

SPRING 2015

THE DORNSIFE CONNECTOR



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EDITOR'S WELCOME

Dear friends and neighbors,

It was a long cold winter but inside the three buildings of the Dornsife Center, things are hopping!

In this issue you'll hear about neighbors who have gotten a jump on their careers by taking advantage of programming offered at the Dornsife Center. We are proud of the economic and workforce development opportunities we offer: not just KEYSLOT but open hours with Drexel Human Resources, GED prep and the new Helms Academy being developed by our partner Goodwill Industries, the College Access Center, and Triskeles' Green Pathways program that lets young people explore careers in food and environmental fields.

See you at the Dornsife Center!

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STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Andrew Issa
Job: Extension Agent
Hometown: Los Angeles, California
Current residence: South Philadelphia
Favorite Movies: Scarface, Hoop Dreams, and Apocalypto
Favorite Food: Caribbean and seafood

What is your job?

I work as a liaison between Drexel's academic and knowledge resources and our community residents and stakeholders. This "middleman" approach gives me better insight into developing community-based and stakeholder-driven programs that serve the needs of community residents. This allows me to plan and deliver programs and evaluate their effectiveness.

Where will we find you at the Dornsife Center?

My office is in the Lindy House.

What is your favorite thing about the Dornsife Center?

The people! Both community members and staff. The culture at the Dornsife Center is one that needs to be packaged, patented, and distributed because it is completely different from any other place I have worked at. I think there is something about this place that energizes people.

What do you do when you're not at work?

I love people, exotic places, fantastic foods, and mesmerizing music. So, if I am not here I am either travelling or eating. If you have any recommendations, please feel free to stop me when you see me and let me know about a good place to eat, a place I should visit, or an upcoming musical event. Sports and TV are also on my to-do list.

HR OPEN HOURS

Since October of 2014, Drexel Human Resources has partnered with the Dornsife Center to provide career resources to the community members of West Philadelphia.

This “Open Hours” program was created to help satisfy the needs of those unemployed or underemployed, providing an opportunity to meet one-on-one with a Human Resources professional about their career goals. Each visitor to the Dornsife Center’s KEYSPOt lab may meet with Courtney Price of Drexel’s Human Resources department. The available career resources vary from resume creation and critique to conversations aimed at discovering a new career path.

Open Hours is hands-on support for those looking for feedback, advice and assistance with enhancing their job search methods. It creates a safe environment for those new to the workforce as well as offering resources to those seasoned individuals seeking new opportunities.

During the fall and winter months, Courtney has had the pleasure of meeting with over 40 local West Philadelphia residents. The success of the Open Hours is seen in the confidence a new resume gives a job seeker and the knowledge about searching and applying for opportunities in addition to the tools necessary to obtain employment.

Success is also demonstrated by gains of employment. Stacey W., now a regular at the KEYSPOt lab, began her new career as an Administrative Assistant with a local energy company in February, and Judy W. obtained an administrative role at Drexel University in November. The list of success stories is sure to increase as members of our community take advantage of resources such as this one and others available at the Dornsife Center.

Looking to update your resume or meet with an HR professional? Open Hours with Drexel HR occurs each Thursday at the Dornsife Center from 1pm-6pm.



GREEN CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAMS



Triskeles Inc. provides youth training programs, job readiness training and paid internships in the green business sector through our Green Career Pathways programs. In our after school programs, youth are introduced to Urban Farming, Sustainability and Nutrition/Cooking skills. They participate in hands-on activities where they are exposed to skill building training and learn to value personal and community healthy lifestyles. Trainings will be April 6th through June 1st, 2015 at the Dornsife Center.

In the summer of 2015, our Youth Entrepreneurship Council will bring together budding entrepreneurs who are looking to apply their skills to develop and implement a community based green initiative.

Finally, a group of 15 youth will have job readiness training and paid internships through our Green Career Pathways internship program, which will give high performing youth an opportunity to work in the city’s leading green businesses.

SUCCESS STORY WITH DWAYNE WALKER

Lifelong Mantua resident Dwayne Walker never touched a computer before stepping into the Dornsife Center. Now, he not only knows how to navigate the Internet, but he also communicates regularly via his brand new email address with family, friends and colleagues he has met through Dornsife.

While taking computer classes at Dornsife's KEYSPOt, Walker said he regularly "checked out" the Dornsife information table. It was there that he discovered a flyer seeking local residents to become Family Ambassadors for Drexel's West Philadelphia Early Childhood Education Initiative (WPECE), a Drexel-led partnership of community and education stakeholders working to improve the quality of early childhood education in the neighborhood. The Family Ambassador program is a collaboration between Drexel and the People's Emergency Center. Walker was selected because of his strong connection to the community and active involvement in taking care of his five grandchildren as well as nieces and nephews.

As a Family Ambassador, Walker promotes the importance of quality early childhood education to local parents through one-on-one discussions, staffing info tables at events, assisting at local childcare centers, coordinating Kindergarten registration open houses for local schools and working with other Family Ambassadors to spread the word about the importance of children reading by third grade. Research shows that children who read by third grade are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to be incarcerated, and more likely to attend college (University of Chicago, 2010).

At the Dornsife Center KEYSPOt, Walker also completed the three-hour online Mandated Reporter training to understand procedures for reporting child abuse – required to become a Family Ambassador.



As a result of Walker's enthusiasm and commitment to the WPECE mission, he was recently promoted to Parent Navigator, which allows him to act as a liaison between other Family Ambassadors and WPECE partners. However, he has not allowed this promotion to go to his head.

"I'm just a guy who is doing what I am doing because it's the right thing to do," said Walker. "My motivation is seeing these children learn and grow."

Walker's connection to the community goes back to his days as a student at McMichael School and continues today through his membership at Metropolitan Church and as a line cook at Chris' Pizza. Walker admitted to some negative detours in his life, but he successfully earned a GED and raised four daughters with his wife, who unfortunately passed away a year ago. After her death, Walker said he sunk into depression. He credits his sister with pushing him to "get busy" to overcome the sadness from his wife's death. That's when he decided to check out the Dornsife Center.

"People who don't use the center are missing out on a good opportunity," Walker said.

As he watched the Dornsife buildings undergo renovations last year, Walker, who lives just two blocks from the Center, said he never suspected the Center would have such a positive impact on his life. Not only has he learned how to use the computer, but he also participates in financial literacy classes through Clarifi and received tax assistance through Campaign for Working Families.

"It's an inspiration to have the Dornsife Center," said Walker, "and wonderful for Drexel to take initiative in our community."