



# UIC Neighborhoods Initiative

Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University

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## Interns Gain Valuable Experience

My education has become more well-rounded by working for the Near West Side Community Development Corporation," said UIC intern, Cheryl Wilson. "School has given me all the theory, but NWSCDC has given me the actual experience."

Often we do not think of internships as "real" jobs and we view them as pseudo experiences. This is certainly not true for many of the interns at the Great Cities Institute and the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative. NWSCDC and The Resurrection Project are two programs that have interns who are funded by the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative. Cheryl Wilson, who is pursuing a Master in Urban Planning and Policy, was granted a graduate assistantship at NWSCDC. This fall will be her second semester at UIC and NWSCDC and she is already fully immersed in both her education and internship.

"I work with the executive director of NWSCDC whom I support in grant writing," said Wilson. "Some of my other responsibilities involve working with potential homebuyers, doing city title research, and working as a correspondent between the NWSCDC and homebuyers."

When the United Center was built in 1993 on the Near West Side of Chicago, many of the residents became concerned and worried about gentrification in the neighborhood. As a result, the City of Chicago, the Bulls, and the Blackhawks began collaborating and working with the predominantly African-American population who live in the community. The city promised to build 75 residential units to improve the neighborhood. As of today, approximately 40 units have been built and the city continues to keep its promise by improving the neighborhood and the needs of its residents. Among the improvements is a much

welcomed Walgreen's that soon will be up and running on West Madison Street.

"The Near West Side is a very attractive area for homebuyers because of its proximity to the Loop, the Medical Center district, UIC, the James Jordan Boys and Girls Club, schools, and several parks," said Wilson.

Kirby Burkholder, an asset management associate for The Resurrection Project in Pilsen (TRP) was hired as a fulltime consultant after his graduation from the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at UIC. Prior to starting his fulltime position at TRP, Burkholder interned in its development division for over a year, while completing his masters degree.

"The internship gave me experience in real situations so that I could better understand our discussions about urban issues in class. I also felt that I could contribute with comments during class about my experience at TRP," said Burkholder.

The management division at TRP where Burkholder works, buys older buildings in Pilsen and Little Village from the City of Chicago, which are then rehabbed and rented to low income families in the neighborhood. On July 1 of this year, the management division of TRP took over management of all the buildings. The buildings had previously been maintained by an outside management agency. Currently, TRP runs the projects from beginning to end. TRP also has a homebuyer development program that has recently completed building its 100th home in the Pilsen neighborhood.

"My work is very exciting," said Burkholder. "I help tenants fill out applications to qualify them for renting our homes. I

research vacant land and lots in Pilsen and Little Village through city and county records at City Hall, and I help manage and maintain the buildings that we have rehabbed."

There are many internships available to students at UIC that help them financially during their graduate years and give them

valuable real life work experience. The Great Cities Institute and the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative offers many possibilities and openings for students who want to experience working in urban environments and communities. If you would like more information, please contact the Great Cities Institute at 312-996-8700.

## C-Train Opens Doors to New Opportunities

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Where do you go and what do you do when your income is below poverty level and you do not have a high school or college education, but you love children and you want to start a childcare business? Without a certificate that validates your competency in childcare and without capital to start a business, fulfilling that dream might seem impossible for some. There is an alternative for those who have come in contact with the C-TRAIN program.

"There was a woman in our program who had no education and had not worked for 25 years and she took our classes. She is now a certified family day care provider and operates a successful business from her home," said Jill Stein, former director of C-TRAIN. "C-TRAIN fulfills a need for low income individuals who have no higher education, and it also breaks the barrier so that they can pursue a career in childcare."

The C-TRAIN program is an economic development project for low income residents on the Near West Side of Chicago and it was initiated by UIC's Center for Urban Economic Development. The program offers two basic classes for those who want to work in childcare. The classes not only make the students eligible to work in childcare centers, but they also encourage them to complete their GED and pursue higher education.

"Many of our students never finished high school, are on welfare and lack confidence in their own capabilities," said Stein. "Our program increases their self-esteem and it encourages them to do something good for themselves and others."

The C-TRAIN project was started in 1995 by Toni Henle of the UIC Center for Economic Development as a result of a survey that she conducted on training and educational needs among low income residents.

In 1997, C-TRAIN obtained a \$50,000 grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education through the Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA), based on a proposal

written by Toni Henle. C-TRAIN has used the HECA grant to expand the educational efforts to Malcolm X and Kennedy-King College. HECA refunded the program with \$55,000 for the 1998-1999 year. C-TRAIN also receives financial support from a HUD grant that is administered by the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative. This grant is a collaboration between UICNI and the West Side Consortium for the purpose of purchasing a building to house a daycare center.

Mostly African-American and Hispanic women between 20 and 40 years of age enroll in C-TRAIN classes. This past summer 10 participants completed the program and of the 10 completions, seven are employed in the day care industry, and one is currently involved in Americorps and plans to enter a four-year BA degree program.

The C-TRAIN project is currently run by Patrick Roberts, a UIC Ph.D. student in Curriculum and Instruction at the College of Education. He replaced Jill Stein, a Ph.D. student in Education Policy who was involved with the program for 2 1/2 years. She found the practical experience rewarding and a nice complement to her education at UIC.

"We have very committed students in the C-TRAIN program who are incredibly dedicated to the child care profession," said Stein. "It is very encouraging to see that our program works and that it can make a difference in people's lives."

A major goal for the future is to work more closely with community based childcare agencies and shift the responsibility of recruitment from C-TRAIN to the agencies.

C-TRAIN hopes to set up a College Community Coordinating Council which will involve the agencies to recruit students and then refer them to C-TRAIN. This creates a collaborative approach between C-TRAIN, the colleges, and the agencies to better serve the students, said Roberts.

So far, the program has established recruitment relationships with several

organizations in the community in collaboration with UIC departments and Malcolm X College.

As the process of recruiting and choosing candidates expands, the program continues to develop and be refined. Currently students can choose to take six hours or more

in child development, continue school to earn an associates degree in Early Childhood Education, open day care businesses in their home, or combine work and school.

For more information on the C-TRAIN program, please contact Patrick Roberts at 312-996-0663.