

# Training Inc. writing new futures for some

By CAROL ELROD

**E**leanor Blakey was out of work for more than a year. Geary King moved household goods, set up for banquets and worked in construction. He was laid off repeatedly. Vicki Brown's part-time dishwasher, cashier and house-keeping jobs didn't pay enough to support her and her daughter.

Now, because of a unique training program, a cooperative effort of the IUPUI Division of Continuing Studies, the city's Division of Employment and Training (DET), 120 area businesses and an assortment of community organizations, all three have full-time, permanent, white-collar employment.

Called Training, Inc., the two-year-old clerical skills program helps men and women get and keep jobs — even during business downturns.

Nearly 75 percent of Training Inc. students had worked only in unskilled or minimum-skill jobs before they entered the program. About the same percentage are members of minority groups.

The model for Training Inc. was designed eight years ago by the Institute for Culture Affairs in Oak Brook, Ill. Widely copied all over the country, this model has been recognized by the United States Department of Labor as one of the 10 best government-sponsored training programs in the country.

Participants not only upgrade typing, reading, writing and arithmetic skills and learn filing, business communications, data entry, bookkeeping and the use of the calculator, they also are indoctrinated with what the staff calls "business style."

That means they learn the importance of appropriate dress, punctuality, friendliness, tact, responsibility, pride in work and cooperation with co-workers.

"Business style is as important as how fast you type," says Marti Lapka, director of job development.

There's nothing second-class about the Training Inc. facility, located on the eighth floor of the restored Majestic Building at 47 South Pennsylvania St. It's tastefully decorated with contemporary office furniture, well-cared-for plants and graphics in chrome frames.

Couple that with the latest in office equipment and you have an A-1 place to work and to learn.

To expose students to what the business world will be like, the staff has them run a pretend corporation, the final exercise in their "hands-on" training.

Although no money is taken in and no goods are shipped in "Lester Hill," provider of supplies for hospitals, motels and nursing homes, students do all the paperwork and take all the phone calls a real company would.

"We deliberately throw in some glitches" along with the orders to fill, says Jacqueline Speicher, program director.

The 14-session course seems to provide just the practical information and the problem-solving skills students need.

Ms. Brown, who had worked mostly part-time jobs before entering the Training Inc. program, has been employed as a dispatcher for Indiana University hospitals for nearly a year, an occupation which demands strict attention to detail as well as unflappability.

Each weekday, (and every third weekend) she handles 200 to 250 requests for everything from equipment repair to transportation of patients to the X-ray department.

On busy days, all six phone lines can be busy at one time as she routes requests to University, Riley or Long hospitals or to Fesler Hall where many of the laboratories on the Medical Center campus are located.

Another successful graduate is Geary King who, before he signed up for Training Inc., had grown tired of the seasonal nature of the jobs he'd held. "They led nowhere." Besides, "if you don't work every day, you can't make enough money to get along."

Now employed at American United Life Insurance Company, he was promoted from his entry-level job as a messenger

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Geary King now works in AUL tape library  
Former jobs often left him unemployed, going 'nowhere'

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clerk to tape librarian in just two months. King has been told a promotion in such a short time is unusual.

For about four hours after his work day starts at 2 p.m., he files tapes and pulls them from storage racks when they're needed for a computer run.

Later on in his "day" he sits at a computer terminal to update the tapes' locations — quite a different job from loading couches and pianos onto moving vans.

When his work is done, King, who quit high school because he needed to work to support himself, assists employees in adjacent departments. (He earned his high school diploma through the GED program.)

Nicknamed by the staff the "alumni secretary" because she helps members of her graduating class keep in touch with their fellows via newsletter, Ms. Blakey had worked as a nurse's aide, a bartender, a clerk and an administrative assistant before her stint at Training Inc.

Although she hated math "with a passion" in high school, she discovered an aptitude for figures. She loves her job in the actuarial department at Indianapolis Life Insurance Co. It shows; she has been awarded two raises in eight months.

Although Ms. Blakey had office experience prior to signing on at Training Inc., long unemployment had made her typing skills rusty. She knew she had to regain speed if she expected to be hired. Bosses can afford to be choosy these days. Very few persons who type less than 50 words a minute can find clerical jobs, Ms. Blakey says.

She was able to increase her typing to 61 words a minute, "with no mistakes."

Since it was started here in 1981, six classes have been graduated from the Training Inc. program. Although not every enrollee in the 30- to 35-member classes completes the course and not every graduate is able to get and keep a job, most do.

About 85 percent of those hired in the past were still working three to six months after graduation. Several have been on the job a year. Sixty-six percent have either received raises or otherwise upgraded their jobs since they were hired.

When you consider past work history, the statistics are impressive.

The program was started because the Mapleton-Fall Creek Neighborhood and the North Meridian Business Group became concerned about unemployment in their area. The businesses and community organizations that are involved now represent other areas of the city as well.

Private sector representatives with whom Training Inc. works make referrals, provide resource persons to help with training, contribute money for equipment and other expenses not covered by the DET contract and talk to classes about how to be good employees.

Trainees are recruited, interviewed and screened by the Hampton Enrollment Center, a subcontractor to DET.

The Division of Employment and Training administers the federal CETA grant from which Training Inc. gets some of its funds. Because of cut-backs, CETA money now can cover only lunches and transportation during class sessions.

Ms. Lapka is looking for churches and civic groups which might be willing to help defray some of the costs of the program.



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### Vicki Brown now works at University Hospital *Rest of group was as excited as she when she was hired*

Because unemployment can cause self-esteem to plummet, she and the other staffers spend a lot of time encouraging students. "Every day they take some step toward success, whether that's having been on time for a whole week" or passing a 40 words-per-minute typing test.

During the formal job search at the end of each training session, it's particularly easy for students to become demoral-

ized. "I was sure I would get one job I applied for," says Ms. Brown. "When I found out I didn't, I was crying. But everyone let me know I could do it."

When she finally found her job, classmates and staff alike were as excited as she was. "Training Inc. is like a family that sticks together."

Indicative of their desire to succeed, the 29 students in the sixth class, just graduated, made 400 phone calls, sent 294 letters and had 90 actual job interviews. By graduation day April 22, a third had jobs.

Training Inc. doesn't drop out of the picture once students receive their diplomas. If necessary, staffers may work with graduates who don't find employment for as long as three additional months.