

helping PEOPLE help THEMSELVES

break the cycle of poverty

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Enterprising Kitchen SOAP WITH SUBSTANCE

BY BETH GRIFFIN

The industrial-sized vats of lye and coconut oil come in the back door at The Enterprising Kitchen in Chicago. Several weeks later, they are shipped out in attractive gift baskets, as all-natural beauty soaps with names like Citrus Blossom and Ginger Snap. In between, they are carefully tended and patiently transformed by a group of women who are making changes in their own lives at the same time.

The Enterprising Kitchen (TEK) in Chicago's notoriously impoverished and now-gentrifying Uptown neighborhood has received three grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development's economic development fund.

Much More Than a Minimum Wage

TEK was founded by a group led by Joan Pikas, an educator and small business owner who was determined to help marginalized women by combining training and education with a profitable business model. "Making soap is not our goal," she says. "We want to teach women the skills they need to be reliable employees, so that they can move on to jobs that will give them a living wage."

Women from all over Chicago are referred to TEK by addiction recovery homes, battered women's shelters, and even the sheriff's department, whose female furlough program counts TEK as a preferable alternative to overcrowded Cook County jail. TEK has a small



"It is an empowering thing to manufacture a product."

Photos by Ken Touchton

MORE THAN 150 WOMEN LIKE EVELYN HAVE MANUFACTURED NOT ONLY BARS OF SOAP, BUT LIVES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE ENTERPRISING KITCHEN.

full-time staff, composed largely of women who have gone through the program, and a cadre of regular volunteers. The referring agencies provide case workers. Most of the participants are in their late 30s, but the ages range from 18 to 60.

At any given time, 12 women are working in the business on six-month rotations, learning job and life

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of CCHD:



Kitchens are places where most of us go to be fed. In Chicago, low-income women from diverse ethnic and experiential backgrounds enter *The Enterprising Kitchen* where they are “fed” opportunities to get their lives back on track, learn new job skills, and earn enough to support themselves and their families. They call their line of soaps “Choices” because they are teaching women to make better choices in their lives.

The Enterprising Kitchen is an example of the kind of project supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development’s Economic Development Program. This program is designed to create good jobs and just workplaces, and also develop assets for low-income people, their families, and their communities.

Our economic development grants support, in the words of Pope Paul VI, “integral human development” among low-income people and promote both low-income leadership and ownership. Visit some of the businesses created with CCHD support by logging on to the websites listed in this newsletter. Some might even help you with your Christmas shopping!

You support the women of The Enterprising Kitchen—and thousands more like them—through your ongoing support of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. May God continue to bless you for your solidarity with our low-income sisters and brothers. Be assured of our grateful prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Robert J. Vitillo
Executive Director

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways. You can support CCHD with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer, or consider a lasting legacy to help people help themselves—remember CCHD in your estate planning. For more information, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365/ mcampbell@usccb.org.



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WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed more than \$260 million to more than 4,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective and so that CCHD’s investment will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between the poor and non-poor.

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ENTERPRISING KITCHEN *continued from page 1*

skills and making minimum wage. “But they’re getting so much more than that,” says Joan. “We’re helping women get some confidence and earn some money in a safe and supportive environment.” She adds, “We have seminars on workplace ethics and behavior, job search skills, resume development, and financial literacy. Tutors help with GED test-taking and computer skills, and we are just starting a monthly health and nutrition event with a nurse practitioner.”

A Labor of Learning

The soap-making is all done manually, and Joan says that it is intentionally labor intensive. “It’s an empowering thing to manufacture a product,” she says. “With our ‘cold process’ soap, lye and vegetable fat are heated in large pots to cause the chemical reaction that produces soap and glycerin. We pour the mixture into molds and let it cool and harden slowly while the chemical reaction continues.” It is later cut and packaged for sale through TEK’s website, church bazaars, specialty catalogs, and retail stores.

TEK has expanded beyond bar soap into glycerin soaps, shower gel, liquid soap, and the newest entry, bath tea. Product sales currently cover 43% of TEK’s operating budget, and Joan is confident that that self-sufficiency will increase.

The soap cauldron is not the only mixing pot at TEK. “One of the best things about The Enterprising Kitchen is how the ethnic groups get along,” says Joan. “We have African Americans and women from South Asia, East Africa, Turkey, and China, and when there have been tensions, we have gotten over that hump by talking about it in a group, generally over a shared lunch. The women are learning to appreciate one another’s differences, and friendships have formed.”

Forming Soap, Transforming Lives

In the first six years of this program, some 150 women have “graduated,” and there is always a list of women waiting to get in. Seventy percent of participants have moved on to employment or advanced vocational training. Nearly 75% of participants continue to progress one year after graduation by maintaining jobs that pay a living wage and/or through furthering their education. The average wage earned by working graduates is \$9.10 per hour, which is 30% higher than the national average wage earned by former welfare recipients.



THROUGH CCHD FUNDING, WOMEN LIKE INESSA GAIN CONFIDENCE AND JOB SKILLS THAT LEAD TO WELL-PAYING JOBS.

Role models are important at TEK, and graduates are encouraged to come back as speakers and mentors. “They’re living proof that if you work hard and feel that there’s a purpose in your life, you can get back on your feet,” says participant Nayda Medina. Nayda was referred to TEK after four months in Cook County Jail. Her life “changed and went downhill,” she says, when she took a leave of absence from her long-time employment with the Chicago Board of Education and got involved with substance abuse. “I just snapped,” she explains, “and I burned a lot of bridges.” TEK has helped her with her recovery. “They don’t judge me here,” says Nayda. “They motivate me when I’m ‘down’ and even if I do something wrong, they don’t down talk, they discuss how I could do it differently.”

Nayda has been promoted through different units of TEK and is hoping to get a job in floral design when she leaves. In the meantime, she has reconciled with her family and made friends with other participants who remind her of her own daughters. “TEK is a wonderful opportunity for the ladies who get a chance to come here,” she concludes. “People here have faith in you.”

CCHD has provided grant funding for The Enterprising Kitchen since 2002. Recent funding is being used to expand the business and to train and promote a TEK participant into the position of Product Manager. Your ongoing support of CCHD is vital to the success of groups like The Enterprising Kitchen. ☺


January Is Poverty in America Awareness Month

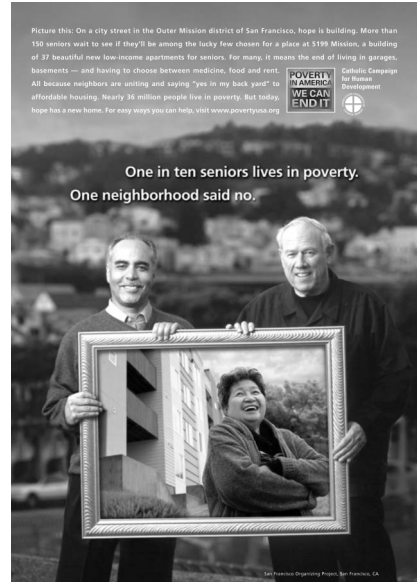
NEW CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS GRASSROOTS SOLUTIONS THAT BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

In January, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) will launch its fifth national public awareness campaign emphasizing the tragic reality that nearly 36 million Americans now live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau). Timed to coincide with the beginning of *Poverty in America Awareness Month*, this year's campaign uses television, radio, and print ads to attract attention to the number of Americans living in poverty and to showcase real solutions—projects funded by CCHD in communities across the United States.

The 2005 campaign features three different CCHD-funded projects that break the cycle of poverty. One grows and markets nutritious food to hungry residents in a poor section of our nation's capital where chain grocery stores no longer exist. Another provides safe shelter and quality education for the children of rural New Mexican migrant farm workers. A third offers affordable housing to San Francisco's low-income senior citizens. These stories are representative of programs supported by CCHD that weaken poverty's grasp on our nation.

In addition to the multi-media campaign, a national press conference will be held on January 11, 2005, in Los Angeles. There, CCHD will release the results of its 2005 *Poverty Pulse* public opinion poll addressing awareness and attitudes related to poverty in America and its survey of low-income Americans that documents their experiences living in poverty.

CCHD invites you and your families to join in the observance of Poverty Awareness Month. Visit the Poverty USA website www.povertyusa.org (English) or www.pobrezausa.org (Spanish). At the website, you can tour "Poverty, USA" and learn what you and others can do to help by clicking on words like *Educate*, *Advocate*, *Participate* and *Donate*. 



Picture this: On a city street in the Outer Mission district of San Francisco, hope is building. More than 150 seniors wait to see if they'll be among the lucky few chosen for a place at 5199 Mission, a building of 37 beautiful new low-income apartments for seniors. For many, it means the end of living in garages, basements — and having to choose between medicine, food and rent. All because neighbors are uniting and saying "yes in my back yard" to affordable housing. Nearly 36 million people live in poverty. But today, hope has a new home. For easy ways you can help, visit www.povertyusa.org.



One in ten seniors lives in poverty.
One neighborhood said no.

ONE OF THREE POVERTY USA PUBLIC SERVICE PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS TO BE RELEASED IN JANUARY DURING POVERTY IN AMERICA AWARENESS MONTH.

WHERE'S MY MONEY GOING?

All CCHD funds received are used solely for the support of CCHD's anti-poverty mission. CCHD abides by the charitable standards set by a leading donor advisory service. Our funds are divided as follows: 85% is assigned to CCHD's core program mission of community empowerment, economic development, and education programs; 5.5% is allocated to coordinate the annual appeal and communications efforts; 3.5% funds our poverty awareness campaign; and 6% is assigned to administrative costs. We thank you for continuing to empower low-income people through your ongoing support for CCHD.

SHOP WITH YOUR VALUES

As the holiday season approaches, you can support The Enterprising Kitchen and the self-sufficiency of women like Nayda by purchasing their hand-crafted scented soaps and spa products online at www.theenterprisingkitchen.org/shoponline.html.

CCHD's Economic Development Program promotes justice, human dignity, and self-sufficiency by supporting job creation and the establishment of businesses that provide decent wages, distribute profits more equitably, and ensure an active role for low-income persons in business decisions.

Consider making a donation to CCHD in the name of someone on your holiday gift list, or visit www.usccb.org/cchd/edshopping.htm for information on how to order a variety of products from organizations receiving CCHD funding including:

- Native American artwork, quilts, pottery, and books
- Aromatic handmade soaps, bath salts, and spa products
- Locally grown organic foods, including hormone-free dairy products, wild rice, jams, jellies, maple syrup, cookie bars, and gift baskets
- Natural baby products, dolls, and toys
- *Latin American Christmas*, a children's book and CD that keep Latin American Christmas traditions alive