

## **Journey Home's Employment Initiative in the Works**

As an organization committed to sustainable solutions, Journey Home is putting an increased focus on employment this year. In addition to our Aerospace Employment program, Journey Home is now working to develop a universal processes that simplifies and removes some of the most prominent barriers for those who are looking to build self-sufficiency and re-enter the workforce.

In her first 3 months at Journey Home, AmeriCorps VISTA, Yasmine Ali, has been working tirelessly make progress on implementing the Opening Doors Greater Hartford employment strategies. The next 9 months of Yasmine's work will involve collaborating with several community partners to establish (1) universal employment assessment, (2)work ready training coupled with supportive services, (3) vocational/ occupational training, (4) job placement with trusted partner companies and (5) financial coaching and financial literacy.

Yasmine's first project has been developing an employment assessment that is easy to access, and that identifies a jobseekers' interests, capabilities, needs, experience and barriers.

Improving access to work ready training will ensure that all job seekers have the level of support and preparation they need to be successful in the work force. This training provides things like interview skills, assistance with writing a resume and cover letter, tips on how to discuss criminal history and tools for building relationships with employers. The variety of available resources will cater to the spectrum of jobseekers and their needs.

The cost or barriers to starting a new position can be overwhelming. Small obstacles such as appropriate clothes for an interview, a haircut or required gear for a position could potentially prevent someone from pursuing the job they desire. More serious barriers such as a criminal history can seem insurmountable. Partnerships with supportive service agencies can provide clothes for interviews, financial support for required gear or clothes to start work, and act as advocates and navigators when working to obtain a certificate of employability from the board of pardons.

Meeting the needs of all job seekers also means providing the proper education or training certification. By developing partnerships with local schools, Yasmine hopes we will be able to provide trainings that are reflective of the job market in Connecticut.

“Connecting clients to careers where they can thrive will be a focus,” she says, “we believe we can do this by matching education with relevant careers in growing fields.”

In Connecticut that means establishing partnerships within the manufacturing and healthcare industries which are the fastest growing in the state. Precedent for this has already been set with the success of Journey Home's Aerospace Employment Program.

The City of Hartford along with Journey Home and several shelter providers are continuing to develop this program that will pave the way to meaningful employment, and hope to see it rolled

out in the coming months. We look forward to a time when this pathway is comprehensive and easily accessible for all those experiencing, at risk or transitioning out of homelessness.