

## AWARD

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Baker and Hunter clearly fit that bill.

Before taking the job at the health center, Baker worked as a financial analyst for large corporations in New York City.

"I abandoned that because it just wasn't satisfying," he says. "If I sat up on top of the World Trade Center and traded blocks of stock, that wouldn't be doing anything. Here, I feel like I'm doing something."

When Baker arrived in Newton Grove in the early 1980s, the health center was on the brink of financial collapse. Under his guidance, it not only has survived but has expanded to become a vital community resource for people in Sampson,

Johnston and Harnett counties.

In 1986, Baker created the Migrant Benevolent Association to help in what he calls, the center's "unending struggle for financial viability."

The association acts like a mini-foundation, raising money for health outreach programs, education and research. It also funds a free translator service for health professionals in North Carolina whose patients are migrant farmworkers who don't speak English.

Hunter came to the Tri-County Health Center after serving two years in the Peace Corps setting up loan cooperatives in small mountain villages in Honduras.

In Newton Grove, he helped launch the health center's "Farmers In Prevention" substance-abuse program, which offers recreational and other activities to migrant workers.

"Alcohol and drug use is very prevalent among farmworkers," Hunter says. "Part of it is a recruitment tool. A lot of people recruit from the inner city and they look for people who are down-and-outs. They go to shelters and soup lines. Where else would you find people who'd be willing to stand in line and do farm work?"

The recreation program tries to ease the sense of isolation migrant workers feel on their days off.

"That's typically a time to indulge in drugs and alcohol," Hunter says. "These camps are really tucked away in the boon-docks and people have nothing to do. A lot of people have no idea this lifestyle even exists."

From its beginnings as a tiny storefront operation run by local health departments, the Tri-County Health Center has expanded to a 50-member clinic offering basic

health-care, dental, and substance-abuse treatment services.

On any given day, as many as 100 people - most of them poor and Spanish-speaking - may walk through the clinic doors in need of care. The nearest public health center is about 60 miles away in Nash County.

In addition to supporting the center's recreation program, the Robert Wood Johnson money will help pay for a new intervention project with youngsters in the court system and, perhaps, creation of a grantwriting position to help raise money for future programs, Baker says.

Challenges facing the center include finding ways to serve the growing number of migrant families that are choosing to settle permanently in North Carolina.

As for health reform proposals being debated in Congress, staff

members worry that the type of care offered by the Newton Grove center will be overlooked.

"Substance abuse is not high on the list right now for reimbursement," Hunter says. "We're sort of like a stepchild when it comes to health care."

In the future, the center may become part of a network of community health centers serving special populations or it may continue to operate independently.

"We have to think strategically and long-term," Baker says. "Who would have thought that a migrant center a lot of people opposed 15 or so years ago might be where they'd get their health care in the future? At the same time, we never want to lose our specific mission, which is to serve migrant and seasonal farmworkers. We know they would be the first to go in the competition of other things."

## PROJECT

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munity foundations had applied for funding under the initiative by the September deadline.

Cunningham says at least three national funding initiatives are being offered to community foundations this year - on the environment, violence and cultural diversity.

"When faced with a number of national initiatives all at the same time, particularly at smaller [community foundations] with limited resources, they have to select what would work for them at the moment," she says. "There is a fair amount of competition."

Although Tar Heel community foundations may not be respond-

ing quickly, nonprofits serving gays and lesbians hope to benefit from the partnership's initiative.

Kenda Kirby, executive director of the statewide Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equity based in Durham, says that while there are foundations that support gay issues, she often has to be creative in her grant proposals.

"An example is a grant I applied for through the [federal] Centers for Disease Control to produce educational materials about violence against women," Kirby says. "The way we looked at it was that often violence against women is associated either with a perception [by perpetrators] that their targets are lesbians or derogatory terminology about that."

As part of the national initiative, local advisory committees

that include gay and lesbian leaders will be set up to help establish new grantmaking priorities for community foundations.

"It's a great way for foundations to start researching these issues," says Antonio Maciel, a program officer at the New York-based Gilmore foundation.

Other participating foundations are the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Colin Higgins Foundation, the David Geffen Foundation, the Edward Hazen Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation and the Ms. Foundation for Women.

For information on the national partnership, call Cunningham at (212) 475-2930.

For details on the Southern Outlook project, call Bell at (919) 682-3702.

## Whitney Jones

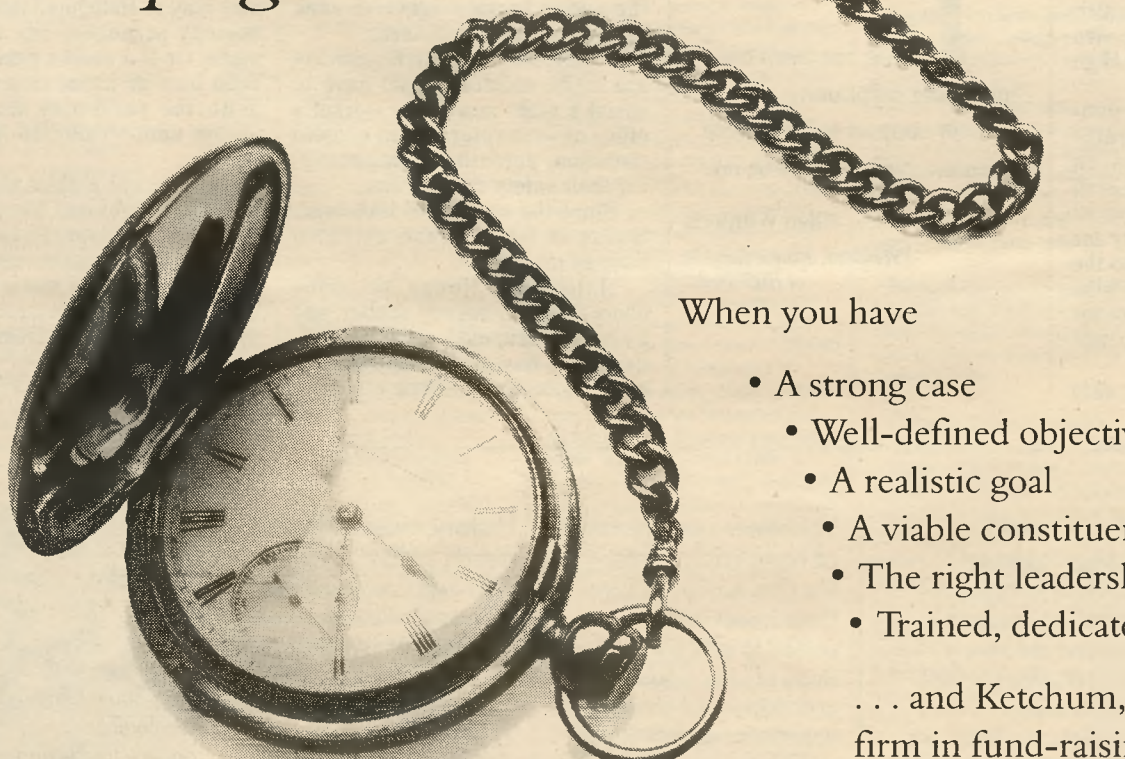
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