on the out-of-school population will have a major impact since the majority of funds have previously been targeted for summer jobs programs for in-school youth.

To be eligible for WIA-funded initiatives, each low-income youth aged 14-21 must be facing one or more of the following challenges to successful workforce entry: be a school dropout, have a basic literacy skills deficiency, be homeless, be a runaway, be a foster child, be pregnant, be a parent, be a criminal offender, need to complete an education program, or need help securing and holding a job. Programs must include tutoring, dropout prevention activities, alternative school services, mentoring, paid and unpaid work experience, occupational skills training, leadership development, and appropriate supportive services.

And for the first time the legislation requires that Youth Councils be established to create local youth services plans and to oversee youth programs funded under the legislation. Youth Councils will have responsibility for making youth service delivery more comprehensive, coordinated and effective. To that end, they will gather and assess data, identify and assess community resources, develop a strategic plan, provide oversight and accountability, and link with other

youth-serving organizations in the community. Youth Councils will be created by and become a subset of the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs).

To make sure the needs of refugee youth are incorporated into the plans, try to become actively involved in the **Youth Councils**, encourage the appointment of individuals who are well versed in youth employment or in serving those with limited English proficiency, and join broad-based local youth coalitions to help map the full range of youth employment services. Refugee service providers can be a real asset to the Youth Councils as they develop strategic plans because most offer resources that mainstream youth agencies lack, such as translation and interpretation, access to newly arriving populations, bicultural staff, ESL classes, and trust and rapport in the refugee community.

Catholic Charities of San Jose, Calif., provides an excellent case example of the kind of linkages it takes to make a successful transition to youth funding under WIA. Although the agency is one of the major players in youth programming in the city, staff of its Youth Empowerment for Success (YES) program felt that the core of their work was not employment. With the transition to WIA and the resulting budget cuts, the agency needed to re-evaluate its mission. As Buu Thai, the youth services program director, states, “We had a major decision to make: should we close down the youth employment program? Did we want to become a lead agency with the Workforce Investment Board?” Catholic Charities ended up partnering with two major employment agencies in San Jose who had little experience in working with youth but vast experience in job placement. YES had the large clientele and expertise in working with youth. In collaboration, they won the youth employment contract.

### UAW/General Motors Partner for Apprenticeships

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with hands-on experience in three areas of activity: First, students attend their home school in the morning where they complete the necessary classes for high school graduation. Second, students attend a countywide vocational training facility for a modular training program that was designed, in part, by the manufacturing sector. Third, students work in laboratories learning how technological skills relate to the actual application of the technology in the manufacturing process. At the conclusion of the two-year program, students take the UAW/GM apprenticeship test. Throughout the program, students are mentored by UAW skilled trades journeymen.

Of the original group of MTP students, 94 percent passed the test compared to 10-12 percent nationally. Of the second group, 100 percent passed. Additionally, two and a half years after graduation, 80 percent of MTP students were employed with an average hourly wage rate of \$10.69. For more information, contact the MTP Coordinator/Mentor at 810/236-9174 or UAW/General Motors Flint Metal Center, G-2238 W. Bristol Rd., Flint MI 48453.

# EIC Outreach Campaign 2001 Kicks Off

Tax time is here again and the EIC National Campaign 2001 is underway to get the word out about Earned Income Credits (EICs) for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. The credit is designed to reduce the tax burden on these workers, supplement their wages, and make work more attractive than welfare. Workers who qualify for the EIC and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year 2000 and may even get extra cash back from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Even workers whose earnings are so small that they have not paid taxes can get the EIC. As the flyer on this page shows, this year the EIC can boost paychecks higher than ever before.

## Eligibility

Refugees, asylees and those granted Temporary Protected Status qualify for EIC if they and family members have legal work authorization. Their children must have lived with them in the United States for more than six months out of the year to be considered "qualifying children" for the credit.

There is a new development this year in the EIC: Workers who otherwise met all the EIC eligibility requirements in previous years and later obtain legal work status from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) may be able to claim the EIC for up to three previous years. Under this provision, a family of four, all with legal work status, could qualify for a \$10,000 credit! After receiving legal work status from the INS and obtaining Social Security numbers, workers may back-claim the EIC by amending their tax return for the previous year even if they had been denied EIC last year for lack of a Social Security number. Or they may file an original return for the previous year if they had not already done so.


## Translations, ESL Curricula Available


The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CPBB), based in Washington, D.C., has developed an EIC 2001

# Give Your Paycheck a Boost!



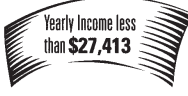
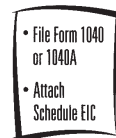


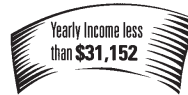
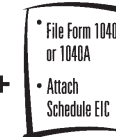



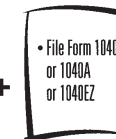
Claim Your Earned  
Income Credit

*A Tax Benefit for People Who Work*





	OR		+		+		= up to <b>\$2,353</b>
<p>If you lived with one child in 2000 and your family earned less than \$27,413, you can get up to \$2,353.</p>							
	OR		+		+		= up to <b>\$3,888</b>
<p>If you lived with two or more children in 2000 and your family earned less than \$31,152, you can get up to \$3,888.</p>							
	OR		+		+		= up to <b>\$353</b>
<p>If you had no children living with you in 2000 and you earned less than \$10,380, AND you were between ages 25 and 64, you can get up to \$353.</p>							

Outreach Kit that includes IRS forms and instructions, EIC participation by state, Schedule EIC 2000, questions and answers, and an informative Campaign Outreach Strategy Guide. The guide covers 12 key strategies for building an effective campaign. Strategy 6, "Reach Out to People Who Don't Speak English," features RefugeeWorks and the outreach we have done on behalf of the EIC (such as this newsletter) and includes valuable tips on tapping into non-English media and getting free bilingual tax help. The full kit is available for \$3 from the center at 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington DC 20002. Call 202/408-1080 for more information.

The EIC flyer appearing here in English has been translated by CPBB into over 15 languages including Bosnian, Cambodian, Ethiopian/Amharic, Farsi, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Tagalog and Vietnamese. RefugeeWorks will once again make these available at no charge. We will also continue to make available the EIC ESL SCANS curriculum through the generosity of Peter Daniels of Orange County (Calif.) Catholic Charities. Mr. Daniels helped develop the curriculum last year. Since that time, he and Tre Tran, a tri-lingual Ph.D. candidate, have added a more advanced version covering the EIC in greater depth. Send requests

for these resources, specifying languages, to Karen Heist, [kheist@refugeeworks.org](mailto:kheist@refugeeworks.org).

### State EIC

And remember, in addition to the federal EIC, low-income workers may be eligible to receive extra money from a refundable **state EIC**. This year, the District of Columbia and New Jersey have joined Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Vermont and Wisconsin in offering an EIC that builds on the federal credits and adds an additional 10-25 percent in state credits.



## Comings and Goings

The new year began with a trip to Kansas City, Mo., for RefugeeWorks Director Jane Bloom and Assistant Director JoAnn Soker who conducted training

and technical assistance activities for Community Service Employment (CSE) grantee Jewish Vocational Services and its partner agencies. Also in January, RefugeeWorks returned to New York to continue its help to the state's Bureau of Refugee and Immigration Affairs in employment program planning.

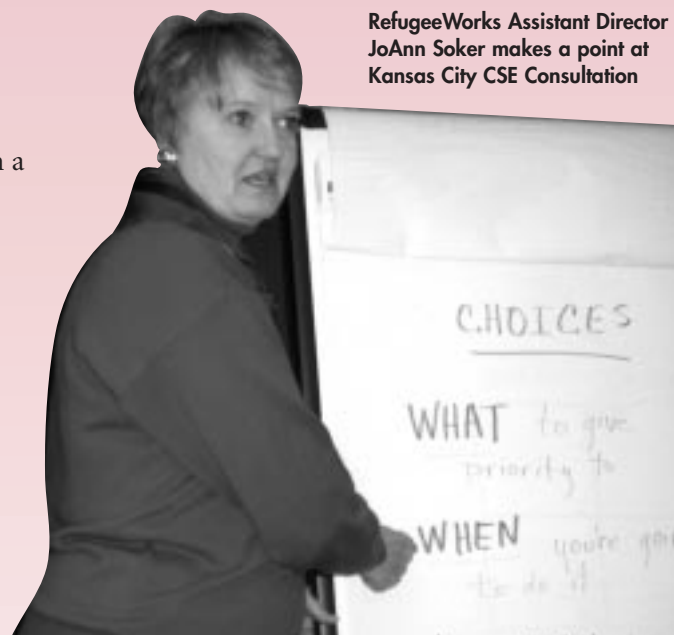
We were also selected to speak on vocational services at the Iraqi Refugee Resettlement Seminar, held January 23 in Washington, D.C. The seminar was arranged by Meridian International Center on behalf of the U.S. Department of State for visitors from northern Iraq and Iraqi exiles.

February travels include the Fargo, N.D., Alternative Project for Soker and the Jacksonville, Fla., LIRS regional coordinator retreat for Bloom. March will bring us to Merced, Stockton and Fresno, Calif., for CSE site visits as well as to the LIRS resettlement network conference for which RefugeeWorks is organizing five workshops on such topics as interpreter skills training and refugee youth employment.

New York State Refugee Coordinator Molly Wilkinson and staffer Tom Hart review employment service plans



RefugeeWorks Assistant Director JoAnn Soker makes a point at Kansas City CSE Consultation



Kansas City CSE Coordinator, Gaby Flores (center), and other trainees hard at work during RefugeeWorks' January 8 training

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## ONLINE CONNECTION

This feature is designed as your “online connection” to additional information concerning the articles contained in this edition. Each website listed below is followed by the name of the organization that owns it and a brief description of its contents.

**www.learning-for-life.org/exploring**—*The Exploring Program*—Exploring is a national worksite-based career educational program sponsored by Learning for Life, a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America. Local community organizations initiate an Explorer post by matching their people and program resources to the interests of local youth. Search this site to identify Exploring programs in your local area.

**www.usworkforce.org**—*US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration*—Use this site as a “gateway to information on the Workforce Investment Act.” The “What’s New” section offers timely updates about the implementation of WIA. Check out the recently published *Integrating Year-Round and Summer Employment and Training Services for Youth Under the WIA: Technical Assistance Guide* for a review of eight actual WIA sites that are integrating year-round and summer youth programming services.

**www.heldrich.rutgers.edu**—*Heldrich Center for Workforce Development*—Looking for a

cookbook about Youth Councils? Heldrich Center has just published *Recipes for Success: Youth Council Guide to Creating Youth Development Systems Under WIA*. This guide walks you through all the issues that need to be considered in order to develop a coordinated, collaborative youth centered youth council for your community.

**www.nyec.org/pepnet/listprac.htm**—*PEPnet Awardee Profiles*—Access profiles of youth employment and service programs recognized for excellence by having met the criteria for PEPnet, the *Promising and Effective Practices Network*, an initiative of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC). The PEPnet guidelines are also available from the NYEC web site.

**www.cbpp.org**—*The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*—Check in with this site for more information about the Earned Income Credit (EIC) campaign kits for 2001. Posters and flyers in English and Spanish are available on-line.

**WE’RE ONLINE!** Check out the latest issue of the RefugeeWorks newsletter at **WWW.LIRS.ORG/RW**

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