

Assessment Committee Report

Continuing our evaluation of the Friendship House Clothing Bank, on August 21 we (Karen Chellquist, Gina Martinez, and myself) volunteered there for a half day. Unfortunately, Robin was not there due to a health issue, however, Cheryl was and we spent the first part of the morning with her, then made our way to the floor to work alongside the women. In Karen's words, "it was a great and necessary experience." Here's information we gathered from the experience:

- The work is physically demanding.
- The time it takes to fill an order has decreased from 30 days to around 1 1/2 weeks.
- If we could ask agencies to use a standard form developed by the FHCB (as opposed to a form created by the agency), it would increase efficiency, especially if the agencies began emailing orders as opposed to faxing.
- We found some room for improvement regarding sign-in of volunteers; perhaps better coordination between FHCB and Rashita would help.
- There's one particular agency that returns clothing regularly on the basis that the items were not "selected" by their clients, so the FHCB has to process the returned items a second time and most land in the B-grade bins.
- Some concerns raised regarding job safety. What a blessing to have Gina's professional perspective on this. Some of the ladders don't work properly, and currently, there is no "disclaimer" or "waiver" for volunteers to sign in the event of injury.
- Flashlights to read the labels in the dark aisles of hung clothing would be helpful.
- We were impressed with the information Cheryl shared regarding job training and job seeking. From the rationale for colored post-it notes hung in the office that provide a timeframe for when jobs were posted, to planning out expectations for successive time periods, e.g. what are the job-hunting goals and how they are met the first 5 weeks, 10 weeks, etc. We loved the acronym CEO, Creating Excellent Outcomes. The possibility of finding opportunities for the women to do "full time" stints at a workplace, to help them make a smooth transition from part time to full time work was an intriguing idea as well.
- The different tasks (e.g. sorting, filling orders, hanging, using computer to fill out form, scanning, answering phones, and greeting people who arrive with donations) provide quite a variety of beneficial workforce experience. The women get opportunities to interact with different people with different personalities, and because the job allows for socializing, they get a taste of the dynamics of teamwork.