

# THE WEEKLY UPDATE

THE NEWSLETTER OF OHIO UNIVERSIT  
DEPT. OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

October 15, 2007

## ASWB OFFERS NEW ONLINE SOCIAL WORK REGISTRY

The Association of Social Work Boards, the member organization of licensing boards in the US and Canada, has recently announced the creation of an Online Social Work Registry. The registry enables social workers to store verified records of their copies of their educational, licensing and clinical supervision; and unverified records of their continuing education, references, employment history and other professional credentials in a confidential, secure database. Initial verification costs \$35 for students and \$60 for professionals. Thereafter, all members will be assessed an annual maintenance fee, which is currently \$25, and after one report annually, additional reports will each cost \$25. However, ASWB is making the registry available to social workers affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita at no charge. The registry is particularly useful for social workers who move or change employment frequently, or who have difficulty maintaining their professional records. However, if the program receives heavy usage,

Social Workers may eventually be expected to have their credentials available in this way. For further information or to apply to the registry, go to:

<http://www.aswb.org/registry/>.

## OHIO BENEFIT BANK

The Ohio Benefit Bank under the Governor's Office of Faith Based Initiatives is offering low and moderate income Ohioans help to claim tax credits and public benefits. On **October 24, 2007 at 9am** there will be a regional briefing in Glouster at the Hocking Perry Athens County Action Agency for the Benefit Bank. Please find (attached) more information regarding this issue.

### Announcement

The GSSWA next Meeting will be on Tuesday, October 16th from 1pm to 2pm in the Grad Lounge.

## HELP RESTORE CONSUMER PROTECTIONS IN OHIO

Melissa Greenlee is involved in a referendum petition drive organized by a coalition called "Voters Empowered to Overturn SB 117". Signing this petition means giving Ohio citizens a vote on the amendments made law by SB 117, which includes, among other issues, the changes to the CSPA. In order to get this issue on the November 2008 ballot, 241,366 signatures are needed to be collected and get at least 44 counties to sign the referendum by October 30, 2007! Your urgent help is needed! Melissa is diligently working on collecting signatures every Saturday through the end of October at the Athens Farmer's Market from 9:30am until about 1pm. Some volunteers are needed to help on those days. If you would like to sign or circulate a petition in the Athens or Vinton County area, please contact Melissa directly at: [melissa.greenlee@mvfairhousing.com](mailto:melissa.greenlee@mvfairhousing.com) or go to [www.yourohiorights.org](http://www.yourohiorights.org) or call 1-866-529-8386.



## A CALL FROM DART

The Direct Action & Research Training (DART) Center is currently accepting resumes for community organizing positions which are available to Social Work students at Ohio University. The positions represent a career track and an opportunity for students to make a meaningful impact as community organizers. For further information and guidelines, please refer to the attached message. For any questions, contact:

Ben MacConnell  
Recruitment Director  
DART Network  
ph: (785) 841-2680  
email: [ben@thedartcenter.org](mailto:ben@thedartcenter.org)  
[www.thedartcenter.org](http://www.thedartcenter.org)



## INTRODUCTION TO THE OHIO BENEFIT BANK

**The Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB)** is a public-private partnership that provides community outreach and access to low and moderate-income Ohioans for free tax preparation and public benefits. In partnership with the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the OBB allows eligible Ohioans to claim tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, and public benefits, such as food stamps, child care subsidies, home energy assistance and children's health care insurance. The OBB works with partners, such community or faith-based organizations, senior service programs, food banks or food pantries, health providers, and housing programs in order to customize the outreach programs to community needs. The involvement of faith-based and community groups is particularly important, because these organizations are well-positioned to reach underserved populations who might not access benefits through traditional channels.

The Ohio Benefit Bank **breaks down barriers to access** to credits and benefits through one-stop, counselor-assisted sites located in convenient places. The program converts complex eligibility requirements into easy-to-answer questions written at a fourth-grade reading level, posed by a trained counselor, as prompted by a web-based interface, resulting in completed tax returns and benefits applications. The answers to the questions populate tax and benefits forms, resulting in complete and legible tax returns and benefits applications.

During one year of start-up operations, with funding from The Columbus Foundation and the Ohio Department of Development, lead outreach partner the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks has trained over **700 Benefit Bank counselors** and empowered nearly **200 faith-based and community organizations** to establish over **250 Benefit Bank sites in 46 counties**. These organizations are using their staff and volunteers, and partnering with public agencies in their counties, to provide OBB outreach and access. Faith-based and community groups are also integrating the OBB into their existing programs (for example, into case management).

The OBB provides **weekly reporting of results**, available by site, groups of sites, and for the State, and anonymous information about the clients served. Across Ohio, OBB sites have together assisted more than 6,000 low and moderate-income clients in claiming over **\$5.9 million in credits and benefits**. The work of the faith-based and community organizations and public agencies through the Benefit Bank also spurs **economic development**, generating as much as **\$600,000 per site** in credits and benefits, most of which will be spent in local communities and spur additional economic activity through multiplier effects.

The OBB will expand over the coming year with funding from the State budget and private foundations, and with the support of the Governor's Office, State agencies and local partners. The OBB will help more low and moderate-income Ohioans move toward self-sufficiency by claiming tax credits and public benefits for which they are eligible.

Dear University of Ohio students:

The Direct Action & Research Training (DART) Center is currently accepting resumes from alums and spring graduating OU students interested in social and economic justice issues for their paid, four-month community organizing training program known as the DART Organizers Institute. The application deadline for this program is January 1, 2008.

The DART Center has built non-partisan community organizations throughout the country that have won important improvements on a broad set of issues affecting low-moderate income people including:

- Education reform in low-performing public schools
- Job Training
- Drugs and Violence
- Affordable Housing
- Criminal Recidivism
- Neighborhood Revitalization, etc.

The DART Organizers Institute starts June 17, 2008 and combines a 7-day classroom with 15-week field training. Organizer Trainees will learn such things as:

- Entering a community
- Identifying and training local leaders
- Strategic planning and issue cutting
- Relationship and community building
- Direct Action on community issues
- Fundraising

This is a paid training program designed to promote successful graduates into permanent salaried positions making up to \$35,000/year in starting salaries, plus benefits. Graduates from the DART Organizers Institute have gone onto accept Executive Director and Associate Community Organizing positions throughout the country. We continue to train the best of those working to build the power of low-moderate income neighborhoods to win victories on important issues in their community.

To understand what graduates of the DART Organizers Institute have accomplished, please take a moment and read through a few examples:

1. Jeff Modzelewski finished his undergraduate degree in 2004 at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. After working for two years in the business world, he then was accepted into the DART Organizers Institute. Eight months after Jeff's paid community organizing training, he organized over 750 community leaders in Columbus, Ohio to reign in payday lending operations that prey upon the most vulnerable

by charging exorbitant fees and interest on short-term loans. As a result, State Senator Miller introduced statewide legislation that will reasonably regulate the rampant misuse of payday lending. With the momentum of the State Senator's commitment, Jeff and coalition leaders are now building a statewide power base to ensure passage of this legislation.

2. Leah Woodward finished her masters in film in 2005 at University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida and then graduated from the Organizers Institute in 2005. She then accepted a job with the FAST organization in St. Petersburg, Florida. Using the training provided, Leah and another organizer mobilized 1,800 people from 28 congregations to take action on affordable housing. As a result of this action, County Commissioners agreed to create a \$10 million dollar housing trust fund that will set public monies aside for building housing that low- to moderate-income families can afford. In addition, the commission unanimously approved a mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance that will compel builders to include affordable units in their developments for years to come.

3. Andy Lee graduated from Michigan State University and went into the DART Organizers Institute in 2004 and was hired onto staff with the BUILD organization in Lexington, Kentucky. Andy organized with local leaders to create a drug recovery program in the women's jail in 2006. During an in-depth research phase facilitated by Andy, leaders discovered that over 80% of the jail population in Fayette County is there for problems related to drugs and alcohol, and with treatment the re-arrest rate drops from 66% to 19%. While a drug recovery program existed in the jail for men there was no program for women. After initially denying any consideration of BUILD's plan to add the needed \$175,000 to the city's annual budget for the program, the mayor eventually agreed to do so after being confronted by 1,010 people from 20 congregations all pressing for the program at a community action on March 20, 2006. Two months later the Urban County Council made it official by approving the Mayor's budget, and later that summer, the drug recovery program in the women's jail opened. The program is expected to save millions of dollars in tax money previously spent on re-arrests, while also demonstrably improving the lives of thousands of women who would have continued wrestling with drug addiction and crime. Andy is now the Executive Director of another community organization in Broward County, Florida known as BOLD Justice.

4. Virginia Lynch finished her undergraduate degree at Emory University with a degree in religious studies and then entered the DART Organizers Institute in 2004. Following training she accepted a position on staff with the PEACE organization in Lakeland, Florida. Using the training provided by DART, Virginia led an organizing drive that mobilized over 800 community leaders to publicly call for action on health care related issues. As a result of her work, the organization won the approval of a permanent half cent sales tax that will provide over \$35 million dollars annually to fund one new health clinic a year for the next five years and increase indigent patients seen from the current 2,000 to 45,000 patients

per year. Virginia is now the Executive Director of a the RISC organization in Richmond, Virginia.

These While these are clear-cut victories with measurable results, they are only snapshots in time depicting the work of three of the graduates of our training program. Along with over 30 others, Andy, Leah, Jeff, and Virginia continue to organize and regularly express a long-term commitment to the field.

To apply, University of Ohio students must send an updated resume to: Ben MacConnell, the Recruitment Director at: [institute@thedartcenter.org](mailto:institute@thedartcenter.org) before January 1, 2008. You can also call him with questions: (785) 841-2680. To find out more about the DART center, check out our website: [www.thedartcenter.org](http://www.thedartcenter.org)