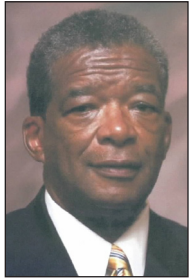


# Respond, Inc.

Serving Camden and Neighboring Communities Since 1967

Winter 2010  
Volume I Issue I



Wilbert Mitchell,  
Executive Director,  
Respond, Inc.

## Welcome from Executive Director Wilbert Mitchell

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Respond, Inc.'s quarterly newsletter. Since 1967, Respond has worked to provide the city of Camden and surrounding suburbs with social services that promote the economic independence of their residents.

We operate childcare centers that enable busy parents to work without compromising the well-being and development of their children. We help

people help themselves with job training that mentors students from the classroom to the workplace. We secure housing for the homeless and other vulnerable members of society. We support our community and our clients, making them stronger and better.

And we're proud of what we do.

With this newsletter, we share with you news about our staff, our clients, our achievements and our ambitions. In this issue, you'll get a look inside our lively childcare centers and share in the discoveries of the children. You'll learn about our job training courses and the ways in which they change the lives of our students. You'll meet some of our volunteers and gain insight into their projects and aspirations. I am confident that the more you know about Respond, the more pride you will feel in our work and our clients.

At Respond, we make a difference every day, and it is my hope that this newsletter will strengthen us as a community in action. I wish you happy reading and a joyous holiday season!

Wilbert Mitchell  
Executive Director

## The New Worker Job Development Center: Providing People the Skills They Need to Land Jobs

Respond, Inc.'s New Worker Job Development Center operates according to an old pearl of wisdom: *give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, but teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.* Instead of providing temporary aid, Respond's New Worker Job Development Center teaches area residents valuable skills that sustain them throughout their lives in the job market.

In addition to the Culinary Arts Program, which produces both great food and successful kitchen-ready graduates, the New Worker Center offers several other job training and Adult Education courses.

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## Respond and AmeriCorps Brighten Up the 100 Block of State Street

AmeriCorps volunteers this fall painted four homes along the 100 block of State Street in traditional Victorian style, bringing a slice of Cape May to Camden. Owned by Respond, Inc. and occupied by the agency's adult clients, the properties have been transformed by bright blues and greens and lively purples and reds.

The houses and their beautiful paint jobs were featured in the *Courier Post*, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. ▾



AmeriCorps volunteers hard at work on one of Respond's State Street properties.

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### Fall Festival Fun



Neighborhood child at the Camden Fall Festival.

Camden's community is culturally—and linguistically—diverse. While this diversity adds color and life to the city, it can be an obstacle for job seekers who find their options limited by language barriers. That's why Respond, Inc. has developed the English as a Second Language (ESL) course, which aims to prepare students for effective on-the-job communication, and for the U.S. citizenship tests.

The Center also offers a free Adult Education course that helps students pass the General Education Development (GED)



Automotive Technology Program students (from left to right) Jose Morales, Gilbert Montes, and Jose Toledo at work under the hood.

tests. Dr. John Randall and the Rev. Herman Henderson, along with AmeriCorps volunteers Tori Keels and Dani Larkins, instruct and tutor students in the five subjects of the GED exam.

Made possible

by a federal grant through the Camden County Adult Education Consortium, the course provides valuable help to aspiring GED-holders as they put in their mandatory 60 hours of classroom time before sitting for the test.

Additionally, the Center's Automotive Technology Program provides hands-on training that prepares students for work in real garages and repair shops. During 21 weeks of both classroom and practical garage instruction, students learn about automotive technology fundamentals, brake systems, engine performance, engine repair, steering, suspension, and automatic, manual and electrical systems. At the end of each quarter, they are tested both on paper and under the hood of a practice car. Students say that instructor Fred Alward's "unconventional, urban, simple, common-sense teaching approach" provides them with the guidance they need while at the same time allowing them to be themselves and find their own work style. ▶

### Triangle Park Makeover



AmeriCorps volunteers team with workers from Respond, Inc. to beautify Triangle Park at Main and Elm streets between 3rd and 4th streets in North Camden.

## Culinary Arts in Action at the New Worker Job Development Center

By Tori Keels

Chef Shawn Harris, one of the leaders of Respond, Inc.'s Culinary Arts Program, tells his students that "everything's about the path."

His mantra may not seem relevant to the art of cooking, but Respond's Culinary Arts Program isn't just about cooking. The program is also about personal growth and development, about evolving as an individual through teamwork in the kitchen.

The program brings together 180 students annually. They are adults of varying ages (18-50) and backgrounds (Camden community members and residents from the Juvenile Justice Commission and Camden County Corrections).

They team up with instructors Chef Kendall, Chef Galal and Chef Shawn in Respond's three large kitchens for 16 weeks.



Culinary Arts students serve hors d'oeuvres in the New Worker Job Development Center kitchens.

They learn the "ins" and "outs" of cooking, catering, baking, high volume food production, and knife and kitchen safety and sanitation.

Respond's Culinary Arts Program has been credited with a high level of retention and success. Many of its graduates have secured jobs in local kitchens, including those of the Camden River Sharks and the Trenton Marriot.

Some students stay on to work with Respond's kitchen unit, which offers catering services to the local community.

The Culinary Arts Program helps students learn how to produce delicious food, yes. But it also gives them valuable, marketable skills that they can use to transition into long-term careers. So while they're learning how to chop veggies at high speeds and season dishes with panache, they're also making progress on "the path," as Chef Shawn calls it. They're moving forward.

The name of Respond's catering service is Responsive Catering. To have them cater your events, contact (856) 583-2640. ▶

**Watch for the Date!**

**The New Worker Job Development Center will be dedicated in January to one of our founders, Dr. Charles A. Sayre.**

## Autumn Amusements at Respond's Child Development Centers

By Jenny Merritt, Red Davis, Erik McIntyre, Teri McDermott, and Dani Larkins

Fall was an exciting time at Respond, Inc.'s Child Development Centers. The children watched the seasons change — and their teachers delighted in taking them out into the pumpkin patches and cornfields to wonder at nature. A lot happened in the classroom too, as everyone settled into the school year. Here are some highlights of the Autumn 2010 season:

- At the **Bank Street Center**, every wall was chock-full of fall decorations, including an apple tree mural, a swarm of paper bats, and a field of handmade pumpkins. Maybe the children were inspired by their trips to a pumpkin farm. Whatever the inspiration, they were hard at work—even the infant room was packed with seasonal artwork! The decorations helped to put everyone in the mood for the Halloween party in late October.
- The staff of the **Fairview Village Center** took the children on an educational field trip to Duffield Farm in Sewell and Johnson's Corner Farm in Medford. The teachers loved watching their students experience the delights of the farms: games, crafts, animal feeding, and unique interaction with the natural environment.
- The **Fairview Village** and **Pyne Poynt Centers** are participating in the 100 Book Challenge, which improves literacy by challenging children to read one hundred books in a single school year.
- The **Firehouse Center** class is participating in the St. Jude's Tricycle Marathon to support the St. Jude Foundation in December. The children will take pledges and ride tricycles to raise money for cancer research. The Firehouse children are also continuing their participation in the Healthy Choices program. They teamed up with the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Children and



Fall-themed artwork covers the walls at the Bank Street Center.



Students and teachers from the Fairview Village Center in the pumpkin fields at Duffield Farm in Sewell, N.J.

the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to take part in an initiative to prevent childhood obesity by learning proper exercise and healthy eating techniques.

- The **Merchantville Center** had an a-maze-ing October. The children went on a roadtrip to Storybook Land in Egg Harbor Township. They and their teachers also had a blast in the pumpkin patch and corn maze. Each child picked his or her own pumpkin to take home.
- The **Pyne Poynt Center** hosted the first sessions of its new monthly Ask the Doctor program. Childcare was provided while parents participated in a free question and answer session with physicians and medical students from Cooper University Hospital. Answers to health-related queries regarding both the children and their parents were provided. Sessions are held at the Center on the second Tuesday of every month from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., with dinner provided. ▶

## Families Cooking Together Program Extended

Respond, Inc. this summer received a grant from the Differential Response Initiative at the Community Planning and Advocacy Council of Camden County to bring multigenerational families together at the Culinary Arts Training Center.

Under the tutelage of Respond's outstanding chefs, the families worked in the kitchen to prepare a meal, and then sat down together to eat, talk, and laugh. Siblings who were too young to help in the kitchen were taken care of in the childcare classrooms, where they learned about nutrition, tasted various foods and participated in playful exercises.

At the end of the summer program, Respond held a celebration for the families to come together for a sumptuous meal prepared in their honor, and the agency received notification that funding to extend the program into December was available! ▶

## Volunteer Spotlight: Automotive Resources International

By Rene Breton



Rene Breton

One Monday in September, 10 volunteers arrived at Respond, Inc.'s Stockton Child Development Center.

They came from Automotive Resources International, an automotive fleet management business with offices in Mount Laurel that teams up with United Way to volunteer for local non-profits twice a year. Automotive Resources International is a division of Holman Automotive.

The volunteers brought energy and life to the Stockton Center's Monday morning. The Culinary Arts Program sent over some complimentary pastries—still warm from the oven—and we dug into this delicious breakfast as we planned the work to be done around the center.

Then we got down to business. Weed whackers buzzed outside as volunteers beautified and tidied up the Center's grounds. Paintbrushes flew inside as they added color to its interior walls.

Respond, Inc.'s beaming Executive Director, Wilbert Mitchell, stopped by periodically to look in on the project—and to offer his enthusiastic support.

Having worked up our appetites all morning, we were excited to see Judy Everts, Respond's Director of Adult Services, arrive with a big lunch made for us by the Culinary Arts Program. Hearty sandwiches, a massive chocolate cake, and some famous double chocolate chip Camden Cookies gave us just the energy boost we needed to finish the job and clean up.

At the end of the day, the volunteers wiped their brows, took pictures, and admired the wonderful job they'd done. They were proud of the Center, whose grounds were impeccably groomed, and whose walls were now clean and colorful.

Once they'd gone, one of the Stockton Center's teachers admired the newly painted, bright yellow wall. She smiled, and told me yellow was her favorite color.

*Thanks for all your hard work, ARI!* ▶

## Thank You to Our Partners in the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program

Respond, Inc. receives funding through the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) program.

Developed in 2002 by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to assist distressed areas of the state, the NRTC program establishes partnerships between businesses and community organizations that work together to promote neighborhood development by investing in the future and in families. Businesses receive a 100 percent state tax credit against business-related income in return for community investment.

The Campbell Soup Company, Sun Bank and PNC Bank played a key role in the renovation of Respond's New Worker Job Development Center. They invested a total of \$637,730 that reflects \$387,730 from Campbell Soup Co., \$150,000 from Sun Bank and \$100,000 from PNC Bank in tax credits.

Their investment created 30 jobs and provided training in Automotive Technology and Culinary Arts to more than 136 youth and adults from the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, the Camden County Correctional facility, and the community at large. Respond thanks them for their partnership and support. ▶

## Respond Wins AmeriCorps Award



*Wilbert Mitchell, Executive Director, Respond, Inc., accepts the Sponsor of the Year Award for the Atlantic Region of AmeriCorps NCC from Robin Nixon, Deputy Director of Programming, along with AmeriCorps Team Leaders Ethan Gehl (far right) and Josh Kerber (far left).*

### How to Give to Respond, Inc.

When you make a donation to Respond, Inc., you support programs that make a real difference in the lives of Camden's most vulnerable community members. You provide quality daycare for children whose parents work hard every day. You give homes to those without shelter. You teach valuable skills to at-risk teens and adults—and you get them that much closer to securing employment and becoming self-sufficient.

When you give to Respond, you change Camden lives for the better in a permanent way.

Make a donation today. You may contribute to a program of your choice or to our general program fund.

Checks can be made payable to:  
**Respond, Inc.**

532 State Street  
Camden, NJ 08102

Or you can donate online through Pay-Pal, at  
<http://www.respondinc.com/fund.htm>

Respond, Inc. is a not for profit (501) (c) (3) charitable organization.