

Clerical Skills Job Program Has Cause To Celebrate

By KAREN PRESLEY

With 212 of its 267 "trainees" having found jobs, Training Inc. is celebrating its third anniversary.

Training Inc. is a clerical skills program for low-income, unemployed high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 65.

Funded entirely by the Job Training Partnership Act, Training Inc. plunks trainees into a world of typewriters, calculators, office computers and business professionalism. During each of Training Inc.'s 12-week sessions, about 30 trainees are taught what it takes to become employees.

Like regular office employees, they are expected to "be at work" five days a week, with the shortened hours of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. In that time, trainees not only learn or brush up on clerical skills but also receive tips on how to dress and how to mingle with coworkers and supervisors in an office atmosphere.

"We're really trying to help people make a new life for themselves in terms of a career," said Marty Miles-Severance, job placement coordinator.

The Indianapolis Alliance for Jobs interviews prospective trainees. In accordance with rules estab-

lished under the JTPA, no trainees are paid, though they may receive bus fare and day care assistance for their children.

The average age of trainees is 28 to 29, Ms. Miles-Severance said. Almost all are women — about three men enroll in each session — and about two-thirds are black.

Many trainees are single parents seeking jobs for the first time, Ms. Miles-Severance said. They may have had jobs when they were graduated from high school but their skills no longer are competitive.

"Some of them are making major life changes at the same time they're with us," she said. "So we do a lot of listening and a lot of problem-solving."

Ms. Miles-Severance also does a lot of coordinating. Her duties include finding jobs for graduates of Training Inc.'s program, and she lobbies public as well as private employers.

"The whole philosophy of the program has been one of partnership between the government sector, the private sector and the educational sector," she said. Training Inc. is a program of Indiana Vocational Technical College.

At a reception Wednesday in the Marott, local businesses will be recognized for their contributions to

Training Inc. Some businesses have employed graduates, while others have donated dollars, sponsored free trips or loaned personnel.

The North Meridian Business Group, a fraternity of merchants along the North Meridian corridor, is underwriting the reception.

"And that's fitting," Ms. Miles-Severance said, "because it was that group that originally determined that a training program is needed to deal with the unemployment in that (clerical skills) area."

"It was their support that really allowed this program to come into being."