

The Encore Opportunity Awards of 2009

TAPPING THE PASSION AND
EXPERIENCE OF WORKERS OVER 50

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 **ENCORE
CAREERS**

Recognizing Opportunities in Encore Talent

By Phyllis N. Segal and Diane Piktialis

[Civic Ventures](#), with support from [MetLife Foundation](#), is proud to announce the winners of the 2009 Encore Opportunity Awards.

Even in today's challenging economic times, nonprofits and government agencies are engaging people over 50 in creative ways to accomplish pressing missions.

Spread across the country, the eight 2009 Encore Opportunity Award winners protect public safety, build low-income housing, teach job skills, preserve the environment, and fill other vital needs.

Though diverse, the winners have at least one thing in common: They have tapped encore talent to serve the common good.

Just a few years ago, the idea of workers over 50 as a talent pool, and the concept of encore careers that combine continued income, personal meaning, and social impact, were not on the radar screen for many social sector organizations. They are now, as organizations face a combination of societal needs and continuing demographic changes. These award winners powerfully demonstrate why this resource is too good to waste.

Segal is a vice president at Civic Ventures. Piktialis is an expert on boomers and workplace issues.

These vanguard organizations point to important insights and practical strategies of great value for other employers:

1. Encore talent helps develop new services to meet unmet needs.

Recognizing the loss of native language and culture led the **Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals** to develop a program in which Native American elders teach young children the Dakota and Ojibwe languages and heritage. And to help seniors and people with disabilities live independently, **Umbrella of the Capital District** connects homeowners with encore workers providing maintenance services, such as light carpentry and plumbing.

2. An encore work force meets expanding program demands.

A growing roster of disabled clients needing services meant that the small nonprofit **Civitan Foundation Inc.** needed to grow, too. It found a new source of direct care staff in the increasing numbers of boomers looking for encore career opportunities – and created the Caring Connections project to recruit, hire, and train them.

3. Moving valued staff members into encore roles is a strategy to retain them.

The **National Center for Appropriate Technology** created an “adjunct” employee option, through which former employees may return when needed – keeping invaluable expertise available to the organization. Rather than wind down by entering a “phased retirement” track, the nonprofit’s adjunct employees are transitioning to a new stage of meaningful work.

4. Leadership is key for starting a successful encore hiring program.

The CEO at **Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter Florida Inc.** – who is in an encore career himself – appealed to retirees to enhance his organization’s work force and almost tripled the staff in seven years.

5. A multigenerational staff enhances the work environment.

Tapping encore talent creates a multigenerational work force in which experienced staff members serve as mentors, role models, and even surrogate family for younger staff and clients alike. At the **Gwinnett County Sheriff’s Department**, encore workers coach younger staff and often become parental figures to inmates.

6. To meet their mission, employers can place encore talent in specific programs, in jobs throughout the organization, or both.

The **National Center for Appropriate Technology** recruits and hires 50-plus energy specialists for a team that assesses energy efficiency in commercial, industrial, and government buildings. The nonprofit also employs encore workers across the organization in diverse roles such as telephone hotline staff and horticulturists.

7. Employers are willing to pay for help finding and training encore workers.

The **Executive Service Corps of Chicago’s** interim executive director program provides encore opportunities and training for former nonprofit executives to help nonprofits during difficult management transitions. Foundation funding helped start the program, but it now receives support from fees that come from the nonprofits that hire interim directors.

8. Employers think beyond classified ads and online postings to recruit encore workers.

Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter sees recruiting older adults to become AmeriCorps members as a way to develop future staff. Other award winners recruit through local groups of all kinds, including professional associations and community organizations.

9. Training eases encore transitions and engages encore staff.

Before going into the classroom, recruits from the building trades receive extensive teacher training by **Orleans Technical Institute**, a program of **JEVS Human Services**. New teachers learn how to communicate their real-world skills to an at-risk population.

10. Encore workers can thrive when they have opportunities to support each other.

Executive Service Corps of Chicago creates a learning community for the encore career work force to share experiences. For the interim directors who find positions through the corps, meeting together fosters support and success in their new stage of work.

Saving Native Language

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
Minneapolis, Minnesota

You can learn the history, the folklore, the music, the dance. But you may never truly understand a culture – a people – without knowing the language.

That feeling drives Lillian Rice in her work, teaching children a Native American language slipping into extinction.

The Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals gives workers who are old enough and wise enough to be considered “elders” in native communities an opportunity to get paid to do what only they can: save a language.

The organization’s program, called the Wicoie Nandagikendan Urban Immersion Preschools Project, has given Rice, 77, a chance to fulfill a longtime wish: “It was one of my private thoughts, wondering, ‘How can I reach the young ones?’”

In three Minneapolis classrooms – two in a public preschool and one in a child care center – more than 50 Native American children, ages 16 months to 5 years, participate in language immersion classes in Ojibwe or Dakota.

If you invest in people over the long haul, their commitment, their vision, and their wisdom can make a change.

Margaret Boyer, executive director

For three hours every weekday, children learn in the assigned native language. No English is allowed. To prepare them for kindergarten, they learn pre-literacy

skills and math concepts. They talk through simple tasks, such as washing hands or using a spoon. They hear native stories. They learn about the “three sisters” – corn, beans, and squash – the main crops of many tribes.

Each class is led by an elder, who is paired with a younger person, an apprentice.

In Native American communities there’s a distinction between an “older person” and an “elder,” says Margaret Boyer, executive director of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals, a state-wide advocacy group.

“An elder understands our cultural values,” she says. “There’s general agreement that they have a lot of wisdom and, just through living their life, have shown that they have a lot to share.”

The elders who lead the language classes, three regulars and a substitute, are in their 60s and 70s. They get paid \$30 an hour for the part-time work, more per hour than the executive director’s position, “because they’re needed so badly,” Boyer says.

UNESCO reports that the Ojibwe language is “severely endangered,” with only 8,000 speakers. The Sioux language, which includes the Dakota and Lakota dialects, is “vulnerable,” with 25,000 speakers.



Alexandria Mason, left, and Maya Stand-Acero, center, learn in the Ojibwe language from Lillian Rice, 77, about removing the husks from wild rice in the traditional way at Four Directions Family Center in Minneapolis.

The idea for the preschool program, which began in 2006, came from a group of Native American preschool teachers the alliance convened in 1999 as part of an effort to reach out to underrepresented communities.

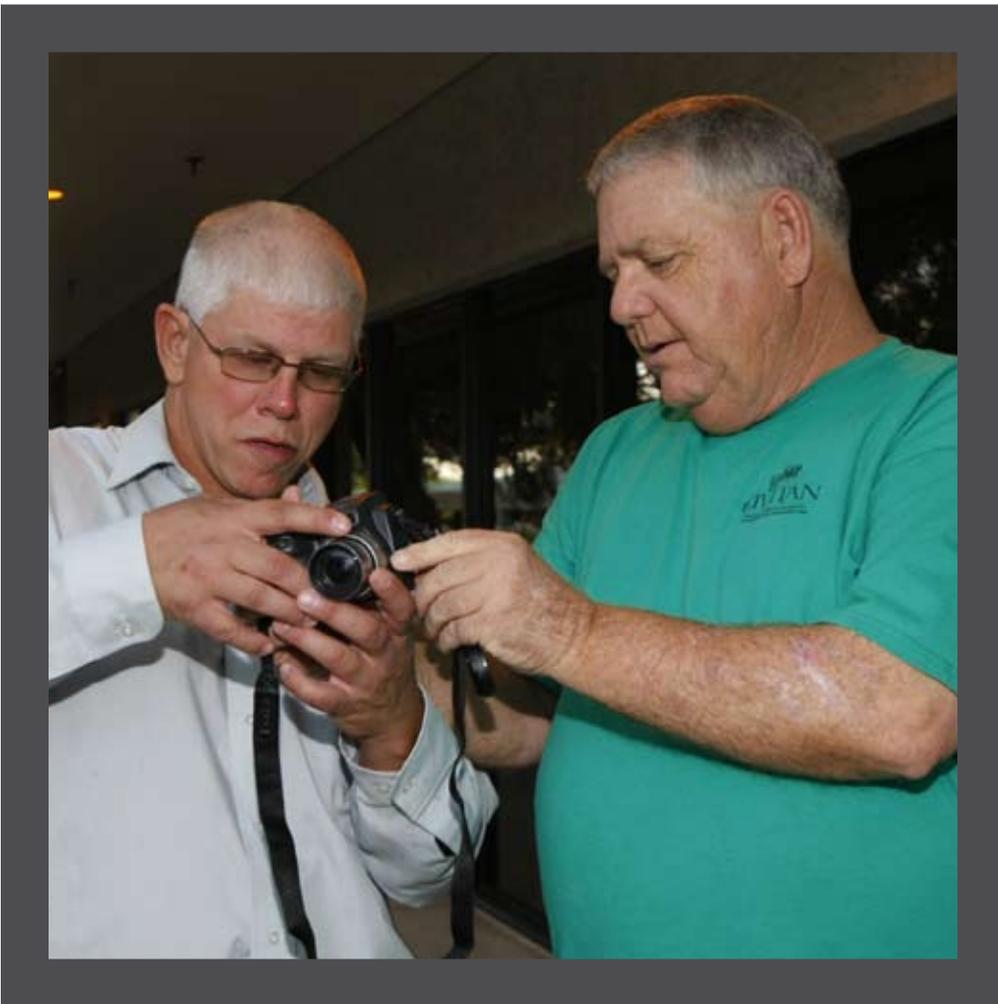
John Poupart, president of the American Indian Policy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, commends the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals’ efforts and compensation of elders. “The elders have really been the libraries of our people,” he says.

Rice says the pay reflects the complexities of the job, which include developing the curriculum and mentoring the apprentice: “I don’t think that I would do it on a volunteer basis. It’s hard work.”

In retaining elders, the alliance recognizes the need to be flexible. Workers in their 60s and 70s may need time off for family commitments, medical appointments, or just for a break, Boyer says.

“We take the long view with staff,” she adds. “If you invest in people over the long haul, their commitment, their vision, and their wisdom can make a change.”

For more, contact Margaret Boyer, margaretcboyer@gmail.com. Or visit: earlychildpro.org



David Zowin, 43, left, learns from Civitan Foundation employee Leo Levenson, 65, during a Civitan photography class.

Creating Meaningful Connections

Civitan Foundation Inc.
Phoenix, Arizona

Without hesitation, David Zowin, a 43-year-old with a form of autism called Asperger's syndrome, expresses his feelings for Civitan Foundation employee Jon Cochran, 73.

"I was born and raised to have respect for my elders," says Zowin, whose parents are deceased. "Jon is more than just an elder. I feel he is a dad to me."

Civitan purposefully develops those kinds of relationships by recruiting people over 50 as caregivers for individuals with developmental disabilities. In fact, the organization, which offers respite care through a summer camp and year-round social and learning activities, developed its Caring Connections program to attract workers over 50.

"We were having a very hard time retaining employees for direct care," says Dawn Trapp, executive director of Civitan (not affiliated with Civitan International). "We were predominantly hiring college students, and turnover was very high."

And, Trapp says, "Workers over 50 bring compassion, patience, and a real desire to connect and build lasting relationships."

Caring Connections, which launched in 2008 to meet the demands of a growing clientele, is a recruitment and training program. It reaches out to encore workers online, in newspaper ads, at job fairs, and through other organizations. Employees receive extensive training to work with an often challenging population.

Cochran learned of Caring Connections on a job search Web site. Over the years, he has worked in different roles – car dealer, real estate agent, and president of a Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter.

In retirement, Cochran was bored. Civitan's online listing appealed to him. "It was something that I could really get into," he says.

Cochran met Zowin at the foundation's camp during the summer of 2009. Zowin had recently lost his mother to cancer, and Cochran offered empathy.

"Evidently, I hit the right buttons," Cochran says. "David seemed to blossom."

Civitan has had no problem recruiting boomers and older workers like Cochran. In less than a year, about 50 individuals, who range in age from their 40s to their 70s, have gone through Caring Connections training. More than 20 have been hired as part-time caregivers, with the rest in the process of being matched with clients.

"Some have come to us because they needed to re-enter the work force for financial reasons," says Merilee Adams, who coordinates the program. "Oth-

Workers over 50 bring compassion, patience, and a real desire to connect and build lasting relationships.

Dawn Trapp, executive director

ers have come to us because they want something to do that is rewarding and fills their need to be valuable and productive."

Carol Kratz, program director at the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust – which gave Civitan a grant to start Caring Connections – can attest to the program's worth. "The project demonstrates the effectiveness of the combination of these caring older adults with the individuals needing their attention," she says, adding that the employees have demonstrated that they "have the patience and experience to relate well to individuals with disabilities."

For more, contact Dawn Trapp, dtrapp@campcivitan.org. Or visit: campcivitan.org

Stepping in to Help Nonprofits

Executive Service Corps of Chicago Chicago, Illinois

Many nonprofits across the country are struggling with a problem that may be avoidable: instability after an executive director leaves.

Executive Service Corps of Chicago, or ESC, helps organizations during that critical time “between directors” by creating a pool of experienced former directors willing to take short-term assignments benefiting nonprofits.

The corps’ effort represents a win-win strategy that I believe has great implications for the future, in terms of technical assistance services to nonprofit organizations.

Aurie A. Pennick, executive director and treasurer of The Field Foundation of Illinois

The need for a service to help nonprofits find interim directors was clear, says Marcia Lipetz, president and CEO of ESC, a nonprofit consulting organization. A 2006 report by The Bridgespan Group predicts that nonprofit organizations will need 640,000 senior managers, including executive directors, by 2016.

A year after that estimate surfaced – amid other similar projections – ESC launched its interim director program, which recruits, screens, trains, and refers interim director candidates to serve in Chicago-area nonprofits.

An organization seeking an interim executive pays ESC to assess the nonprofit’s leadership needs. Based on that evaluation, the corps refers three people to the nonprofit, which handles the interviews, hiring, and compensation.

Candidates, who are typically over 50, undergo training at ESC to learn about how to serve an organization in transition. An interim director’s role is to

prepare nonprofits to “pivot and thrive,” Lipetz says. Often that mission requires hard, quick, and potentially unpopular decisions that only someone with confidence backed by years of experience can make.

ESC assists the interim directors by assigning them to program coordinators, volunteers who often have great experience in nonprofit management and are available to offer advice or help. The corps also schedules peer group meetings so that program participants may learn from and support each other.

When Almarie Wagner, 64, accepted an interim post in 2008 at Art Resources in Teaching, she led the nonprofit through hard staffing decisions and changes. “If we hadn’t done that, the organization would’ve closed for sure,” she says.

Wagner had held nonprofit management positions for about 35 years, the last 15 as the head of the American Heart Association. As Art Resources in Teaching’s interim director for 10 months, she helped to broaden its fundraising strategy and identify qualifications for a new executive director. She says she felt proud to help steady an organization that otherwise couldn’t have afforded someone with her background.

Emmy King, an Art Resources in Teaching board member, recalls: “We had let two executive directors go in a two-year time frame. Both had proved disastrous for our organization. We went to ESC to try to find someone to help

guide us through our challenges, and Almarie was a perfect match.”

Aurie A. Pennick, executive director and treasurer of The Field Foundation of Illinois, which funded the start-up of the interim director program, says ESC’s effort “represents a win-win strategy that I believe has great implications for the future, in terms of technical assistance services to nonprofit organizations.”

For more, contact Marcia Lipetz, info@esc-chicago.org. Or visit: esc-chicago.org



Joe Ross, 74, left, an Executive Service Corps of Chicago program coordinator, and Almarie Wagner, 64, whom the corps has placed as interim executive director, discuss the ESC’s management transition program.

Enhancing Public Safety

Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department Lawrenceville, Georgia

In the community and the workplace, 50-plus employees of the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department are teachers and confidants.

Even inmates see their value.

"Most inmates are under 30 and recognize that a person 50-plus has a lot of life experience and has been exposed to a

lot of life's problems," says Chief Deputy Mike Boyd. "That same inmate will not seek out that type of advice and counseling from a much younger deputy."

Boyd says the suburban Atlanta department, which serves a community of nearly 800,000, has benefited greatly from hiring people in their encore careers.

"Experience in various occupational fields is a huge help to our organization," explains Boyd. "With the budget issues we face as a local government agency, there is no way we could expend the funds to train existing personnel to equal the years of training and experience workers over 50 bring to the table."

Encore workers have come to the department from various backgrounds, including information technology, education, construction, retail, and manufacturing.

Some who have come from the private sector say "they spent their careers chasing the dollar," Boyd explains, "and after that career, they came to us wanting to do a job that had importance and meaning to the community."

The department has built a reputation for hiring and promoting workers 50 and older – 25 percent of its 600-person work force – through word of mouth and community programs, including Seniors and Law Enforcement Together. That program, in which residents and police address public safety issues affecting seniors, is run by a recently retired deputy now working part time.

Area law enforcement agencies have taken note of the department's regard for employees over 50. Says Lou Solis, assistant chief of the nearby Braselton Police Department: "I know that the leadership respects all of their employees and that they rely on the 50-plus employees for their historical knowledge and technical expertise as well as their vision for the department."

And with employees in their late teens to early 70s, mentoring grows organically.

Capt. Cecil Whiteaker, 62, joined the department with years of experience in the U.S. Army, including two tours of duty in Vietnam. "I've considered myself a mentor for some time," he says. "In Vietnam, sometimes you were the 'old man' at 21."

Experience in various occupational fields is a huge help to our organization.

Mike Boyd, chief deputy

Whiteaker, who coordinates the department's training programs, says he enjoys that unwritten, informal part of his job.

Deputy Trenell Bullock, 33, says Whiteaker has enriched his understanding of law enforcement with a positive attitude and constructive feedback. "Having a mentor is important in the work that I do," Bullock says.

For more, contact Lt. Sean Smith, sean.smith@gwinnettcounty.com. Or visit: www.gwinnettcountysheriff.com



Deputy Trenell Bullock, 33, left, says he considers Capt. Cecil Whiteaker, 62, a mentor who has enriched his understanding of police work.

Building More Than Homes

Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter Florida Inc.
Eustis, Florida

In its mission to build homes for the poor, Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter Florida Inc. takes full advantage of the age makeup of its community.

Many retirees who settle in central Florida have time and skills to contribute, says the nonprofit's CEO, Jim Fischer. He knows well the appeal of working during the traditional retirement years.

In 2000 at age 59, Fischer retired after three decades as CEO for a youth services nonprofit in Minnesota. "That magic carrot out there – early retirement – didn't fit for me," he says. "I really like to work. I really like to contribute."

After a couple of years as a volunteer board member for Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter, an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, Fischer moved to the organization's top job in 2002.

That magic carrot out there – early retirement – didn't fit for me.

Jim Fischer, CEO

Since then, he has tripled the organization's staff to nearly 30 employees, half of whom are over 50. And half of whom aren't, which makes for an enriching multigenerational environment.

Mary Lou Mills, 53, and Danielle Hughes, 23, often work together. "We rely on and depend on one another to get the job done," says Hughes, an employee at one of the nonprofit's four thrift stores. "Mary Lou has taught me to do a lot of new things and helped me to grow in my job."

And Mills, who manages the stores, likes to see that happen: "I love watching Danielle grow as a person and mature into the woman I know she can be."

Encore workers over 50 have come from a variety of backgrounds, including banking, retail, law, and engineering. Mills – a longtime Habitat employee who has seen the affiliate grow – feels that those employees bring "a greater awareness of mission." She says: "Older workers bring a calmness in the face of crisis and an ability to see beyond the short term. Their vision is greatly expanded."

The 50-plus workers serve across the nonprofit, helping to coordinate volunteers, manage donations, oversee construction, and handle other responsibilities. The growing work force has contributed to an expansion in home building. When Fischer joined, the affiliate was constructing two houses a year. Now it builds 15 annually.



Danielle Hughes, 23, left, and Mary Lou Mills, 53, work together to help build a house for Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter.

Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter has impressed others with its age-diverse work force. Mark Hill, a longtime Habitat volunteer, has witnessed how well the generations mesh.

"You have young people working right alongside older folks who have a different take on life," says Hill, a local circuit court judge. "When they're all working together, they communicate with one another. They get to know one another. They get to know about each other's generation."

Fischer, now 68, hopes to bring more people over 50 into the mix with a

targeted effort to recruit older AmeriCorps members, creating a pathway to new careers. "Don't do it because you think it's a good idea," he advises. "Do it because you're hiring people who have the skills that fit the job best."

Fischer recommends hiring people of all ages who can grow. "Experience is a good teacher," he says, "but I learn every day."

For more, contact Kelly Pisciotta, kelly@habitat-lakesumterfl.org. Or visit: habitat-lakesumterfl.org

Retaining and Recruiting Talent

National Center for Appropriate Technology Butte, Montana

When the National Center for Appropriate Technology needs a position filled, it often calls on people who already know the job: former employees.

Employees who leave the organization are placed on adjunct status, meaning they can return when they want – assuming a job is available – without having to repeat the hiring process, including the paperwork and training.

The National Center for Appropriate Technology, or NCAT, has a clear mission: to help people use environmentally sound methods – or “appropriate technologies” – to grow crops, raise animals, and use less energy. With locations in Montana, California, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, and Louisiana, it has traditionally maintained an age-diverse work force.

The adjunct option is one reason why. Typically, the organization brings back former, often retired, employees for short-term assignments, though some workers return to fill permanent positions.

“We develop and invest in our staff,” says Marcia Brown, NCAT’s chief operating officer. “For us to lose somebody because they suddenly want to retire is a hard thing.”

Bringing employees back as adjuncts keeps that talent in the fold.

Rose Sullivan, 89, has twice returned as an adjunct. She spent her early working years as a teacher but left work to start a family that eventually included seven children. When she was looking to return to work, she learned about NCAT.

Sullivan got a job there in 1978 as the librarian’s assistant but was laid off for economic reasons in 1981. A few months later, she got a call to return and manage the library. She retired in 1992 at age 72. And in 1997, she got called again.

“I flunked retirement,” jokes Sullivan, who is still at NCAT as a part-time library director.

NCAT also recruits boomers and older adults who haven’t worked for the organization before. One way is by utilizing trainees from Experience Works – an organization that trains low-income individuals 55 and older for jobs that serve their communities. Former Experience Works members, now NCAT staff, handle calls on an NCAT hotline that helps low-income consumers find assistance paying their energy bills.

The organization has also recruited experienced, 50-plus energy specialists laid off from the local utility to help implement an NCAT program that works to reduce energy use in commercial, industrial, and government buildings. Over time, the utility veterans have become mentors to the younger workers.

NCAT’s recruitment and hiring practices overall have sparked those kinds of relationships, as the organization has placed employees of all ages in various roles throughout the organization.

**We develop and invest
in our staff.**

Marcia Brown, chief operating officer

“NCAT’s openness to mentoring within the staff and its demonstrated commitment to collaboration for many, many years has created a climate of openness and support,” observes Jonda Crosby, executive director of the Alternative Energy Resources Organization, a Montana-based nonprofit that has collaborated with NCAT on different projects.

Crosby adds: “Staff and others have the incentive and inclination to support one another, work together, and get more work done – and done better.”

For more, contact Marcia Brown, marciab@ncat.org. Or visit: www.ncat.org



Rose Sullivan, 89, left, helps Holly Hill, 28, find reference materials at the National Center for Appropriate Technology’s library.



Brian Jones, left, a teacher at Orleans Technical Institute, shows students how to check the positioning of a door frame. (Photo courtesy of JEVS Human Services)

Hammering Skills Home

Orleans Technical Institute, a Program of JEVS Human Services Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

What started 35 years ago as a school offering clerical courses to women returning to the work force has become a place where students of all ages facing a host of disadvantages can work toward a career in the building trades.

Individuals who have grown up poor, are barely literate, have been in prison,

or have abused drugs are among those benefiting from the knowledge of experienced boomers and older instructors over 50, who make up most of the teaching staff at the nonprofit Orleans Technical Institute. And more than half of the roughly 120 employees school-wide, including support staff and job placement counselors, are 50-plus.

Orleans is operated by JEVS Human Services, a social service agency and one of the largest nonprofits in the region. The school helps its instructors – former plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and others – learn to transfer their skills to the classroom and relate to the students.

“Having a teacher who has worked in the field is absolutely invaluable,” says Kristen Rantanen, a JEVS vice president. “Students have an opportunity to learn from someone who has 20, 30 years in the field. That’s worth the price of admission.”

Adds Jayne Siniari, Orleans’ executive director: “Basically, our instructors have gotten into this field because they love teaching. And they want to give back.”

That’s why Linda Dunphy, herself an Orleans graduate, became an instructor there in 2002.

“I love helping the students and sharing my experience and knowledge,” says Dunphy, 57, a laid-off manufacturing worker who has performed maintenance and repair jobs through the years. “It is very rewarding to see that you can take someone who has never lifted a hammer before or put in a garbage disposal and give them the skills to do numerous tasks for their future profession.”

Aaron Lewis, 43, feels fortunate to have Dunphy as a teacher. “I believe that the maturity and wisdom that Ms. Dunphy brings to the classroom surpasses that of a younger teacher,” he says.

Lewis is enrolled in the school’s six-month building trades program, one of a variety of full- and part-time diploma programs at Orleans.

From a practical standpoint, says Leslie Jones, Orleans’ human resources manager, hiring 50-plus workers to teach the courses has been good for business: “In our case, the hires we’ve made for instructor positions at our trades school have really paid off.”

Having a teacher who has worked in the field is absolutely invaluable.

Kristen Rantanen, JEVS vice president

For example, the teaching staff’s reputation has helped lead to solid connections with area businesses. In turn, those relationships have helped the school achieve a 74 percent job placement rate, which it uses to attract new students.

David Brandolph of David Brandolph Electric Co. in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, has hired dozens of Orleans graduates. He says he knows the students are committed and the instructors can break down the obstacles to learning that some students face.

Teachers without extensive practical work and life experience are less likely to have the know-how, Brandolph says. “I don’t think you can take someone with five years’ experience, put them in the classroom, and say: ‘Teach these kids.’”

For more, contact Diane Posternack, diane.posternack@jevs.org. Or visit: orleanstech.edu

Making Vital Repairs

**Umbrella of the Capital District
Schenectady, New York**

At 90, Leonard and Naomi Tucker go to the theater. They're active with community groups. They even swing dance. But they know their limitations.

The fact that the workers are older is a big part of why clients enroll in Umbrella. They are peers who are trustworthy, respectful, and capable – someone they can relate to.

Elaine Santore, co-director

"As we were getting older and living in our own house, it was getting difficult doing all the maintenance," Naomi Tucker says.

The Tuckers found help through Umbrella of the Capital District, which matched them with Bill Gosier – himself a retiree – to perform the odd jobs they couldn't. By recruiting experienced retirees, the nonprofit creates a pathway to encore work that helps older adults and people with disabilities live independently.

"When we started Umbrella, people were going into nursing homes because they could not maintain their homes," says Co-director Elaine Santore. "People who lived through the Great Depression, fought in world wars, helped each other, and never accepted charity, were put into a place they did not want to be, because they had no one to help them mow a lawn or change a light bulb."

Umbrella, which serves four upstate New York counties, maintains a pool of roughly 140 workers, called "handypeople," available for minor home repair and housekeeping.

As of fall 2009, 94 percent of Umbrella's handy-people were 50 or older.

"The fact that the workers are older is a big part of why clients enroll in Umbrella," San-

tore says. They're served by "peers who are trustworthy, respectful, and capable – someone they can relate to."

Clients pay a yearly sliding scale membership fee ranging from \$145 to \$315. When they need work done, they call Umbrella, which arranges a service call. The client pays the handyperson directly – \$12 per hour.

Gosier, 75, signed up as a handyperson five years ago. He had been a food services manager for 30 years and had dabbled with home repair as a side business. In his mid-60s, Gosier had taken a maintenance job at a department store chain and retired at 70. He had heard about Umbrella at the local library and joined its roster a few months after retiring.

Gosier says he enjoys the work and being able to help people. He knows he could make more if he went into business for himself, but he appreciates Umbrella's flexibility.

Umbrella's model is spreading, expanding encore opportunities. Recently, the organization helped a senior services provider in nearby Colonie, New York, create its own program.

Rick Iannello, executive director of the Albany Guardian Society, a nonprofit that seeks to improve seniors' quality of life, says he respects Umbrella's founders for creating a necessary, innovative, sustainable service. The benefits to the clients, he says, are obvious. The ben-

efits to the workers may be more subtle, but are just as meaningful.

"The fact that they are paid for their work is highly important," Iannello says. "It recognizes that you as an individual have a life of skill and effort. And now we're asking you to put that to work for older people."

For more, contact Elaine Santore, elaine@theumbrella.org. Or visit: theumbrella.org



Handyman Bill Gosier, 75, left, checks out the dishwasher of client Leonard Tucker, 90, in Tucker's Albany, New York, home.

Encore Opportunity Awards 2009 Selection Panel

Ann Bowers, Selection Panel Chair
Board Chair, Noyce Foundation

Diana Aviv
President and CEO, Independent Sector

Mary Bleiberg
Executive Director, ReServe Elder Service Inc.

Ted Childs
Principal, Ted Childs LLC

Martin Rodgers
Senior Executive, Accenture

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MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. In the area of aging, the Foundation funds programs that promote healthy aging and address issues of caregiving, intergenerational activities, mental fitness, and volunteerism.

metlife.org

Civic Ventures

Civic Ventures is a national think tank on boomers, work, and social purpose. Its Encore Careers campaign aims to engage millions of boomers in encore careers, providing personal fulfillment doing paid work and producing a windfall of talent to solve society's greatest problems.

Encore.org/employers