

# Connections

## Coming together UNC nonprofit center names consultant

Plans for a center for nonprofit studies, research and assistance are moving ahead at the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jill Gammon, president of the Wake Education Partnership, will work as a part-time consultant to help set up the program. Her task will be to help put together an advisory board, and then to work with the board on preparing a mission statement for the new program and a strategic plan to finance it.

The advisory board will hold a retreat this summer that will produce the mission statement and strategic plan. Among other issues, the board will examine how the new program will be distinguished from other nonprofit efforts in the state, and how it will work in relation to other schools and departments at UNC-Chapel Hill.



Jill Gammon

Richard Edwards, the school's dean, hopes to put the program into effect over the summer, fall and following spring. Its basic goals will be to offer interdisciplinary nonprofit studies, conduct research and provide management training and technical assistance to nonprofits.

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem has made a \$45,000 grant to finance the planning effort.

Gammon will continue her full-time job at the Wake Education Partnership, which raises money to support public schools in Wake County.

Todd Cohen

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## Electronic network Computers link Winston-Salem agencies

A computer network linking five social service agencies in Winston-Salem has saved an estimated 20,000 work hours over the past two years. The system, which was spearheaded by the United Way, is operated by Forsyth County.

BY BARBARA SOLOW

### WINSTON-SALEM

When a low-income client walks into the offices of the Sunnyside Ministry of the Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, one of the first things Director Linda Yokeley does is switch on her computer.

By typing a few simple commands, Yokeley can plug into an electronic database that will tell her whether the client has sought or received help from any of four other emergency assistance agencies in the city.

"That way, we don't have to waste time calling the other agencies," Yokeley says. "Many times our clients need more funds than any one agency can give them. The system helps us find more help for them."

Since it was established more than two years ago, the Emergency Assistance Computer Network has saved Winston-Salem nonprofits an estimated 20,000 work hours.

The system's five member agencies — Crisis Control, Experiment in Self-Reliance, Forsyth County Department of Social Services, Salvation Army and Sunnyside Ministry — now have a way to share information and resources without having to conduct repeated interviews with clients.

The idea for the network arose in a 1988 study of emergency assistance services by the United Way of Forsyth County.

Among the study's recommendations was creation of an electronic network that would reduce duplication of services among nonprofits and improve the quality of emergency financial assistance given to area residents.

The Kate B. Reynolds Poor and Needy Trust provided \$60,900 in startup funds for the system, and the Forsyth County Management Information Services Department — which runs the system — donated nearly \$20,000 worth of programming, training and other in-kind services.

During its first year of operation, staff of participating social service agencies said they looked up records of 15 to 150 clients per day on the computer system. Of those, a whopping 62 percent had already been listed by another agency — resulting

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in a significant savings in paperwork.

Less than 1 percent of agency clients refused to sign a consent form necessary to allow information about them to be entered into the system. In all, some 8,500 clients are now part of the shared database.

Judy Freeman, director of community problem-solving for the United Way, says network organizers looked at a computer system run by a group of churches in Asheville as a model for their efforts.

"The difference there is they didn't have the county involved," she says. "Here, the county Management Information Services Department (MIS) has been the heart and soul of the project."

Jim Cooper, director of Forsyth County's MIS department, says managing the system takes up very little of his workday.

"The most

difficult problem to overcome was that the agencies needed to have a fair amount of faith in each other," he says.

"They had to spend a lot of time on the front end keying into the system, and for the first three to six months, they might have looked on it as a waste of time."

Will more agencies be added to the network in the future?

"We've talked about that several times," Cooper says. "We feel the emergency financial assistance providers have been pretty well taken care of. Maybe we could come up with a different need that we could address" electronically.

The network's advisory committee is also discussing ways to make the system financially self-sufficient, including charging each agency a user fee.

In addition to easing the paperwork burden for social service agencies, network organizers say the computer system has also helped low-income clients.

"They can see that they don't have to spend as much time at each agency," says Yokeley of the Sunnyside Ministry. "We work with so many of the working poor. We want to get them in and out as quickly as possible without having to tell the same story over and over."

For details, call Freeman at the United Way, (910) 724-1045.

Many times our clients need more funds than any one agency can give them.

LINDA YOKELEY  
Director  
Sunnyside Ministry

### A network of need

## Study shows 26 million Americans are hungry

A new study released by a national network of food banks shows one in 10 people — or 26 million Americans — rely on help from food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency programs.

The Food Bank of North Carolina in Raleigh and Metrolina Foodbank in Charlotte were among the 34 food banks that participated in the national study.

The study was conducted by the VanAmburg Group of Erie, Pa., for the Second Harvest food bank net-

work. The hunger study, which included a mail survey to social service agencies and extensive personal interviews with food bank clients nationwide, refutes some commonly-held ideas about who is hungry.

Among the key findings:  
• Income is a key factor in determining whether people seek food aid. The study showed 73 percent of households receiving food assistance had annual incomes of less than \$10,000 and 88 percent had annual incomes of \$14,000 or less.

• Most people seek emergency aid are not transient single men. The study shows the majority of clients at emergency food outlets are female.

• Less than 20 percent of clients served by food programs are homeless.

• Children make up a disproportionate share of those receiving assistance from private food programs

• Nearly half of those receiving emergency food assistance did not expect to need it three months prior to being interviewed.

• Eighty-four percent of food bank clients have no health insurance.

Studies of the Raleigh and Charlotte-based food banks echoed the national findings.

"The study documents that hunger is closely associated with the problem of poverty," says Greg Kirkpatrick, executive director of the Food Bank of North Carolina.

For a copy of the study, call the Food Bank of North Carolina, (919) 833-9027 or Metrolina Food Bank, (704) 376-1785.

### International competition

## Software developers looking for pro bono project

BY KAY MCFADDEN

Got a particular software need that could further your nonprofit's goals? Interested in getting a state-of-the-art, \$20,000 application designed absolutely free?

Have we got a deal for you. The organizers of the Software Developers Competition, held annually in the Triangle, are seeking a worthy North Carolina organization whose software request will form the basis of this year's contest.

The concept pits software developers from all over the world against each other to see who can come up with the best design solution for that organization.

Two days of competition will climax Oct. 8, when six finalists will battle to a winner-take-all conclusion. The recipient can choose any of the software designs developed by contestants for its use.

Tom Droege of Droege Computing Services, an organizer of the event, explains what kind of project the competition is seeking.

"We're not looking for generic things, like fund-raising software," he says. "We want some unique need that has to do with the mission of the nonprofit."

The past three years' worth of winning projects are good examples. In 1991, the contest's inaugural year, a system was developed to track child-abuse cases. In 1992, the winners created a research database for the Duke Primate Research Center.

And last year, the American Dance Festival was the beneficiary of a video archive, set up to catalog filmed performances by some of the nation's greatest artists in ballet, tap, jazz and modern dance.

ADF spokeswoman Sandra Schleuter was delighted with the results of the 1993 competition, which gave ADF the luxury of choosing from 87 software programs. ADF plans to link its custom-designed archive with the national archive in Washington, thereby helping to preserve dance history.

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"It's our responsibility to archive these forms so future

generations can see and hear these [performers]," Schleuter said after the competition. "With this software, a dance teacher in Billings, Montana, will have as much access as the dance teacher at Duke."

The Software Developers Competition is the largest in the world, attracting participants from as far away as New Zealand. While Droege Computing and Raleigh-based Allen Marketing coordinate the event, its sponsorship comes from some of the industry's biggest names, including Microsoft, IBM and WordPerfect.

This year, at least 120 competitors are expected. For developers who enter the competition, the incentive is the possibility of attracting funds from corporations or financial investors looking to sponsor the next Bill Gates. Making a nonprofit the recipient of this collective effort creates a neutral — and inspirational —

playing field.

Deadline for applicants to have their software needs considered is June 1.

According to Droege, the recipient will be selected based on need, nature of the application itself and the nonprofit's willingness to have staff help with the judging. The competition does steer around certain groups.

"We stay away from groups that are highly political or controversial," says Droege. "This year, we'll have 120 competitors doing their best and we like it to be for a cause that has broad support, not polarizing issues such as abortion or gun ownership."

Droege or someone on his staff will be happy to help nonprofits craft a proposal.

For applications forms and information on how to become the potential winner of the 1994 Developers Competition, call Droege Computing Services or (919) 383-9749 or (919) 382-7422. Tom Droege may be reached on-line via CompuServe, i.d. 71333,3015.