

CONTACT US

Highlights

[EARNING](#)

[HUMANITRI](#)

[HPES](#)

[LYDIA'S HOUSE.](#)

[ALIVE INC.](#)

[NSEC](#)

[LITTLE BIT](#)

[TWIGS](#)

WE'RE CONNECTED

The Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund is a component fund of The Greater St. Louis Community Foundation and a member of the Women's Collective Giving Grantmakers Network, a growing, nationwide group of more than 30 organizations similar to our Fund and with more than 6,000 members altogether.

Why We Give - Near Southside Employment Coalition



Why We Give - Grantee Profiles

Because giving is at the very heart of Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund, we felt it was important to share stories about those who are impacted most by the generosity of our members. We chose Near Southside Employment Coalition to feature this month in honor of Labor Day. We hope you enjoy the piece, and are inspired by these real life impact stories.

**Changing Lives Through Training & Employment -
Near Southside Employment Coalition**

A 2016 SOS Grantee

It was time for a change.

She'd been working all her life, mostly in factories, and here and there for temp agencies.

But at this stage of her life, it just wasn't practical to put her body through long days of standing on concrete floors.

Miss Jones walked into the [Near Southside Employment Coalition](#), unsure of herself, and feeling pretty low.

"She called herself despicable," said the Rev. Ohala Ward, executive director of the Near Southside Employment Coalition (NSEC). "That's the word she used. She was really down on herself. She just didn't want to do that type of work anymore. She wanted to transition to something more like receptionist work."



NSEC job training class graduates hold their certificates.

Miss Jones was in the right place.

NSEC's mission is to equip individuals 16 and older with resources, skills and training necessary to obtain long-term employment and stabilize their lives.

When Miss Jones visited NSEC, she went through the customary in-take process and was referred to Mers Goodwill, one the NSEC's many community partners.

Mers offers a senior employment program that trains, places and sponsors individuals in jobs at other nonprofits and organizations, including NSEC.

As luck or fate would have it, Miss Jones wound up back where she started.

"Mers sent me a new receptionist and it was her!" Ward said. "The clients love her and she's been here for two years. She does an excellent job. She took a computer class, and she uses a laptop now. We love her."

This is just one of many of the success stories of NSEC, a SOS 2016 grantee.

My Story

Near Southside Employment Coalition has helped me significantly mature and develop into a person that I didn't know I could even become. They helped me realize that I had potential to accomplish any goal in life and as well what it takes to become successful and eventually run a business or even start one of my own. Also they help me put forth the steps needed to have an edge in the workforce, interviews, and even leading a team. NSEC employed me with my first ever job at 16. Mr. Mcroberts constantly checked on me, encouraging me that I can do anything I wanted and even chased me down a couple time to ensure I had transportation to get home and work throughout the week. I eventually bought my first car with the paychecks I saved up; it helped me realize that I can do anything on my own if I put my mind to it. Now I currently have two cars, two jobs, and on my way to buying my first house at the age of 18. This place instilled confidence, leadership, and stability when it is well needed or not. NSEC changed my perspective of what success really is and as well how to obtain it.

The staff at the nonprofit, which was founded in 1983, provides training, job placement and other services to individuals in the St. Louis region, with an emphasis on those in the South City neighborhood where their building is located.

"We serve anyone that can get to us - we've had individuals from all over," Ward said. "We're one of the few agencies that still take walk-ins off the street. We also get referrals by word of mouth and other social service agencies, and we're listed on United Way 211."

Though their primary focus is employment and training, the staff at NSEC has built a

An NSEC client wrote this than you that hangs on the nonprofit's wall. network of partnerships with businesses, community organizations and nonprofits so that they can refer their clients to get the help they need once they walk in the door.

"We like to form partnerships in the community so that we can have as many resources as possible for our clients," Ward said. "If they need help with child care, clothing, food, medical issues, mental health, substance abuse or help with medication, we refer them to other agencies."

NSEC relies on their community partnerships to provide networking and local employment opportunities for their clients, and outreach services for youth in the community.

The minute a client walks in the door, the job search begins with an in-take interview. A staff member collects basic demographic information, and asks the client about their skills and work history.

Each client participates in a career assessment, and is directed to an employment specialist who will go over their application and help them set short and long-term career goals.



Neighborhood clean-up day.

"We also give them job leads the day they come in," Ward said.

The clients receive help with their resumes, and job training if necessary.

"We make sure that the staff and volunteers that provide the services here are a good fit for our mission so that our services are provided with respect and dignity," Ward said. "It's about listening and hearing their needs so that we can best service them."

As a small nonprofit, Ward says NSEC has been fortunate to have a great board and generous donations from local companies of office supplies and computers to help create a space with a professional environment.

"When they come in we want them to feel that this is a space that will help them," Ward said.

Clients participate in some job training classes at the NSEC office on Pestalozzi Street, including a pre-employment skills class.

NSEC used to hold a computer and customer service skills class taught by instructors from a local university, but then money ran out.

Now, thanks to a \$15,000 grant from Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund, Ward is happy to report that they will be able to resume that class this fall!

"We are so blessed to get the grant so we can start this program back up," Ward said. "We also got donations of laptops from Boeing Co. and computers from Nestle Purina, so now after completing the training the students will get a laptop!"

In addition to receiving a certificate for completing the training - and the potential for more job leads and employment - Ward thinks the incentive of a laptop will be great motivation for clients to enroll and complete the training.



Recently, a young man came in and saw this photo on the wall of NSEC and said "That's my dad! You helped him find a job. Can you help me?" And they did.

NSEC is taking applications for a computer skills class that will start in November.

NSEC currently serves about 400 clients a year and of those who follow through the process, roughly 120 individuals are trained. Seventy individuals are placed in jobs every year.

Once they are placed in a job, NSEC remains a resource for the client.

"We're always here," Ward said. "Once we place them in employment we do follow ups at 30, 60 or 90 days whenever possible. We make sure they have transportation. Or if they have a crisis - we're here."

To learn more about NSEC and the work they do, visit www.nsecworks.org

Written by Bethany Prange of 618 Creative for Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund.