

## Community Impact

### Community Collaboration and Leveraged Contributions Offers New Start for Family

Family aggression sent Laura, a single mother of three boys, to Sistercare, a shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Laura had struggled to maintain financial security for her family for several years because of debt and lack of skills required by most jobs in the Midlands today. Through Sistercare, Laura learned of opportunities for help from Family Service Center-operated Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program.

In the Midlands, nearly 80,000 adults do not have a high school diploma or GED and lack the skills required for the workforce. Jobs now favor individuals who demonstrate basic computer literacy, critical thinking, problem solving and team building skills in addition to the basic skills of reading, writing, math and comprehension skills. In the near future, only 15% of jobs in the Midlands will be considered unskilled, representing a gap between the number of unskilled workers and jobs available for them.

To bridge this gap, United Way of the Midlands, a partner of Family Service Center of South Carolina's Work/Life Solutions Program, committed \$100,000 in seed money that secured a \$1.3 million federal contract. This grant funds programs at Family Service Center that assist eligible unemployed and underemployed individuals in obtaining and retaining stable employment.

When Laura requested aid from the program in March 2006, she received financial support from the Family Service Center. Laura completed a series of introductory, intermediate and advanced Microsoft Office courses at New Horizons Computer Learning Center to address one of her barriers to employment – her lack of basic and current computer skills. Now employed in a full-time position with excellent benefits at Pella Corporation, she and her children have moved out of Sistercare and into a home.

Laura is just one of the 1,200 adults that the WIA program served in the Midlands in 2005-2006. By assisting customers with transportation and teaching basic computer skills, the WIA program solves problems that lead to unemployment and prepares workers for the increasingly competitive marketplace.

As the Community Impact leader, United Way of the Midlands not only provides funding, it also creates opportunities for local service providers like Sistercare and Family Service Center to work together to meet the overall needs of individuals. By focusing on solving underlying problems of unemployment, United Way of the Midlands and its partner agencies change lives of Midlands' citizens every day.

*United Way of the Midlands is donors, partners and volunteers discovering and responding to the crucial needs of our community—then finding resources to address those needs and following up to make sure the work gets done.*

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