

900451

# Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program

## *1990 Report*



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645 State Office Building  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

### **From *Surviving* to *Thriving*: Displaced Homemakers Do Start Over**



COUNCIL 6  
AFSCME  
UNION LABEL



### **WHO ARE DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS?**

Displaced Homemakers are individuals who have spent a number of years caring for their families and homes, and were dependent on the income of a spouse or partner. Now, because of death, divorce, separation, or disability of that partner, or loss of other support, they must seek employment in order to become emotionally and economically independent.

### **HOW DO DISPLACED HOMEMAKER PROGRAMS HELP?**

Displaced Homemaker Programs reach out to serve a group of Minnesotans often unserved by other programs. The programs aid clients in identifying and removing barriers, developing confidence and learning the choices available in the move toward independence. The program is voluntary and services are free to eligible applicants.

### **WHAT SERVICES DO THE DISPLACED HOMEMAKER PROGRAMS OFFER?**

A combination of individual and group activities are available:

- Group Orientation and Intake
- Assessment and Testing
- Life Skills Development
- Pre-Employment Preparation
- Job Development/Placement
- Personal Counseling
- Career/Educational Counseling
- Support Services Referral
- Remedial Education Access
- Skill Training Access

Programs offer limited client expense reimbursement for supplies, travel, or day care as funds permit.

### **HOW ARE THE PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED AND OPERATED?**

The twelve Displaced Homemaker Programs are administered by the State Job Training Office (SJTO) of the Department of Jobs and Training. The Department has awarded grants to local organizations to operate the programs. Five are non-profit corporations, five operate under the administrative umbrella of a community action agency, and two are under the umbrella of community colleges. Client eligibility is determined by income and displaced homemaker status.

### **ARE THEY SUCCESSFUL?**

While the goals of the programs stress preparation for employment and training, from July 1987 through June 1989, over 72% , upon completion of their enrollment period, were in school, working, or active with another employment and training program. The cost per participant is an extremely modest \$462. Forty-six percent (46%) of those served are welfare recipients desirous of moving off public assistance.



## *HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*

- 1977 Support for Displaced Homemakers developed in Minnesota and two programs were authorized by the State Legislature.
- 1978-79 The first two Displaced Homemaker programs opened --
- o Life Work Planning Center, Mankato; and
  - o New Careers/Working Opportunities for Women, Twin Cities.
- 1980-81 In response to successes and needs, the State Legislature authorized the third and fourth programs --
- o SOAR, Duluth; and
  - o Mainstay, Marshall.
- 1982-84 The Legislature, through an increase in line-item marriage license and dissolution filing fees, authorized funds and started six new programs --
- o Crossroads, Thief River Falls;
  - o Pathfinders, Morris;
  - o META 5, Brainerd;
  - o WINGS, Sauk Rapids;
  - o Lives in Transition, Virginia; and
  - o New Directions, Detroit Lakes.
- 1984-85 The Legislature designated all funding for programs to come from increased marriage license and dissolution fees.
- 1986-86 The Legislature renewed funding from dissolution and marriage license fees.
- 1988 Programs celebrate 10-year Anniversary.
- 1990 **NOW WE ARE TWELVE!!** State Legislature authorized additional funds; services expanded into Mora/Cambridge area. Two new programs started --
- o SE area, Rochester Community College; and
  - o Willmar area, Heartland Community Action.



### ***SPECIAL PROJECTS***

In addition to the contracted services and state dollars, the Displaced Homemaker programs have secured matching funds from a variety of foundations and grants. Many of the programs are also involved in special projects with select clientele. These include:

- o Workshops in conjunction with technical college
- o Workshops in conjunction with battered women's shelter
- o Workshops for Native American group on reservation
- o Project for minority displaced homemakers in inner city
- o Workshops for STRIDE participants
- o Chemical dependent displaced homemaker group project
- o Special AFDC project
- o Non-traditional occupations project
- o Special marketing project



## **PROGRAM FACTS AND FIGURES**

**1987 - 1989 Biennium**

### **ENROLLEES**

- o Over 74% of displaced homemakers were unemployed when they enrolled.
- o Over 74% were supporting children.
- o 87% had at least a high school diploma or GED at enrollment.
- o 84% were separated or divorced.
- o Over 46% were living in rural areas or towns.
- o 13% of displaced homemakers had a disability that affected their employability.
- o 25% of Displaced Homemaker Program enrollees were age 45 or older.
- o 47% of Displaced Homemaker Program enrollees were receiving some welfare assistance.

### **COMPLETIONS**

Of those displaced homemakers leaving the Displaced Homemaker Programs -

- o 31% achieved employment with an annualized wage of \$12,085.
- o 15% were in advanced education leading to employment.
- o 9% were in skills training leading to employment.
- o 10% completed program objectives.
- o 3% entered other employment and training program.



The Displaced Homemaker Program is committed to achieving:

- o Continued efforts to assist Minnesota's displaced homemakers to overcome personal and employment barriers, learn about choices and resources available to them, and move toward economic independence.
  
- o Service to the four remaining unserved counties.
  
- o Continued public education to promote increased understanding of the needs of the displaced homemakers.
  
- o Continued networking with other agencies to increase support service and employment and training resources for displaced homemakers.



**PROGRAM PROVIDERS**

**PROGRAM**

**CONTRACTOR**

**COUNTIES SERVED**

Minnesota Displaced Homemaker  
Programs Coordinator  
690 American Center Building  
150 East Kellogg Boulevard  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
612/296-5325  
1-800-652-9747

Crossroads, DHP, Inc.  
102 North Main Street  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
218/681-8158

Lives in Transition  
702 Third Avenue South  
Virginia, MN 55792  
218/749-2912

New Directions  
P.O. Box L  
New York Mills, MN 56567  
218/385-2900

META 5 DHP  
Brainerd Community College  
College Drive and SW Fourth Street  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
218/828-2538

W.I.N.G.S.  
728 South Benton Drive  
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379  
612/251-1612

Pathfinders DHP  
215 Atlantic Avenue  
Morris, MN 56267  
612/589-2556  
1-800-223-1239

MAINSTAY, Inc.  
308 North Third Street  
Marshall, MN 56258  
507/537-1546

Life-Work Planning Center  
Nichols Office Center  
410 Jackson Street  
Mankato, MN 56001  
507/345-1577

Private  
Non-Profit  
Corporation

Arrowhead  
Economic  
Opportunity  
Office (AEOA)

Otter Tail-  
Wadena Community  
Action Agency  
(CAC)

Brainerd  
Community  
College

Tri-County  
Action  
Programs, Inc.

West Central  
MN Community  
Action Agency  
(CAA)

Private  
Non-Profit  
Corporation  
Nobles and Rock

Private  
Non-Profit  
Corporation

Roseau, Kittson  
Marshall, Polk,  
Red Lake, Pennington  
and Norman

Koochiching, Itasca  
St. Louis, Aitkin,  
Lake, Cook and Carlton

Becker, Clay  
Otter Tail, Wilkin,  
and Mahnomen

Cass, Crow Wing,  
Morrison, Todd,  
and Wadena

Benton, Stearns,  
Sherburne, and  
Wright

Douglas, Grant, Pope,  
Stevens, Traverse,  
Big Stone, Chippewa,  
Lac Qui Parle, Swift  
and Yellow Medicine

Redwood, Lyon, Lincoln,  
Pipestone, Murray,  
Cottonwood, Jackson,

Sibley, Le Sueur,  
Blue Earth, Brown,  
Nicollet, Watonwan,  
Waseca, Martin and  
Faribault



**PROGRAM PROVIDERS****PROGRAM****CONTRACTOR****COUNTIES SERVED**

**Project SOAR of Northeastern MN**  
 205 West Second Street, Suite 101  
 Duluth, MN 55802  
 218/722-3126

Private  
 Non-Profit  
 Corporation

Duluth and surrounding  
 communities

**New Careers/Working Opportunities  
 for Women**  
 Colonial Office Park  
 2700 University Avenue, Suite 120  
 St. Paul, MN 55114  
 612/647-9961

Working  
 Opportunities  
 for Women

Anoka, Carver, Scott,  
 Dakota, Ramsey, Hennepin,  
 Washington

**Southeast MN Area DHP**  
 Rochester Community College  
 851 30th Avenue Southeast  
 Rochester, MN 55904-4999  
 507/285-7110

Rochester  
 Community  
 College

Rice, Goodhue, Wabasha,  
 Steele, Dodge, Olmsted,  
 Winona, Freeborn, Mower,  
 Fillmore and Houston

**Heartland DHP**  
 Box 1359  
 Willmar, MN 56201  
 612/235-0850  
 1-800-992-1710

Heartland  
 Community Action

Kandiyohi, Meeker  
 Renville and McLeod



## THE WISH TO BECOME MORE THAN WE ARE

**CAREERS**

## Exploring new career paths, finding resources to help on the way

by Mollie Hoben

Bonnie Burke married at 18 and never finished high school. For 23 years she was a full-time homemaker, raising two children. Two years ago, she and her husband divorced.

"It's very traumatic to wake up one day and realize you're on your own," she said. Especially when you have no employment track record, and you think you probably don't have the skills that would get you a job you'd want anyway.

Burke saw an ad for Working Opportunities for Women's displaced homemaker program and applied. "I knew I had to do something," she recalled. "I figured, I've got nothing to lose, everything to gain."

Burke is one of many women whose image of themselves has not included career satisfaction as a goal, or perhaps even a possibility. Yet sometimes economic necessity or a growing wish to become more than she is can push a woman into readiness to redefine herself as a worker, and she looks for resources to help her.

At WOW, Burke learned that she had more skills than she thought. "They helped me list skills I had gained in ways other than working. I ended up with a long list. I thought, 'I could have any job in the world!' I learned I have more gifts and talents than I've used."

The program at WOW also helped Burke realize she had choices. "I needed work and I would have taken any job that came along." Through doing some temporary work, in fact, she was offered a job. "The salary was low. Because I had been encouraged [at WOW] to reach high, I gave a counter

figure. They said no; I said fine. I had the confidence to turn it down. I liked that feeling of power."

It wasn't long after that incident that Burke learned about the job she now holds: administrative assistant for the National Association of Social Workers. Even though it felt like a bigger step than she had expected to take, she applied ("for practice") and was offered the position. "I was thrilled. It's a wonderful job."

Burke has been asked to do some speaking for WOW and last fall was appointed to a seat on the state's Displaced Homemaker Advisory Council. Gerontology is a field that appeals to her "down the road."

Photo by Mary Lee Slettenhaugh



Bonnie Burke learned at WOW that she had "more gifts and talents than I've used."



## Life Work Planning Center

### Mankato

When I began my internship as a counselor at Life-Work Planning Center in Mankato last September, I experienced the sensation of "returning home". I also felt proud, challenged, motivated, competent & eager to use my recently acquired counseling training to help displaced homemakers tap their own resources to build new, satisfying, productive lives.

The returning home feeling was the same supportive feeling I experienced the first time that I came to LWPC in January, 1987. Actually, I came here at that time by mistake. I believed it was some kind of employment office that would help me find a job. After Julie listened to my "story" she said, "We're not an employment agency, but you are in the right place and we can help you. We are a displaced homemaker agency."

YES! I WAS A DISPLACED HOMEMAKER! At least, here I was something! I was so confused and angry and frustrated....I felt like a nothing. After 29 years of marriage, I was in the middle of a very painful divorce. My job had been reduced from fulltime to less than halftime. My children were grown and no longer needed a fulltime mom. I had a valid teaching certificate that seemed absolutely worthless without current experience in the overcrowded market. The feelings of hopelessness, shame, rejection, loneliness, depression, and fear were so overwhelming that I was stuck...immobilized...unable to plan and take charge of my life.

Participation in the series of workshops and support groups and individual conferences helped me develop the courage and strength to get past being stuck. The work done in groups provided the structure and support necessary to focus on options available to me. The staff at LWPC didn't force the participants to work hard at the activities. Instead they lovingly and assertively pushed us to learn all about ourselves and to planfully prepare for further training and/or employment. They were there to help with each step into the "real world" and to pick up the pieces when there were setbacks.



By the end of the series, I had decided to develop a new career. I successfully completed a graduate level course in counseling during spring quarter at MSU. The next fall I began the work for a Master's degree in Counseling the Adult. So ...here I am, back where this new life started, Life-Work Planning Center. When the internship ends I will graduate in June. I want to work with adults in transition either on a campus or at an agency such as Life-Work Planning Center in Mankato.

*Jan Boe*



Crossroads  
Thief Rivers Falls

BUILDING MY FUTURE

My decision to leave my husband of 5 years took a lot of deep soul searching. I had been determine to make this marriage work after an already failed marriage in my early 20's. Now I would be single again, expected to raise my 2 children, adjust to a new community, and manage to somehow survive financially with my limited skills.

I left Texas in Mid-August in a small rented truck with all the belongings I could fit inside. My unfamiliarity with a clutch driven vehicle, roads I was unaccustomed to traveling, and a limited supply of cash all somehow strangely motivated me. I was determined to shut out my fears of this horrible trip and tried to appear anxious about what may lie ahead for the sake of the children.

The next few months were spent skimping on an AFDC check while I attempted to repay my sister and my parents money they had sent to help me leave Texas. During this time my children adjusted remarkably well. My oldest daughter started second grade and my youngest daughter seemed to thoroughly enjoy having mom at home everyday. I babysat for my sister at that time as a way of repaying her money she had loaned me. The adjustment to all of the changes in my life did not come as easy for me as it had for the girls. I became more and more depressed with each day. Feelings of being inadequate in all parts of my life began to take hold. My emotions of anger and resentment for my soon to be ex-husband also grew.

By February I had repaid my debt to my sister and my parents. Because of strong encouragement from my sister and lack of anything better to do I reluctantly decided to go back to school. I was able to get a student loan and purchase a used car days before school started. The financial aid officer at school was



very helpful in letting me know of programs I could utilize for help. He told me of a county funded program which had money available for day care expenses. This was extremely good news as I worried about being able to afford day care. However, the county had to deny me full day care assistance because it was spring of the year and their funds were running low. At the county office they told me perhaps Crossroads could help. I was not familiar with the program they were referring me to and I thought it was odd that an organization outside of the social service office could or even would help me in anyway.

The Director at Crossroads assured me that they could help by providing money to pay for the child care the county could not help with. I asked many questions pertaining to where their funding had come from and why such a program existed. The Director told me how they were established to assist displaced homemakers. She talked about the difficulty some women go through when they become displaced. As I sat listening to her comments I realized I was becoming withdrawn from her words. It was as if she knew things about me without my having to tell her. She was explaining to me some of the emotions displaced homemakers go through. I am sure she noticed my apparent mood change. She told me that in the near future a workshop/support group session would be starting up and encouraged me to attend. She took me from her office and introduced me to the coordinator for the workshop. We talked briefly and as I was preparing to leave they both again mentioned the workshop and encouraged my involvement.

I was nervous about attending the workshop that first night. As I had suspected I recognized no one but the coordinator. The other women who were already there seemed to have the same nervous look about them as I had. Somehow that was a warming



feeling to me.

The coordinator eased the nervous tension in the room in the first minutes of the meeting. I realized over the course of the evening that she had a special ability to draw out of the group emotions that were not easy to display.

I listened intently to comments made by others present and was surprised by some of my own remarks. I would have never thought that I would admit, let alone express to strangers, the feelings I had been sheltering inside of me.

The workshop was scheduled to meet once a week for 10 weeks. As we adjourned on the first evening everyone seemed sincere in stating that they looked forward to the next meeting. I left the meeting room with a new kind of feeling and it was not until I arrived at my car and sat inside that I began to cry. I told myself that I had done a good job; I had no reason to be crying. But the tears did not stop and I asked myself why. As I reflected on the meeting and the comments that had been made it became clear, I was not crying because I wished I had not contributed, I was crying because I was so relieved at what I had heard. Everyone who shared comments that evening had experienced my same feelings. I did not have to feel ashamed of my feelings; my feelings were all justified. I was not alone, other displaced homemakers had very much the same emotions to deal with and I was so overwhelmed by the realization of that, that it had moved me to tears.

I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop sessions that followed. I learned more about myself each time, and it was a good feeling to leave the meeting room with positive thoughts about myself.

The workshop gave me a new approach to my education. I was now determined to do my very best. I no longer needed school to fill up my time but I truly desired to become a provider for my children. I now knew too that I was a good mother and a good



person. I could overcome whatever may lie ahead. Today I work at a community college as a secretary. I enjoy the work I do very much. I no longer utilize the AFDC program and I have become the provider for my children that I desired to be. Thank you, Crossroads, for being a part of that.

ADDITIONAL COMMENT:

I truly will always be grateful to the Crossroad program for their financial assistance at a time when I needed it. But of more importance than that, of course, is their support given to me through the workshop I attended. They helped me see myself as a person very capable of doing whatever I desired to do. I did not have to feel inadequate or be ashamed of my feeling ever again. They had indeed provided me with a Crossroad to Building My Future.

Sincerely,

*Ms. Peggy Dorr*  
Ms. Peggy Dorr



## Sheila Cusick

### PATHFINDERS

Sheila Cusick is a thirty-two year old, white, female with one dependant. Sheila's son, Zachery, is four years old.

When Sheila first became enrolled as a client with Pathfinders, West Central Minnesotas Displaced Homemakers Program, she was experiencing the turmoil that is often a part of transition. As she moved from having been married, to being a divorced, single parent, the confusion and indecision mounted.

Sheila was an AFDC recipient, as well as medical assistance and food stamps. A frequent comment with regard to these services was, "I won't always be dependent on these agencies."

After a series of interest/inventory assessments Sheila came to the conclusion she wanted to pursue a course of study which would allow her to become a para-legal. As a result of that decision, location of a school became a primary issue. Through the use of the Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS), we were able to locate a program that would not only prepare her for a career, but was located in an area of the state she was willing to relocate to.

The next hurdle was finding a place to live. As an AFDC recipient obviously there was not a lot of money she could budget for rent. We were able to provide information about subsidized housing and even though there was a waiting list, we encouraged Sheila to apply. She did so and was able to get housing.

Since Sheila is a single parent, good quality child care to fit her flexible schedule was also an issue for her. We were able to give her a list of licensed providers as well as some guidelines for questioning techniques when interviewing the providers. As a result she has enrolled her son in a structured program with which she is very comfortable and which is subsidized.

Pathfinders was also able to provide Sheila with assistance in filling out the financial aid packet which can be very intimidating. As a result of being granted a full financial aid package, Sheila was able to work out a budget which would be feasible for her to follow.

Pathfinders was able to supply some supportive service dollars which allowed Sheila to relocate as well as to visit the school she was anticipating enrolling in.

As of this writing, Sheila is in her second year of a two year course of study involving one of the fastest growing professions in the nation.

In a recent note we received from Sheila she indicated she had earned the honor of having a grade point average high enough to make the Directors List. And, to quote Sheila, "this from someone who was a lousy student in high school."



Page Two - Client Profile

Pathfinders played multiple rolls in this case, from advocacy, referral, assessment and financial, to being there as a source of support through an uncertain time.

Sheila continues to keep in touch and uses Pathfinders staff as a sounding board in the decision making process.

As a staff, we're individually as well as collectively proud to have been a part of this case.



## LIVES IN TRANSITION

### St. Louis County

Sue J. Came into our office looking for help. She had been married for 20 years to a man that was an alcoholic and a batterer. He had demanded, during a very explosive confrontation, that she get out of the house. Our counselor helped her set up an appointment at Legal Aid, referred her to several programs that give emergency housing assistance grants, and gave her support and encouragement. A week later Sue reported that she had seen an attorney and that the initial divorce papers had been drawn up according to a mutually agreed upon division of their property. At this point she was receiving some financial support from her husband and they were living in the same home.

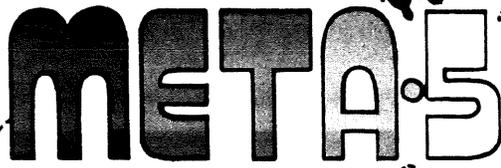
Shortly thereafter, Sue left the home after being physically assaulted by her husband. She also contacted a second attorney as her husband was denying the previous agreement regarding support and property division. She was able to find suitable housing and was beginning to see that she could have a life that did not involve being afraid everyday.

She went through our workshop series and worked very closely with one of our counselors. She appears to have a stronger sense of control of her own life. Sue started a nursing program at a Technical College last month and has some definite goals for her own future.

Sue has completed a 6 week Introduction to Nursing Program at the Eveleth Technical College on November 28th, 1989. She is currently employed as a full time Nurse's Aid Assistant at the Eveleth Arrowhead Nursing Home.

Sue has recently returned to her home and spouse has been removed by a court issued order for protection. Sue has been awarded \$450.00 monthly spousal maintenance. Partner has been making payments however, upon such time of final divorce decree, Sue's spousal maintenance amount may decrease due to her employment or may remain the same or increase if she becomes unemployed.





## A PROGRAM FOR DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS

BRAINERD COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
COLLEGE DRIVE & SW 4TH ST.  
BRAINERD, MN. 56401  
218-828-2538

NAME: Cathy Finken  
Student, St. Cloud State University

When I was younger, all I wanted to do when I graduated from high school was to get married and raise a family. My husband was supposed to take care of everything. Well, I was married at 20 and a mother at 21, but my husband, it seemed, couldn't take care of everything like I thought he was supposed to. Suddenly, I was alone with no money and a child to raise. I moved back home to my mom's and applied for AFDC.

I didn't like being on welfare, and I knew I had to go back to school, but I didn't really know how or for what. I was accepted at Anoka Vo-Tech, but the waiting list for housing was 1½ to 6 years long. The following year I applied at the St. Cloud Business College. I was accepted there also, but it was cost prohibitive because the tuition was so high.

By this time, I was becoming quite depressed with myself and the whole situation. That's when I saw the ad for the Meta 5 seminars being held in Little Falls. I called Arlene, and she came right to my house to meet with me personally. What really impressed me was that I was important enough for her to do that. I went to the seminars and took a battery of tests designed to tell me where my strengths are. These tests really help a person find out who you are and where you want to go in life. At the seminars, the group support was tremendous, and on a one-to-one basis, these ladies really know how to key in to a person's needs. They really are concerned about how you are doing. The variety of information readily available in their office has helped me more than once.

Since I became involved with Meta 5, I have graduated from Brainerd Community College with honors, and am currently enrolled at St. Cloud State. This group of ladies has had enough of an influence in my life that I am majoring in Psychological Services so that I could also be involved in helping other women in my position.



Barbara A. Anderson

Mainstay

I relocated to Marshall the first part of March 1989. As I was in the process of divorce, and starting over alone in a new community, my financial situation and emotions were at the very least in disarray. After hearing about Mainstay from a neighbor who had also sought their services, I scheduled an interview.

Along with the immeasurable emotional support and encouragement I received from my counselor, I also obtained a clear sense of direction as to my future plans. Through consultation and various testing and use of their available resource materials I was able to see my capabilities and that I had many more choices than I realized.

After considering several alternatives that were presented to me, I decided it would be in my best interest at that time to seek employment. My counselor assisted me in preparing a resume and counseled me on interviewing and in a very short time I was hired by a very good company here in Marshall.

I have been very successful thus far and am continuing to grow within the company. I credit a great deal of this to Mainstay. They instilled in me a very positive "You're a terrific person, you can do it", attitude that has had a lasting effect on how I see myself and my future. Without their help I may very well have been relying on AFDC for my income and still in a depressed emotional state of mind. As it is, I am now able to support myself and my daughter and am optimistic about our future.



Teresa Nelson  
W.I.N.G.S.

Gratitude. Yes, I am thankful for my experience with the Displaced Homemaker Program. Because of the knowledge gained in that workshop experience, my life is beginning to step forward both personally and vocationally. My light at the end of a long and dark tunnel has begun to shine and hopefully lead me to a bright, cheerful pathways.

In my college years, I dreamt of teaching speech and drama to high-school students in a positive, impactful style. I chose wrongly to minor in Recreation with a non-teaching endorsement. My other dream to be married came before my career goals were accomplished. During my senior year, I was married to an aspiring Physical Education Health educator. After his graduation, his employment did not come. Instead, it seemed before I ever woke up, I had four children in four years and was milking thirty cows. The children were beautiful, the cows were not. Each day for twelve years we faced a failing farm economy. As the years passed my husband's back failed him, also, and there were many days he could not walk.

In desperation and searching for a financial escape, I tried other means of employment. Occasionally, I substitute taught in the area high schools, but that was an unpredictable income. Sales looked profitable, but the cost of family time proved greater than the minimal financial rewards. The nightmare ended when we sold our cows this past Spring.

Immediately I began an intensive job search. Nothing. Deep within I knew I was employable, but seemed I was doing something wrong. No one wanted my skills.

Then because of my husband's disability, I was referred to W.I.N.G.S., the Displaced Homemaker Program in Sauk Rapids, MN. Walking into the first workshop I was both scared and hopeful. My first lesson was that it was alright to be displaced. What a revolution it was to me that people of all walks and educational levels can discover themselves "displaced".

Our group leader had a gentle teaching style which was encouraging and helpful. Leading us through a personality study, she allowed us to see it was "alright" to be the way we were made. What a release it was to allow my extroverted, intuitive, feeling personality to show!

Of special consequence was the information on the job search. From the application to the resume; from the phone calls to the interview, I learned where I had made mistakes and what to do correctly the next time. With renewed confidence, I continued my employment search



Teresa Nelson  
Page 2

Before the twelve workshop weeks were completed, I was employed! In our local newspaper was an advertisement for a part-time coordinator for Displaced Homemakers from META-5 in Brainerd, MN. I responded the way I had been taught in W.I.N.G.S. I sent the resume, made the phone calls, sent the notes in appropriate fashion. The encouragement from the W.I.N.G.S. staff was wonderful, and to have someone on my side will never be forgotten.

When the phone call came for an interview, I was excited. When the phone call came offering the position, I momentarily was stunned, but then ever so grateful.

Now I'm thrilled in my responsibility to assist other homemakers out of their tunnel. With determination, support, and prayer, I'm ready to do my best.



SOAR  
KATHLEEN SCHROEDER

In June of 1988 two Project SOAR counselors visited Duluth's battered women's shelter to offer information about their program. Kathleen, who had just moved from Milwaukee back to her hometown in order to escape an abusive relationship, was one of the women in attendance at that informational meeting. Encouraged by the warmth of the counselors and anxious to make a fresh start, Kathleen set up an intake appointment for the following week.

Like many women who participate in Project SOAR's program, Kathleen was facing transition in every major area of her life. When she left Milwaukee, Kathleen also left behind parts of her identity. Her role as a custodial parent had abruptly ended when one (19 year-old) daughter enlisted in the military and the other (16) decided to live with her father and complete her high school education. Kathleen left behind a position as a Data Entry Operator with a computerized billing service company. Lastly, her identity had been profoundly shaken by the abusiveness of a primary relationship. Kathleen came to Project SOAR afraid to trust her own judgement and doubtful of her many talents.

Kathleen, after going through some initial anxiety about committing six weeks of her life to self-examination rather than immediately pounding the pavement for a job, signed up for and participated in Project SOAR's comprehensive personal, educational and employment program. She also continued to utilize other resources such as battered women's groups and her own ever growing personal support system, and in time began to regain a sense of security and strength.

Kathleen's work history had been strongly impacted by the commitment to homemaking as her primary career choice. Because she was married and had her first child by the time she was 19, Kathleen did not continue her formal education beyond high school. The jobs that she held were obtained only after both her children were in school full time, and even then were chosen based more on the flexibility they would afford rather than her interests. Still, upon examination, there were themes that surfaced in her work history that indicated several strong skill areas. Kathleen proved to be an exceptionally quick learner. She showed strong leadership ability and in every job she'd ever had made some major contribution to the increased productivity of



her work environment; either by developing training materials for new employees or revamping existing procedures to increase efficiency. As Kathleen went through the process of identifying her interests, gathering information about careers and writing her resume, it became increasingly clear to her that what she really wanted to do was work her way into a management position in a company that would not be threatened by her drive to examine procedures and suggest improvements.

Kathleen signed up as a Clerical Worker for Manpower Temporary Services upon completion of SOAR's six week program. Even though she was no longer satisfied by clerical work, Kathleen needed to make enough money to support herself and have the freedom to continue her career research, go on job interviews, etc. Working at a temporary service allowed Kathleen to "taste" a variety of employment settings and familiarize herself with Duluth's business community. Although she was offered a couple of permanent positions as a result of these contacts, Kathleen again resisted the temptation to settle for a job that she didn't really want.

Three months later, Kathleen received a call from a Project SOAR counselor, who told her about a job opening at Planned Parenthood of MN-NE Region. Kathleen was interested, both because she believed in the importance of the agency's mission and because it looked like the job could provide a means toward her ultimate goal of obtaining a management position. With Project SOAR's support - a counselor helped update Kathleen's resume and called the Regional Director of Planned Parenthood to provide a reference - Kathleen landed the job of Clinic Assistant.

Kathleen learned a great deal at Planned Parenthood. She further developed her management and leadership skills and gained confidence in her ability to handle a highly responsible position. Her innovative ideas were appreciated by her supervisor, and one of Kathleen's accomplishments was to reorganize the clinic schedule to reduce waiting time for clients and create a less stressful environment for the staff.

As Kathleen's faith in her abilities grew, she realized that she was ready to take the next step. With the support of her supervisor at Planned Parenthood, Kathleen decided to apply for a position with Lake Superior Paper Mill Industries. She was attracted to this company because of their commitment to progressive management styles and because of the greater financial security she could achieve in a traditionally male-dominated field. Kathleen applied through the local Job Service and participated in a battery of initial tests. Her scores were high enough that Kathleen was interviewed for the next available technician position. Although that interview did not result in a job offer, Kathleen persisted



by coming back to Project SOAR and discussing her progress. A counselor went over the interview with her and suggested ways for her to field questions and improve her chances. One of the things that became clear in their session was that Kathleen herself was not convinced she could handle the strenuous physical demands and technical skills that the position required. With a lot of encouragement and a reevaluation of her abilities, Kathleen overcame her fears. She let the Paper Mill know that she was still interested in a position with them, and a month later she was called for another interview. After a series of meetings and a required physical examination, Kathleen was offered a job as a Technician for substantially more salary and benefits than she was receiving at Planned Parenthood. Filled with excitement and nervousness, Kathleen accepted the job.

That was four months ago. Kathleen has already received one promotion and is now being considered for a Lead II position; if she gets it, she'll be supervising an entire team of workers and earning more than 40 thousand dollars a year! Beyond the financial benefits the position affords her, Kathleen has achieved her goal of working in an environment that recognizes and rewards her for her leadership ability. Kathleen is also proud of her well developed biceps!

Kathleen continues to visit Project SOAR on occasion, both for support and for the opportunity to give to other participants. Kathleen regularly visits the program to talk to women about her professional journey and to encourage participants to consider nontraditional fields. This is what Kathleen had to say about Project SOAR:

"The program made me feel like I wasn't alone and that my feelings were **normal**. SOAR gave me a chance to make friends, to regain my people skills and to increase my self esteem. Most important, it provided me with the opportunity to discover who I am and what I want."



NEW DIRECTIONS  
Detroit Lakes

NAME: Fern Simpson  
OCCUPATION : Nursing Assistant Training

As I walked through the mall (in Detroit Lakes) one afternoon, I saw a table set up ;with leaflets and typed pages spread across it. Behind the table sat a very bored-looking lady. I stopped to see what the leaflets were about - the title had to do with "New Directions." This amazed me because just a few days before a friend was talking to me about this organization. Just about a month before my husband left me a little note on the kitchen table telling me that he was moving out, that our life together wasn't enough to satisfy him anymore. I soon found out kwhy. He had a girlfriend. I thought this was the end of my world. I even thought suicide was the answer, but then I thought of my grandson and the fact that he would have to grow up without his grandmother's love and affection and realized that there had to be a better way. So I become a "hermit." I went to work and came home -- it was a very rough period of time.

Then a friend mentioned "New Directions." I hadn't found the courage to go into the office, but it seemed that I was meant to find Marilyn, becuase there she sat. We talked awhile. She gave me her card and encouraged me to call her anytime. I guess that was the beginning of my healing process. Marilyn was there when I wanted to drop in and chat when I was in town. She encouraged me to "get more schooling." But I couldn't imagine finding either the time (I was working odd hours and doing sewing for other people and between the two barely making enough to pay bills I was left with. Another time-consuming project? "No thanks.") or the energy. But she was always there to listen.

Then suddenly I got a letter...Marilyn is moving...they will be finding a replacement as soon as possible. Sure, there can't be a replacement for "my ear." However, a few weeks later I get a phone call, "This is Mary from New Directions, please give me a call." Mary and I set up an appointment. Again, "Why don't you try some schooling?" Several other ideas, like promoting my sewing, maybe starting my own sewing operation. Finally, I found my niche - Home Health Care Aide - the first step toward my goal? Back to school I go. Three weeks of Nursing Assistant Training. But, of course, no part-time grants were available through the tech school I wanted to use, so when I was about ready to put it all on hold, Mary called me to say she could get the funding for me.

I am almost finished with my first week. It has been a lot of work, not much sleep, lots of coffee, but what a good feeling for a change. At this point I am at the top of my class and what an ego booster that is. It has been a long time coming, but my self-esteem is getting higher alll the time and I couldn't have done it without all the great help from New Directions - Marilyn, Mary, and one I never met, Pat, who came to my aid. THANKS!

