

Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program

1991 Report



From Surviving to Thriving:
Displaced Homemakers Do Start Over

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
Jobs and Training

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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. Client eligibility is determined by income and displaced homemaker status.

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. The biennial 1989-90 budget for the program is \$2,510,000.

ARE THEY SUCCESSFUL?

While the goals of the programs stress preparation for employment and training, from July 1989 through June 1990, upon completion of their enrollment period, over 73% were in school, working, or active with another employment and training program. The cost per participant is an extremely modest \$566. Forty-five percent (45%) of those served are welfare recipients desirous of moving off public assistance.

**PROGRAM FACTS AND FIGURES
JULY 1, 1989 - JUNE 30, 1990**

ENROLLEES

- * 74% of displaced homemakers were unemployed when they enrolled.
 - * Over 70% were supporting children.
- * 87% had at least a high school diploma or GED at enrollment
 - * 82% were separated or divorced.
 - * Over 45% were living in rural areas or towns.
- * 11% of displaced homemakers had a disability that affected their employability.
- * 25% of Displaced Homemaker Program enrollees were age 45 or older.
- * 44% of Displaced Homemaker Program enrollees were receiving some welfare assistance.

COMPLETIONS

Of those displaced homemakers completing the Displaced Homemaker Program:

- * 29.5% achieved employment with an annualized wage of \$13,375.
 - * 15.5% were in advanced education leading to employment.
 - * 6.5% were in skills training leading to employment.
 - * 17% completed program objectives.
- * 4.5% entered other employment and training programs.

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:

- * Workshops in conjunction with technical colleges.
- * Workshops in conjunction with battered women's shelter.
- * Workshops for Native American groups on reservation.
- * Project for minority displaced homemakers in inner city.
- * Workshops for STRIDE and JTPA participants.
- * Chemical dependent displaced homemaker group project.
- * Special AFDC project.
- * Non-traditional occupations project.
- * Special marketing project.
- * JTPA Older Worker projects.
- * Expanded outreach to recovering chemical dependent women.
- * Curriculum integration project of gender neutral career information for girls and boys.
- * Facilitation of interagency planning for "at risk youth" and their families.

MYTH

"The displaced homemaker problem is decreasing as time goes by."

FACT

While the 1980's proved to be a decade of progress for many women, with significant changes in work patterns and career opportunities, displaced homemakers and single parents are still facing the same situations and challenges they faced at the beginning of the decade. *"THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME"*, according to the National Displaced Homemaker Network.

- * In 1980 Minnesota had 186,376 displaced homemakers. In 1989, Minnesota had in excess of 246,000 displaced homemakers. This represents an **increase** of over **32%**.
- * Nationwide, in 1980 there were 11,430,961 displaced homemakers. By 1989, this number had increased to over 13,323,000, and **increase** of over **16.5%**.

These figures demonstrate the continued need for the services provided by the Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- 1977 Support for Displaced Homemakers developed in Minnesota and two programs were authorized by the State Legislature.
- 1978-1979 The first two Displaced Homemaker programs opened:
- * Life Work Planning Center, Mankato; and
 - * New Careers/Working Opportunities for Women, Twin Cities.
- 1980-1981 In response to successes and needs, the State Legislature authorized the third and fourth program:
- * SOAR, Duluth; and
 - * Mainstay, Marshall.
- 1982-1984 The Legislature, through an increase in line-item marriage license and dissolution filing fees, authorized funds and started six new programs:
- * Crossroads, Thief River Falls;
 - * Pathfinders, Morris;
 - * META 5, Brainerd;
 - * WINGS, Sauk Rapids;
 - * Lives-in-Transition, Virginia; and
 - * New Directions, Detroit Lakes.
- 1984-1985 The Legislature designated all funding for programs to come from increased marriage license and dissolution fees.
- 1986 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:
- * Choices of Southeast MN, Rochester; and
 - * Stepping Stones, Willmar.
- The funding source for the Displaced Homemaker Program was changed from marriage license and dissolution fees to a general fund appropriation.

THE MINNESOTA DISPLACED HOMEMAKER PROGRAM IS COMMITTED TO:

- * 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.

- * Service to the four remaining unserved counties: Hubbard, Beltrami, Clearwater, and Lake of the Woods.

- * Continued public education to promote increased understanding of the needs of displaced homemakers.

- * Educate young women and men to prepare for their futures and impress upon them the importance of developing career skills to ensure a secure future.

- * Continued networking with other agencies to increase support service and employment and training resources for displaced homemakers.

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>CONTRACTOR</u>	<u>COUNTIES SERVED</u>
Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Programs Coordinator 690 American Center Building 150 East Kellogg Boulevard St. Paul, MN 55101 (612) 296-5325 1-800-456-8519		
Crossroads, DHP, Inc. 403 North LaBree Thief River Falls, MN 56701 (218) 681-8158	Private Non-Profit Corporation	Roseau, Kittson, Marshall, Polk, Red Lake, Pennington, Norman
Lives in Transition 702 Third Avenue South Virginia, MN 55702 (218) 749-2912	Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Office (AEOA)	Koochiching, Itasca, St. Louis, Aitkin, Lake, Cook, Carlton
New Directions PO Box L New York Mills, MN 56567 (218) 385-2900	Otter Tail Wadena Community Action Agency (CAC)	Becker, Clay, Wilkin, Otter Tail, Mahnomon
META 5 DHP Brainerd Community College College Drive & SW Fourth Street Brainerd, MN 56401 (218) 828-2538	Brainerd Community College	Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, Wadena, Mille Lacs
W.I.N.G.S. 728 South Benton Drive Sauk Rapids, MN 56379 (612) 251-1612	Tri-County Action Programs, Inc.	Benton, Stearns, Sherburnes, Wright, Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec
Pathfinders DHP 215 Atlantic Avenue Morris, MN 56267 (612) 589-2556 1-800-223-1239	West Central MN Community Action Agency (CAA)	Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine
MAINSTAY, Inc. 308 North Third Street Marshall, MN 56258 (507) 537-1546	Private Non-Profit Corporation Nobles & Rock	Redwood, Lyon, Lincoln, Pipestone, Murray, Cottonwood, Jackson

COUNTIES SERVED

PROGRAM PROVIDERS

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>CONTRACTOR</u>	<u>COUNTIES SERVED</u>
Project SOAR of Northeastern MN 205 West Second Street, Suite 101 Duluth, MN 55802 (218) 722-3126	Private Non-Profit Corporation	Duluth & 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
Choices of Southeast Minnesota 851 30th Avenue Southeast Rochester, MN 55904-4999 (507) 285-5510 1-800-383-5421	Rochester Community College	Rice, Goodhue, Dodge, Wabasha, Steele, Winona, Freeborn, Mower, Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted
Stepping Stones Box 1359 Willmar, MN 56201 (612) 235-0850 1-800-992-1710	Heartland Community Action Agency	Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville, McLeod

Program serves displaced homemakers

Aids victims of the '4 Ds'

By JOANN WRIGHT
Home-Living Editor

WILLMAR — Stepping Stones, a new program to help displaced homemakers become employed and self-sufficient, is up and running at the Heartland Community Action Agency.

Displaced homemakers are persons (some are men) who have lost their primary source of income due to one of the four Ds — death, desertion, disability or divorce.

Most often they are women who have spent a number of years caring for their homes and families and depending upon the income of their husbands. Suddenly they find they must find paid employment in order to survive.

Gerry Taylor of Willmar understands well how quickly a woman who thought she was set for life can find herself suddenly "out in the cold."

In the 1960s Taylor, then Geraldine Hudec, was living in Echo with her first husband, Dr. Ray Hudec, a physician, and their two children. In those days women were expected to be full-time homemakers and mothers, Taylor said. "A doctor made enough to provide a comfortable living for his family and if his wife worked outside the home, she would have been criticized for taking a job away from someone who needed the income to survive." So she kept busy with her family and with volunteer work in church, civic and social organizations.

In 1966, after a short illness, Ray Hudec died and his income ceased. "Doctors were not covered under Social Security until 1965, so he had only paid in for five quarters," Taylor said. "Therefore, I wasn't eligible for Social Security benefits."

"In that small town, there weren't many jobs available that paid enough to live on," Taylor continued. "I applied for at a few places, but they always asked, 'Can you type?' I couldn't then, and I still can't," Taylor said. "I didn't know what to do."

Then an aunt who was a social worker came to stay with Taylor for awhile. Since Taylor had a

Stepping Stones Area Offices

Kandiyohi County, 310 S. First Street, Willmar, phone 235-0850 or, toll-free, 1-800-992-1710, office hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

McLeod County, 105 Second Ave. S.W., Hutchinson, phone 587-5244, office hours 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays.

Meeker County, 11 W. Third St., Litchfield, phone 693-9354, office hours 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays.

Renville County, PIC office, 106 N. Ninth St., Olivia, phone 523-1007, office hours 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays.

degree in social work, her aunt encouraged her to become a social worker. "She was my displaced homemaker program," Taylor said.

Taylor became a social worker for Renville County, a position she held for 14 years. "I enjoyed it, and it paid enough so I could live," she said.

In 1967 she married Gene Taylor and they moved to Willmar in 1968. She continued to work as a part-time social worker while also serving as the office manager of her husband's insurance agency. She also remained active in volunteer work.

In 1979 Taylor was appointed to the Governor's Council for Displaced Homemakers by Gov. Rudy Perpich, a position she has held ever since.

As a member of the council she was instrumental in getting a program for displaced homemakers established in Willmar to serve a four county area — Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod and Renville counties.

An advisory committee was formed, with Taylor as one of its members. In 1988 Region 6E Community Action Agency applied for \$50,000 in seed money from private foundations to help get the program established.

Last November the local program received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training. The grant provides \$65,000 for each of two years.

In March Terry VanDerPol, a native of rural Clara City, was hired as a director. A graduate of the University of Minnesota, Morris, with a degree in social psychology, she had spent the past 10 years managing youth education and employment programs for an agency that serves at-risk youth. The first few months were spent



Tribune photo by Bill Zimmer

Stepping Stones Director Terry VanDerPol, seated, and Joan Aarvig, service coordinator offer counseling and support for displaced homemakers in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker and Renville counties.

in getting the program up and running. Heartland Community Action Agency provided office space and administrative services. The new program, known as Stepping Stones, began recruiting its first clients this summer.

Joan Aarvig, a Willmar native, was hired this summer as a half-time service coordinator. Aarvig earned an associate's degree in human services at St. Cloud State University and graduated from St. Cloud State University last May with a degree in applied psychology.

A divorced mother of two, she has participated in the CAA's self-sufficiency program, and would have qualified for the displaced homemaker's program if it had been in place earlier.

"The period following my divorce was a negative and difficult time for me," she said. "Without the self-sufficiency program I wouldn't be here today. I'm glad

I'm able to turn my experience into something positive for someone else."

According to statistics provided by Taylor, 98 to 99 percent of the clients in Minnesota's displaced homemaker programs are female. The bulk are between the ages of 25 and 44, and more than 90 percent are white women. Currently there are 10 displaced homemaker programs operating in Minnesota.

Displaced homemakers face many barriers to becoming economically self-sufficient, according to VanDerPol. They may lack paid work experience, have low self-esteem, be unaware of what career options are available, what training and education is required, or what skills they have that might be useful to an employer. They may not know how to go about writing a resume or how to prepare for a job interview.

"Stepping Stones can help them

remove these barriers, learn what choices are available and help them develop and follow a plan to achieve financial independence.

Since the local program is so new, there are currently only about 15 clients in the program, VanDerPol said. But, based on estimates of the number of people who generally need this kind of program, "we are scheduled to serve 105 clients this year."

Outreach has played a very big part of VanDerPol's job up until now. Recently she has sent out about 75 referral packets to ministers, social services agencies, food shelves, police departments, lawyers, home extension agents, and Head Start programs — anyone who might be in a position to come into contact with a displaced homemaker.

"We have been getting publicity in the newspapers and on the radio and we have found that

Workshops start Oct. 12

WILLMAR — Stepping Stones, Heartland Community Action Agency's program for displaced homemakers, is sponsoring a series of personal development, career planning, and job seeking workshops. The workshops are designed to help homemakers make the transition to success in the workplace.

The series will begin on Friday, Oct. 12, with three sessions on Enhancing Self-Esteem, Exploring Interests and Value, and Assertiveness, Decision-Making, and Learning Styles.

During the second phase, participants will use written resources, video presentations and computerized career planning aids to choose and plan a career path.

The final two workshops will focus on job-seeking and work readiness skills. During this phase, participants will have the opportunity to develop and practice interviewing and testing skills, receive assistance in developing and producing resumes and job application letters, develop job success skills and learn about employees' rights on the job.

The workshops will begin on Oct. 12 and run through Nov. 16. The will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Fridays in the Heartland Community Action Agency's main conference room at Midtown Plaza, 310 S. First St. in Willmar.

The workshops are free to anyone qualifying for the Stepping Stones Displaced Homemaker Program. Child care and transportation assistance will be available. Displaced homemakers in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker and Renville counties are eligible. Others are welcome to attend. A small sliding fee will be charged.

For further information call Terry VanDerPol at 235-0850 or 1-800-992-1710 or Joan Aarvig at 693-9355 in Litchfield.

West Central
Daily Tribune

10/4/90

**GENEVIEVE NEISEN
MAINSTAY, INC.
MARSHALL**

My name is Genevieve Neisen. I am a single parent of two teenagers. I've been a displaced homemaker for 13½ years. During my separation and my divorce becoming final I was on welfare. I didn't have a college education to fall back on to find a good job to support my children and myself. I felt very fortunate though when I got hired at a glass plant here in Marshall, P.P.G. Industries. It was a good company to work for. I got off welfare and was able to be independent to take care of my children and be able to keep my home. I worked there for a little over 12 years. On October 14th they closed its' doors. It was a very sad time. Many of my friends had to move away. I decided to stay and see what work I could find here. At first I felt so helpless, I was suffering a great loss. P.P.G. was very helpful towards its employees. They sponsored a career day. People came to represent different vocational schools, to help us find a job in a certain field they teach.

Mainstay was there. I saw what their services were and I signed up. I thought what the heck, I am unemployed, I have lots of time, might as well see what they can do for me. A counselor called me to set up an appointment. I was so pleased the minute I walked in the door. Everyone was so nice and I just knew the caring was there. I signed up for the workshops. Since I was without a job I knew I wouldn't be able to pay for what they offered, but they took care of everything. They have funds for those who can't pay. I also needed counseling. My self worth and confidence was pretty low. I didn't know what to do, what kind of jobs are out there. I never thought I would be in this situation. I was in mourning, I suffered a great loss.

Mainstay's workshops helped me so much. I needed motivation, I needed to deal with stress, loss, and grief, I needed to take a look at my values. I found values I never even knew I had. They taught me how to job search, write resumes, interview techniques, and especially career crossroads which path to take. To me career crossroads was one that changed my life around. There were other workshops and to me they were all helpful.

Even though P.P.G. was a good job and I worked there all those years, I realized at Mainstay I want a job I would really love doing. So my counselor was very helpful in getting me to see all the values, experiences, and talents I had to use to find the job I want. I knew I didn't want to go to college so we worked at the various jobs that you didn't need a college diploma. She knew a lady that was doing a job I was interested in doing and she helped me in how to go about applying for it.

At first I didn't think it would happen. But they gave me the confidence and support all the way. Even after my workshops and counseling were done I still keep in touch with my counselor and the rest of the staff. They are like family to me.

Today I have a job with DOT as a Highway Maintenance Worker. I love it. I highly recommend Mainstay to help women and men alike find what they want in knowing one's self and what is out there. We are not alone and there are things you can't do alone. Everyone at Mainstay cares and keeps on caring. Thank you.

**KATY LAITINEN
LIVES-IN-TRANSITION/AEOA
VIRGINIA**

I married at 19. At the age of 29 I was a widow with 2 children, ages 7 and 10 and I was also a recovering alcoholic. All I knew was housework and my home and that I wanted to stay sober. For the next ten years I tried to rearrange a new way of life for me and my children. By September of 1975 another son was born. I became mother to three. Even though I had a romantic relationship--I was determined to be independent--I never wanted to be left alone, not knowing what to do.

During the next ten years, I had to learn how to take care of our financial problems. I learned how to drive a car and how to get my license. From the insurance money I bought a mobile home and land. I also had to learn how to maintain our new home and all the other care it needed. During this time I added one more son to my family, so my family had grown to four children.

By 1985 all my children were in school--and I took my GED. In '86 I realized I was going to be home alone all day long, this is when a friend told me about this program for men and women. So I enrolled in Lives in Transition program. I learned through workshops, assertiveness, self-esteem, confidence and goal setting. I really took a hard look at myself. I took assertiveness and goal setting very serious! Self-confidence I lacked some!

In the winter of '86 I started college courses as a full-time Human Services student. I had a long hard battle during school time. My family and I survived on financial aid and \$200 a month child support. I never applied for AFDC. In the summer of '89 I worked at an Indian Treatment Center, 200 miles away from home. I stayed there during the week and went home on weekends. LIT assisted me with mileage money.

My last year in school was hard, I had left all the hard courses for last. In the Fall of '90 I was going to enroll again to finish my degree. A friend, who is now a fellow employee, told me about a job in the Virginia area for Indian counselors. I applied for the job. I saw all these nicely dressed women at the interview. I, (who has never worn a dress in public) got the job.

I was so delighted and happy. I floated home. LIT once again came to my rescue with supportive service money for clothes so I could look presentable for work. I have been working since October 1990, full-time. It sure feels good to be able to finally support my family after all these years.

Without the help of LIT my life's goals would never have been recognized by me. I can never say enough for this program. Today I am an assertive, still sober, Indian woman, at the age of 46. My life is full, it has a lot of meaning to me and my family. I feel I looked at the inner me when I started the LIT program in 1986. I was given a second chance at life through the help of LIT. Thank you.

CHRIS IHRKE
CHOICES
ROCHESTER

I was a homemaker for 27 years and I'm 62 years old. I came to CHOICES because I hadn't had a job for a number of years and I needed to get back to work because my husband and I had separated. I enrolled in the Career Exploration Class in July of 1990. I was doing volunteer work with the American Cancer Society and later with the Volunteer Connection. The Volunteer Connection suggested that I continue to work for them through the Green Thumb Program.

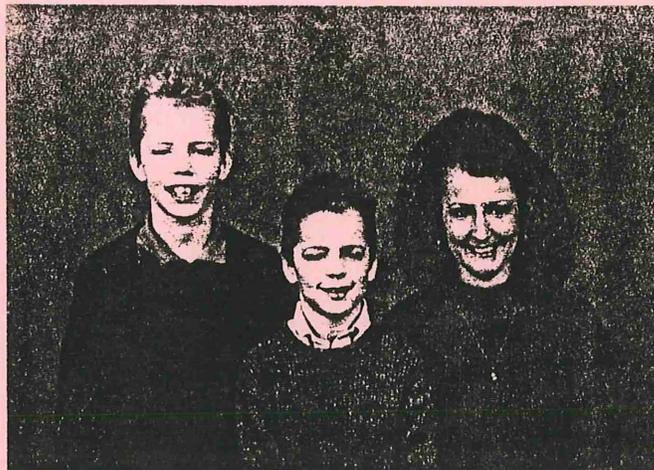
In the Fall I decided to enroll in the ten week Life Skills Development Workshop through CHOICES to work on personal issues and to feel supported by other people in my situation. It was nice to be with other people in the same boat I was in and get feedback and support from each other.

The support of the staff and other people has meant a lot to me. I was really impressed when during break, at one of the first class meetings, the Director came and sat down and just chatted with me. It made me feel cared about and like I mattered. also, at one of our classes the instructor said to us, "Remember, even when you are through with the workshops we won't let go of you until you are ready, we're here for you."

I don't plan to go back to school at this time because of my age, but I enjoy working with the people at the Volunteer Connection and learning new things. Working with CHOICES has helped me have the courage to keep on going. Now I have a job, my own place to live and some new friends.

CROSSROADS DHP, Inc.
Region I

Grace Pagnac
January 1991



There I was, a divorced parent of two children with no educational background for a secure job except my GED. I decided to move to Thief River Falls in 1986, where I enrolled in the LPN program at the Technical College.

A good friend of mine, who was involved with the CROSSROADS Displaced Homemaker Program, gave me their number and encouraged me to call. I called them, and since then they have provided me with child care and financial assistance, and last but not least, they have been supportive with phone calls, letters, and referrals. After graduating from the Technical College and obtaining my LPN license, I enrolled in the Registered Nursing Program at Northland Community College. Being a student and a full time mother, I was only able to work 20-30 hours per month as an LPN.

I have now, after three years of schooling, completed the R.N. program and am working part time as an LPN. I work approximately 30 hours each week, at \$8.04 per hour. I do not have full benefits at this time. I regret to say that I have not passed my RN State Board licensing exams. I will take the exams again in February 1991, and am confident that I will pass them this time! I look forward to making \$11.98 per hour after receiving my R.N. license. It has been a very difficult time in my life, but again, CROSSROADS has been there for me. They have offered me tutoring, good counseling sources for "test anxiety", and financial assistance with state board expenses. CROSSROADS has shown me that there are people out there who care and are willing to help. They have been there to help me cope with difficult moments these past three years and that I will never forget. I am thankful to CROSSROADS for playing a big part in mine and my children's future.

Grace Pagnac

A handwritten signature of Grace Pagnac in cursive script.

FERN SIMPSON
NEW DIRECTIONS
OTTER TAIL-WADENA CAC

I will start my story by saying that I cannot sing my praises of New Directions loud enough or long enough. My counselor was always there when I needed some one to talk to, or cry to.

But, to start at the beginning...About three and one-half years ago my husband decided that the "pasture was greener" and packed up and moved out leaving me with house payments and all the bills. I was working at a job paying \$4.25 an hour and top pay at the place was \$5.00. None of my family live around here, so I was very much alone and lonely. Many times I even thought about suicide, but I have a very special grandson that needs a grandmother, so I kept hanging on "one day at a time". One day I was wandering through the shopping mall in Detroit Lakes and there sat a lady representing New Directions, Marilyn. The timing must have been just right because I had just been talking to a friend about this program. Marilyn gave me her business card and some literature and said to call her and set up an appointment. At that time I had thought of starting my own business. I made an appointment and had a nice visit with Marilyn and she gave me some starting points to look into on the possibility of my own business-even though none of it worked out we became friends, then I started working long hours and didn't have time to keep in touch. Then one night I came home from work-there was a message on my machine from a Mary at New Directions, "please call me". She was taking Marilyn's place-I really felt like I had lost a good friend, but Mary and I got together. We started to discuss school-I had made up my mind there was no way I could go-Mary just told me to keep it in the back of my mind. About a year later I decided that I wanted to become a Home Health Aide-that involved taking Nurse's Aide training, then the Home Health Aide course, which, of course, involved money. Funding was short, but Mary jumbled some things and told me to go do it. Finished both classes at the top of my class. I went to work a week later as a Home Health Aide and really enjoyed the work, but again it was only \$5.25 per hour, so I was working two jobs and killing myself. I did nothing but work and sleep. Finally one day I dropped in to see Mary. She told me (for a last time) that I really should go back to school. So here I am in my winter quarter of my first of two years of schooling to become an Occupational Therapist Assistant. Starting pay when I am out? Between \$9-\$11 an hour-wages I will be able to live on and work only one job. After being out of school 24 years, I was on the Honor Roll in fall quarter.

But the bottom line of this story comes right back to my New Directions counselor and her coming up with some good answers while I was racing my engine getting nowhere. This is one of the best programs I have come across. **KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!**

P.S. I was told I didn't have to sign my story, but I am proud to, I am finally proud of myself.

**NANCY BURGER
LIFE WORK PLANNING CENTER
MANKATO**

In September of 1989, while staying at our lake cottage, I woke up late one Saturday morning, walked outside and found my husband dead of a heart attack. The rescue squad worked on him but could not do anything. We were married for 33 years and have six really great kids and seven grandkids. I was not alone; but losing your mate leaves a void no one else can fill.

A couple of weeks before this my seasonal job had ended. My husband and I had re-financed our home, in my name, and I was paying high health insurance premiums. Suddenly I was unemployed, a widow at 53 and ineligible for Social Security for another 12 years. My tax man told me that with my insurance money I had enough to live on for two years. I urgently needed to get busy and do something to support myself.

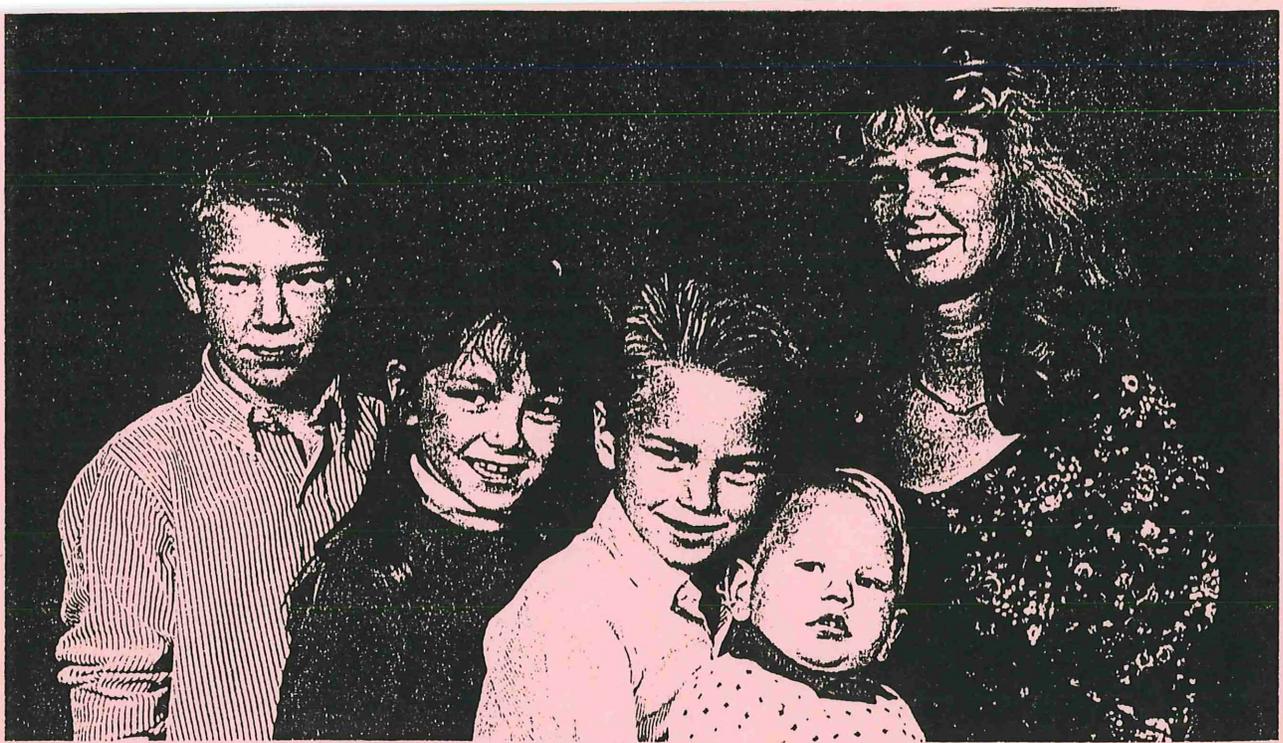
I took some time after my husband's death to straighten things out with the insurance, do some fall work around the house, and get my bearings. Then I visited Life-Work Planning Center. I went to some of their support groups and meetings, and worked with one of their counselors. On their computer, I researched what some of my options were for going back to school for more training. I had also been trying through Job Service to see what jobs I could get.

My husband had been a Maintenance Worker at Mankato State University. As luck would have it, I got an interview there for the same job--but on a temporary basis. Since I had experience from other jobs in this field and was an unemployed head of household, Mankato State let me give it a try. It was very hard physical work, on the night shift, and it took several weeks before I could prove to myself that I could handle the job. The people I worked with were very supportive--they had all worked with my husband and were pulling for me. I was hired permanently three months later, which now meant I had all the benefits!

Even at the time I was offered the permanent job, I still questioned whether I should go back to school for possibly a better job. But with my age I felt that, financially, this was probably the best solution. Without the feedback of my sessions at LWPC, however, I might have always wondered whether my decision to accept the job was really a choice. By coming to LWPC, I knew I had some other options available, I knew I didn't just have to take this job. After deliberating about it, I decided that taking th job was my best choice.

So here I am, a year and half later, with a full-time job and good benefits. I learned to drive a car for the first time at age 54. I have decided to keep my house, and my children and I have been doing some major remodeling. I am expecting our eighth grandchild.

It helps that I'm working with people my husband worked with, hearing about the jokes they played on one another. It's even comforting for me to use the same locker he used with his initials carved on the door. But I am still going to support groups and trying to find out who I am as a person, not just who I am as half a marriage. I am still doing some major re-learning about how to be a person who can enjoy the rest of her life and not just eat, work, sleep and support herself.



"DISPLACED HOMEMAKER NEED A CAREER? NEED TRAINING? DIVORCED SINGLE PARENTS WIDOWED". This wasn't exactly how the ad read word for word as I took the time to scan the Sunday mornings paper, the article seemed to fit who I was and what I needed--with the exception of being a widow though, at the time, I was certainly suffering with many grief issues. I knew I needed alot of changes in my life two years ago. I was an isolated 29 year old woman with four children, the youngest two months of age. I was going through a second divorce, suffering from many abuse issues, low self-esteem, low self worth, guilt-shame, alcoholism, borrowed home, no job, no income, no transportation and very little support from family or friends. I had a haunting past that wouldn't leave me alone. Internal loneliness was a part of a slow destructive disease that I was giving into.

That week I took a risk to be part of an organization called WOW. Since that time I have slowly started to make many changes. WOW gave me the tools I needed to begin a process of doing something for myself.

The staff, instructors and my career counselor were so very supportive with all areas of my life. I learned much about myself and some of the skills I possessed. I was given many resources and new ideas for career changes.

The program was exciting, and gave me hope that my dreams of being a mother and more were possible. I met many wonderful women who had alot of the same fears, hopes and ambitions like myself. A team of resourceful and intelligent women were our guides in helping us learn about career training, about changes, and about ourselves. They helped me work around many stumbling blocks including day care and transportation costs.

Through these two years, WOW has made a definite impression on my life. Today, I am continuing my education with the aid of grants. I have supportive people active in my life, healthy relationships, and a total year of sobriety. I realize I have choices in my career. I was a woman who so desperately needed a direction and training, and Working Opportunities for Women gave me a chance to view opportunities that are there for all women like myself and in other walks of life. I am growing, positive changes have taken place, my goals are being accomplished step by step, and I am enjoying life and all it's opportunities. Sincere and warmest thanks to a very special woman who went out of her way to make some of my dreams come true, Mimi Trudeau, Career Counselor and I hope more women can take advantage of what WOW has to offer them.

Simply,
Grateful,
Sincerely,

Therese

DIANA ENGLS
W.I.N.G.S.
SAUK RAPIDS

In 1984 I was newly divorced, the mother of two active boys (ages 1 and 4), I had no college degree or specific vocational training, and worked as a bookkeeper at a law firm. This was not a minimum wage job, yet my net income didn't begin to cover rent plus food plus daycare. I was receiving no child support, and was not eligible for public assistance. If I continued as I was, this would be my situation for the next three to six years. I had no self-esteem.

Today, I am earning a good wage (\$24,500 annually), paying my rent and childcare, buying food and not in need of any public assistance. Barring any unforeseen catastrophe, I will never need to rely on public assistance, despite the fact that over the past six years I have received on \$30.00 in child support payments. My self-esteem is very high.

What made that dramatic difference? Many things including very hard work. A turning point for me was the W.I.N.G.S. Program, a Displaced Homemakers Program. There I received the emotional support and vocational guidance I needed, as well as some financial assistance. I was able to set a goal and to believe I was capable of achieving it. I returned to school. It took a great deal of planning and arranging, for financial aid, daycare, transportation, etc. I worked part-time and carried a full credit load, but still had to rely on programs like AFDC, food stamps, medical assistance, and WIC, to lead my family through some very difficult years. I am now a tax payer again.

Would I have turned my life around without the help of Judy Stene and W.I.N.G.S.? Maybe. Maybe if I had, it would have taken longer and cost more emotionally. Maybe I wouldn't have even tried. I credit W.I.N.G.S. for starting me out on that long journey away from public assistance.

ELLEN WEIZENEGGER
META 5
BRAINERD

It was May, 1987. I parked in the Brainerd Community College lot, heaved myself out of the car and waddled through the nearest door--and then I stopped. Unsure of where to go, and feeling very much out of place, I looked to the left--nothing, and the right--click.

The door said "META 5 Displaced Homemakers Program". There really was a place for a twice-divorced 26 year-old woman, seven months pregnant with her second child, to begin again. Instead of walking out, I walked in.

Lucy and Arlyne had time for me right away. They poured me a cup of coffee and listened. I told them how my second husband and I had separated, just before I realized that I was pregnant. I'd been living with my parents and worked at a video rental store, which paid the bills at the clinic and helped keep us in food and clothing. But I didn't want to impose on Mom and Dad much longer, and I certainly didn't make enough money to keep myself and two children--much less pay for my imminent hospitalization.

That very first day, Lucy showed me around the school and gave me a financial aid packet and the college catalog. Arlyne administered a test to determine where my aptitudes and interests could take me. I left feeling that I'd accomplished something.

That was the first step. I went back to see the test results, and attended workshops until just before my son was born. I didn't register for classes until the baby was a year old, but META 5 kept in touch, sending me newsletters on a regular basis. I moved into a small apartment and was promoted to assistant manager at work. On the first day of classes there were two familiar faces--Lucy's and Arlyne's.

Now it's January, 1991. Yesterday, I applied for graduation from Brainerd Community College, and at the end of May I'll have an A.A. in Communications. Some of my writing is going to be published. I've been able to cut my hours at work a little, to spend more time with my children.

I plan to go on with my education until I reach a level at which I can teach at a University. It won't be easy, but I know that it is possible.

That's how META 5 works. When your life seems impossible, they present you with possibilities. META 5 gets you started on a new track. And when the going gets tough, META 5 stays with you.

Eventually, you can do it on your own.

**KATHLEEN SCHROEDER
PROJECT SOAR
DULUTH**

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 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 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 month 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.

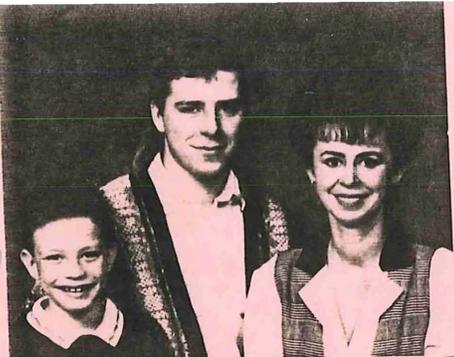
As Kathleen's faith in her abilities grew, she realized that she was ready to take the next step. With the support of her supervisor at Planned Parenthood, Kathleen decided to apply for a position with Lake Superior Paper Mill Industries. She was attracted to this company because of their commitment 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 sessions 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.

Kathleen Schroeder
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That was four month 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 forty 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."



**DONNA DROBNY
PATHFINDERS
MORRIS**

When Donna first contacted the Displaced Homemaker Program, she was working as an LPN at the Madison Lutheran Home. She had recently been divorced and had physical custody of her two sons. Her youngest son Patrick, who was premature at birth, was experiencing problems with his fine motor skills and required tutoring in school as well as a great deal of work one to one at home. Her oldest son Scott had been through treatment for Chemical Dependency and was having difficulty maintaining sobriety because of peer pressure. During this time Donna's house was foreclosed on and she had thirteen months to vacate her home.

Although she was working Donna felt that in order for her to be economically self sufficient she would need to pursue additional training. She contacted Pathfinders, who assisted her in gathering information about the options she had open to her.

The Registered Nursing program at the Willmar Community College was chosen. Donna recalls, "I made a commitment to fifteen months of extensive study, and assured my children that we would survive. Needless to say, they may never trust me again. I cannot begin to even explain the stress and anxiety that the financial aspect alone has caused us. I pray that I should live long enough to repay the loans I have incurred. I know I will never live long enough to forget the embarrassment, or the debridement of pride I have endured. Not to mention the hours that I have spent to seek, or rather, beg for help. I am very capable of following a budget, however, that budget needs to have some money backing it."

Donna did apply to her county for AFDC for her two children as well as Medical Assistance and food Stamps for support until the training program was completed. However, because Donna was a student she had difficulty in getting the assistance she needed from the county. Pathfinders advocated on Donna's behalf with the Family Services Agency in her county to get food stamps and AFDC.

Donna elected to commute for one quarter to Willmar until her son graduated from High School and until she could find a place in Willmar. During this time she and her son were also applying for financial aide and enrolling him in school for fall quarter. In the summer, while juggling her studies, Donna moved to Willmar. Pathfinders was able to assist with some of the relocation expenses.

As soon as she was settled in her new apartment, Donna discovered that her apartment was infested with rats. She requested the management allow her to move to another apartment. The request was granted, however, this meant additional expense for her along with the uncovered costs of the training program. To help her through this time period Pathfinders also assisted Donna with uniform costs and nursing shoes.

Donna is now employed at the St. Cloud Hospital in the trauma unit working twelve hour shifts which she must rotate. This is sometimes a problem because her son, Patrick is in the first grade. Patrick continues to have some difficulty in school because of the circumstances of his birth and fact that his motor skills are not developing as rapidly as they should. However, she is pleased with the school system he is enrolled in and can see that he is making progress. Her oldest son, Scott, is a student in his second year at a Technical College and would like to complete two more years, but is unable to do that because they don't have the finances available. Scott has maintained sobriety since his in patient treatment for chemical dependency, but she indicates that it has not always been easy. Donna stated that one of her proudest moments was when she was able to call the Pathfinders office and refer to herself "Donna Drobny, RN."

In reflecting on her experience, Donna expressed the following:

"Areas of concern for the nontraditional student such as myself include, but are not limited to, expenses such as transportation, child care, mandatory uniform needs, and emergency family needs. Aside from financial help, there is a strong need for emotional support and encouragement.

Help us to be independent and free of government services, as we can be through the employment skills we can acquire. Help us to maintain sanity and emotional equilibrium so we can care for our children, and pass along healthy, positive attitudes and values.

You may wonder what can be done, where does the beginning of the answer come from. Ask us. Ask those of us that are there now. Through this maybe we can help those that will follow. Believe in me. I have proven that I am a valuable, worthwhile person, and that I am determined to succeed. Trust me, don't pass personal judgements, don't stereotype me, help me to get to that other side of the fence. I don't want tons of free money to live an easy good life, I just want enough help so we can live through this experience.

Continue to actively support agencies that are as valuable as gold. Agencies that are providing the services they advertise, agencies that are humanistic and holistic. Such agencies at **PATHFINDERS** and **MINNESOTA AREA JOB TRAINING**, without these two services I know I would not have been able to remain in school. They have literally been my life line, financially and emotionally. They have directed me in possible directions for help. They have encouraged me through "the process" and "the systems", and they have encouraged me to go on when I didn't feel I could fight one more battle. Pathfinders representative, Kate Ouverson, even accompanied me as my spokesperson to one of the agencies that was extremely intimidating. She was able to quote the correct, up to date, rules and regulations, and therefore correct the problem.

Continue to support these agencies, and strengthen them as they demonstrate the ability to achieve the goals that are set before them."

