WORKING PARTNERSHIPS Annual Report 2011-2012

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WORKING PARTNERSHIPS ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Established in 2006, Working Partnerships is a 501(c)3 non-profit agency created by the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation (MRLF). The Working Partnerships service area includes Anoka, Carver, Hennepin, McLeod, Meeker, Scott, and Wright counties.

Working Partnerships developed out of a nationwide relationship between United Way and the AFL-CIO. Thanks to this long-lasting partnership, programs similar to Working Partnerships exist across the state of Minnesota and throughout the nation.

MISSION

Working Partnerships is dedicated to improving the lives of working families and promoting economic justice in Minneapolis and the West Metro area.

GOALS

- Improve the lives of working families by offering immediate and long-term solutions to create financial stability for working people and strengthen communities.
- Promote economic justice through outreach, education, and networking in communities; and with other organizations and individuals.

Emergency Assistance for Union Members

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

"During economic downturns, we talk to members too proud to ask for help to avoid eviction or foreclosure, or to keep the heat and lights on. We send them to Working Partnerships, where they can talk to fellow union members to get some concrete help towards paying or making payment arrangements for those bills. They also get help to avoid problems and assistance on how to get by if they're out of work."

> —Tom Reger, Apprentice Coordinator, Cement Masons, Plasterers & Shophands Local #633

Thanks to the generous support of Greater Twin Cities United Way, Working Partnerships is able to provide working families with small emergency financial assistance grants to help during an emergency. Most often, union members approach us as a last resort after a layoff—when their power or heat is about to be shut off due to a large utility bill, when they are about to be evicted or their home put on the path to foreclosure, or when there's just not enough in the family bank account to pay a child's important medical bill. While the grants are small, they often help keep our clients' heads just above water so they can tackle the most basic and essential of needs when their personal financial situations are overwhelming.

CHARLIE, a construction worker in his early fifties, was laid off for more than

two years. During an economic downturn, jobs in construction are hit especially hard. After learning Charlie and his family just missed the eligibility requirement for Energy Assistance, Working Partnerships helped them pay a utility bill to stop a shutoff, and helped set up a budget plan that the family could sustain. We find that many of our union members in need are too proud to ask for help, but after working with Charlie, we learned that he and his family were in need of food resources. In addition, Charlie expressed his wish to talk to his local and state representatives about his long-term unemployment, his concerns regarding age

Working Partnerships provided emergency grants for critical financial assistance to avoid evictions, shutoffs, and other emergencies: **100** clients and families in 2011 **72** clients and families in 2012 discrimination, and his desire to find a job in his field. Working Partnerships helped provide Charlie with information on how to find and contact his representatives, and best practices on how to effectively express his story.

BIANCA works in the collections department at a local hospital. She recently gave birth to her fourth child, who was born with a heart defect. Bianca had to take extra time off work in order to take care of her sick child. Her husband's income alone was not enough to cover all of the bills during this time, including a large number of medical bills. Despite the fact that Bianca had returned to work by the time she visited our office, the debt remained. Working Partnerships was able to assist Bianca's family by paying an electric bill that was two months behind. This payment helped her family make their mortgage payment without worrying about the electricity being shut off, and helped to lower their high stress level.

A majority of clients assisted by Working Partnerships' programs are members of unions representing low-wage earners who were typically the sole earners in their households. In addition, a significant percentage of clients were members of Building Trades unions affected by the economic downturn's effects on construction and development.

MOLLY is a union member assisted by Working Partnerships. She is employed as a housekeeper at a local hospital, and she is the guardian of her young granddaughter who has multiple disabilities. She contacted Working Partnerships after receiving a shut-off notice from her electric company. Molly missed several payments on her bill after having to purchase new, expensive medical prescriptions for her granddaughter. Working Partnerships was able to pay a portion of Molly's electric bill, and assist her in creating a feasible payment plan with the electric company.



EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE

"It's not right when the people who serve you food in restaurants and hotels sometimes need help putting food on their tables to feed their families after a layoff, reduction in hours, or a disaster. Some of our members needed this kind of emergency assistance after their homes were destroyed by a tornado in North Minneapolis, and Working Partnerships was there with resources to help them get through the tough times."

—Nancy Goldman, President, UNITE-HERE Local #17

Minnesota local unions and individual union members as well as grants from foundations like Roundy's, enable our Emergency Food Assistance program to work with union members and families in their time of need. When union members are laid off, work intermittently, or have a job that just barely supports a family, a financial emergency can be triggered by a sudden medical problem, the additional loss of a spouse or partner's job, or the simple fact of a car needing a critical repair. And when household income and savings are wiped out, basic needs take precedent. Our program helps our clients take care of food resources in three ways: 1) providing eligible union members with a series of \$25 grocery store gift cards to supplement or serve as their primary source for ba-

sic food needs; 2) providing clients and the Northeast Minneapolis area with a Laborsponsored site for the Emergency Foodshelf Network's Fare For All bulk discount food program; and 3) making direct referrals to local nonprofit hunger relief partners like the Little Kitchen, Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP), and Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP), as well as to SNAP application assistance workers for clients' county food support eligibility.

MARIE is a member of the teacher and education support professionals union. Before the recent economic crisis, she was able to find part-time employment in order to keep afloat



during the summer months when she's not teaching. In the past few years, she could no longer find this employment and was unable to keep up with bills. As part of our Emergency Food Assistance program, Working Partnerships assisted Marie with grocery store gift cards, and referred her to the monthly Fare for All Express site in Northeast Minneapolis in order to purchase high quality food at discount prices. The combination of the programs helped Marie with critically important food resources.

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

"If a member comes to us in crisis and has no idea what step to take next, that's when we turn to Working Partnerships. Sometimes our members approach us with a wide range of personal and family issues that can affect them while at work. Working Partnerships works with these members to find affordable and appropriate counseling programs to meet these needs and stay on the job."

> —Ron Mohrland, President, Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local #22

When they are in need, union members and their families find Working Partnerships in a number of ways—through their union stewards, union staff and co-workers, by calling United Way 2-1-1, through direct contact with Working Partnerships staff at one of our workplace resource or layoff trainings, through ads and articles in the *Minneapolis Labor Review*, or through a United Way

Working Partnerships provided information and referral services to link Union members, their families, and the community with local assistance resources. Over 600 referrals in 2011 Over 500 referrals in 2012 campaign at their workplace.

Once we are working with these union members to address their needs, we often find that most union members have never had to ask for assistance before and are unfamiliar with and overwhelmed by—the very large network of social service providers and programs in our communities.

Our relationships with these providers and programs enable us to serve in a dual role for our clients: as an important information and referral resource, and as a trusted peer ally who can prepare, guide, and advocate for our fellow union members in need. We arm clients with information and best practices on applying for services. We make appointments and direct referrals to program staff. And we follow up with clients to make sure they—as well as the provider—follow through on their search for assistance.

ERICA is a seasonal employee at a sports facility. She and her family lost their home to the tornado that hit North Minneapolis. Their apartment was completely destroyed, along with all of her family's possessions—they only had the clothes they were wearing at the time the tornado hit. Working Partnerships was able to help connect Erica to the Red Cross for immediate assistance, and later Urban Homeworks and Bridging Inc. in order to find a new apartment and furniture for her family. Working Partnerships also contributed to Erica's security deposit for her new apartment, and provided food assistance.

Workforce & Resource Training

LAYOFF & DISLOCATED WORKER COLLABORATIVE TRAININGS

"When we needed to educate our members at a plant about what to do when they are out of work, Working Partnerships organized a training with a group of local service providers. The workers were able to learn more about how to access what they need and interact directly with the providers in a group of their peers."

—Doug Williams, Staff Representative, International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers (IUE-CWA) Local #1140

At the request of individual unions, union leaders and staff, companies, and state and local organizations, Working Partnerships develops and executes trainings for workers who are laid off or who are at risk of a layoff. These trainings provide important skill-building, social service and community resource information specific to union members. The vast majority of participants have never before experienced a layoff, and/or are in a demographic group that is experiencing particular trouble in re-entry into the job market: workers 50 and older, single mothers, and people of color.

The most successful of these trainings leverage the collaborative partnerships we have built with other local service providers and target the needs and eligibility—including geographic jurisdictions—of the individual union members we are serving at the training. Our service provider partners in these trainings have included: Family Means, Portico Healthnet, United Way 2-1-1, Community Action Partnership, Ramsey & Washington Counties (CAPRW), Community Action Suburban Hennepin, Hennepin County, State of Minnesota Rapid Response/Dislocated Worker Program, Fare For All, Lutheran Social Services, Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP), Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP), Neighborhood Development Alliance (NEDA), and Tubman.

We make a special effort to treat these trainings as a "one-stop shop" for our union member par-

ticipants; service provider partners are chosen according to the workers' most pressing needs relayed to us by the shop stewards and union staff. Participants are encouraged to fill out applications and make appointments while attending the training directly with provider staff, or make an appointment with Working Partnerships staff for a longer client intake.

In addition, Working Partnerships works closely with Building Trades union locals, members, and apprenticeship training programs to provide similar training opportunities for workers in Building Trades who are new to or have trouble handling seasonal or sporadic employment. From 2011-2012, Working Partnerships reached approximately **580** laid-off Union members at Layoff & Dislocated Worker trainings.



IUE-CWA LOCAL #1140's Doug Williams contacted Working Partnerships to provide assistance to a group of 50 workers about to be laid off from the closing Superior Plating plant in Northeast Minneapolis. Two trainings for these workers were held at times convenient for their work shifts and for their appointments with their state dislocated worker program. The union worked to contact their members to make sure they could attend the training. We collaborated with United Way 2-1-1, Family Means, Community Action-Ramsey & Washington, and the Emergency Foodshelf Network. Workers received detailed information through presentations, handouts, and Q & A sessions on energy assistance, food support, and other critical emergency resources.

KATIE is an Operating Engineer who visited our office after having been laid off for two years. She had run out of unemployment benefits and savings. Though she had experienced seasonal layoffs in the past, she had never been out of work for more than a few months at a time prior to 2009. Her partner also experienced a layoff during the period of time, however, she had just found a job by the time Katie visited the Working Partnerships office. Katie needed help to avoid phone, electric, and water shutoffs before her partner received her first paycheck from the new job. We were able to help her avoid the shutoffs, and we learned several months later that she had also returned to work but was grateful for the assistance during her time of need.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE TRAININGS

"Our apprentices need to enter their careers in the building trades prepared. We prepare them for everything they need to know about their trade, but we also want them to learn about how to manage their finances, access services should the need arise, and become well-informed citizens and community members. Working Partnerships helps us accomplish those goals."

-Pete Parris, Sheet Metal Workers Local #10

Working Partnerships has unique opportunities to connect with union members and their families in a number of different ways. At Community Resource Trainings, our staff provides information, education and training on broad subjects like how to tap into local resources, or highlight solutions to a pressing need unique to that particular union and/or group of workers—like hunger relief, or domestic violence—identified through stewards and union staff. We also present information on the range of services available to union members because of their membership, including all the programs of Working Partnerships.

Building Trades Apprenticeship programs have always been strong partners for Working Partnerships. We have worked with these programs to make sure apprentices get the information they need to ensure they start out on a path to financial stability. These apprentices will enter careers where seasonal work, budgeting, and financial planning—and how to prioritize—are facts of daily life. Working Partnerships made presentations at a series of Building Trades apprenticeship program classes through our coalition partner, Minnesota Wants To Work. Apprentices were given the opportunity to find ways to empower themselves when looking for work and to help others in the same situation. They also learned about how to tap into the local community resource system through Working Partnerships as well as other important United Way-affiliated and other agen-

cies and programs in their areas.

In 2011, Working Partnerships reached over **830** union members at Community Resource trainings.

In 2012, Working Partnerships reached over **720** union members at Community Resource trainings.

Public Policy & Civic Engagement

PARTNERSHIP & ISSUE ACTIVITIES

"Working Partnerships developed tools and materials our union could use to educate members about the Voter ID ballot measure that appeared on the Minnesota ballot in 2012. They also helped develop messages that were concise, customized and targeted to the specific concerns of union families. We used this information to let our members know that it was important to make their voices heard at the ballot box."

> —John Rostad, Field Representative, Minnesota School Employees Association (MSEA)

A mission that includes helping build economic justice and power for workers must also emphasize the importance of getting involved and engaged in the civic life of the community. Working Partnerships has joined a number of coalitions and groups through organizations like the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the Minnesota Participation Project to help union members and union clients connect with their leaders and neighbors on important, non-partisan issues. Working Partnerships takes the lead on engagement on these issues for union members in the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation service area—Hennepin, Anoka, Wright, Carver, Scott, McLeod and Meeker counties.

2012 VOTER ID AMENDMENT

Non-profit organizations are allowed to participate in advocacy and take a position around ballot measures, and in 2012, Working Partnerships worked with Our Vote, Our Future, a non-profit coalition opposed to a constitutional amendment ballot initiative establishing a Voter ID requirement in Minnesota. If passed, this constitutional amendment would have established onerous requirements and high barriers to voting in vulnerable communities, targeting the elderly, students, minority groups, members of the military, and working people. National, state, and local unions and union federations passed resolutions encouraging a "no" vote on the amendment. Working Partnerships, in coordination with the coalition, set out to educate union members about the amendment and explain why voting no was in the best interest of working people. We presented longer "train the trainer" briefings on the amendment and how to talk to coworkers, families and friends about voting no. We attended union meetings to present quick facts and figures about the ballot measure during normal orders of business. And we developed targeted materials geared directly toward union members, discussing the links between an expanded electorate and good public policy for

working people, as well as the connections between support for voter ID and hostility to working people and unions. In the end, the collaboration and coalition were successful, and Minnesota became the first state in the nation to reject a Voter ID law or constitutional amendment at the ballot box.

Working Partnerships made daily presentations to different classes of **SHEET METAL WORK-**

From July through Election Day, we reached approximately **1500** union members at **50** union meetings and gatherings during the campaign to defeat the Voter ID amendment in 2012.

ERS LOCAL #10 Apprentices on the Voter ID Amendment. The brief talks provided a forum for discussion and questions on the specific issue as well as on voting rights in general. In addition, many misconceptions on current voting rules and regulations were cleared up, possibly removing some barriers that could have prevented some of the apprentices from voting.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT/MNSURE IMPLEMENTATION

Working Partnerships is planning to take a major role in working with partner unions and other organizations to begin the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) through Minnesota's health insurance exchange, MNSure. Union members and their families will receive education and in-person assistance in determining the best way to take advantage of the provisions of the Act, and unions will need education and navigation on how the ACA will interact with collective bargaining and Taft-Hartley funds.

CENSUS, RANKED CHOICE VOTING

In 2010, we worked with local unions on the U.S. Census to target workers in historically underrepresented communities and allay the privacy fears of many members for whom "being counted" would truly make a difference in finding resources and benefits. Working Partnerships also worked to educate Minneapolis union member residents about the new Ranked Choice Voting system in municipal elections—reaching out to retirees and communities of color to make sure people knew how to cast the new type of ballot and that lack of knowledge would not be a barrier to voting on Election Day.

WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Working Partnerships works with local unions to provide education around financial stability, union counselor training (formerly known as UCAN), and whatever topics are of interest and important to the local membership.

In 2011 and in 2012, Working Partnerships collaborated with

30 non-profit and Labor coalition (national, regional and local) partners to provide services, resources, education, and empowerment for individuals and communities in need. Working Partnerships collaborates with local Labor and community organizations to help engage workers who are unemployed, underemployed or experiencing unstable or temporary employment to call for good jobs, employment opportunity and economic justice throughout Minnesota.

In June 2011, Working Partnerships hosted the **MINNESOTA WANTS TO WORK SERVICE FAIR**. This event brought together community partners including Portico Healthnet, Neighborhood Development Alliance (NEDA), Bridge To Benefits, Hennepin County Child Support, City of St. Paul Foreclosure Prevention programs, United Way 2-1-1, Family Means, Fare For All, Community Action Ramsey & Washington, Community Action Suburban Hennepin, Cornerstone, State of Minnesota Dislocated Worker Program/Unemployment

Insurance. Workers were invited to attend the fair, make contacts and sign up for direct services on the spot with providers, and share their stories with each other at an open forum during the event. These workers were also shown how to contact their lawmakers to make sure the voices of the unemployed were heard when policy decisions are being made.



Union Volunteerism & Philanthropy

"When our union nurses want to create a volunteer event or direct contributions to a charitable cause in their area, we talk to Working Partnerships. Their relationships and connections with local non-profit organizations can direct us toward the best fit for our members, and they help us ensure nurses' time and money go to worthy and effective causes. And they make sure to recognize our nurses for their volunteer efforts."

-Linda Hamilton, President, Minnesota Nurses Association

Union members volunteer in their communities through their workplaces, their local unions, and their civic and religious affiliations. We recognize union volunteers at our statewide AFL-CIO conventions, in our "Union Volunteers In Our Community" annual report, and in all forms of media. One of our ongoing goals is to further develop, track, and recognize the volunteer efforts of unions and union members.

The annual **"WATER'S OFF"** community service day took place on Saturday, March 26 with the help of volunteers from Plumbers locals # 15, 34, and 6 as well as donations of trucks and parts for all necessary repairs from the Minnesota Mechanical Contractors Association and Metro-Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association. While most plumbing problems are fairly easy to identify, sometimes problems can be difficult to spot and that is where a licensed plumber can point out these problems and recommend a course of corrective action. "Water's Off" began in 1994, with union plumbers providing free repair services to help lowincome, elderly, and disabled homeowners live independent, healthier and happier lives. In 2011, the effort served 121 Minnesotans.

Working Partnerships is a part of the AFL-CIO Community Services Program, a national partnership between the AFL-CIO and United Way Worldwide. Union members and union locals and federations are major participants in the philanthropic life of the Twin Cities community in general and in the Minneapolis area in particular, continuing a statewide cultural tradition of giving back to the community. Union members and their organizations reach out through Working Partnerships and other non-profit organizations that fulfill community needs, and develop relationships that can lead to closer partnerships and increased contributions of time and resources.

WORKING PARTNERSHIPS THANKS THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS:

American Postal Workers Union Local 125 Sam Adams **Timothy Adams** Vicki Anderson Terry Arterburn Larry Bahr Mary and Mark Barclay Patricia and Dale Baysinger Joseph Bedor Joseph Berzak Gary Bistodeau Cliff Bolder Building Trades Credit Union Debra Broostin Tammy and Lowell Bueligen Robert and Muriel Chakich Lori and Tim Christian Larry Clark Theresa Collins Shirley Anne Conn Jean Constance Karl Custer Tim Dixon Todd Eddy Carole Erickson Tovah Flygare Laura Frederickson

Gas Workers Local #340 James and Karen Glander Robert Godava Greater Twin Cities United Way Bonnie Greenleaf Mark Harris LeeAnn Hilstrom-Hudson David Horvord Kim Houle LM Husak IUE-CWA Local #1140 Philip Jarosz Paul and Karen Johnson Raymond and Delores Jokinen Jean and Robert Jones John Kane Michael Larson II Verlene Larson William Larson Mary Lee Heard Lloyd Maas Jr. **Ronald Madaras** Dorothy Maki David Martin Twaya McIntosh Gayle McMahon Patrick McShane

Thomas Mevissen Susan Moore Michael Moore Jacqueline and Daniel Mortenson Corrine and John Nebben Richard Nelson Scott Olafson Barbara Osadchuk Daniel Plath Jeannette Rebar Adam Robinson David and Loree Schutta Frederick Schwartz Bruce Seelig Daniel Shaw **Deborah** Sievers Fred Snelson Katherine Spiess Richard and Helen Steffens **Jeff Street** John Turbitt Ullico Union Resource Guide **UNITE/HERE** Local 17 United Transportation Union Kathleen and Gerald Worshek

WORKING PARTNERSHIPS THANKS THE FOLLOWING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS:

AFL-CIO Community Services Program Anoka County Community Action Program (ACCAP) Anoka/Blaine/Coon Rapids (ABC) League of Women Voters Bridge To Benefits Bridging City of St Paul Foreclosure Prevention program Community Action Partnership, Ramsey & Washington Counties (CAPRW) Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP) Cornerstone Emergency Foodshelf Network/Fare For All Family Means Greater Twin Cities United Way Labor Education Service at the University of Minnesota League of Women Voters-Minnesota

Lutheran Social Services Minnesota AFL-CIO Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Minnesota Wants To Work Neighborhood Development Alliance (NEDA) Our Vote, Our Future Portico Healthnet PRG Second Harvest Heartland Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) St Paul Labor Studies & Resource Center State of Minnesota Dislocated Worker Program/Rapid Response Teamsters Service Bureau Tubman United Way 2-1-1/Carrier Alert Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP) Working America

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