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## Feeding Minds

Huddled and hunched over in a small corner at table 14 in the TASK dining hall, Kpana and John review and repeat vocabulary from a workbook 4,572 miles away from Kpana's home in Monrovia, Liberia. Kpana is just one of the many students in TASK's Adult Education Program (AEP) working on her basic skills in hopes to obtain her GED. Since June, every Monday and Tuesday and sometimes more, John and Kpana have worked together to strengthen her reading skills.

Tucked away in TASK's conference room, "The Three Amigos" are together again. These three AEP students meet daily with Dick, their fearless tutor, to wrestle with puzzling fractions and word problems. Lolita, Evita, and Mary have earned this nickname through their pact to encourage, help, and never give up on each other.

Every morning before TASK opens for lunch, and every afternoon before opening to serve dinner, TASK's dining and conference rooms hum with the sounds of tutors working with students who hunger for knowledge.

TASK's AEP started as a grassroots program in 1992 and has blossomed into what some students lovingly call "University of TASK", offering nine tutoring sessions each week in literacy, basic math, preparation for high school equivalency exams, and basic computer skills; a creative writing workshop each Wednesday; and a book group to encourage reading each Thursday.

Over the past twelve years the program has grown from about 15 students to about 80 students a month with a total enrollment of 220 students coming to study each year. In these past ten months alone, fourteen people have earned their GED after enrolling in our program. Countless more of our AEP students have left our program for better things including job training programs, higher education, and gainful employment. Other success stories cannot be done justice simply with numbers and statistics — parents and grandparents have learned to read to their children and grandchildren, lifelong Trenton residents who had always struggled with reading obtained their first library card, immigrants who have lived here for years have finally felt at home after passing the citizenship test, jobseekers have gained a new sense of empowerment by passing the driver's license test, individuals who dropped out of high school forty years ago are on the road to passing the GED and continuing on to college.

In the short time that she has been working with John, Kpana has expressed how she has been gaining confidence, crediting John and his help as part of the reason. "(John) always has time for me," explained Kpana. "He impresses me with his patience, and goes over the things I don't understand. He always encourages me when I need it, and he has helped me get over things that have troubled me in the past. When I moved here, I didn't know people. I was very shy and nervous in speaking, but now I'm very friendly and I like talking to my classmates. Now I can just go on with life. This school is wonderful."

Our "Amigos", Lolita, Evita, and Mary, didn't know each other before becoming AEP students. They started to work together two years ago at the suggestion of Kelly Hansen, AEP Coordinator. "Ms. Kelly saw something in us that we didn't see then," explained Evita. "We ended up all having different strengths and that's why I think we mesh so well." After studying together for roughly a year the three made a pact to earn their GEDs together and now it's rare to see them apart. "We take the bus together, we study together, we eat together, the only thing we don't do," joked Lolita, "is live together."

Since their introduction, the three students have raised their test scores significantly. Mary only needs a few more points in math, and Lolita and Evita passed everything but still need to pull their average scores up to earn their GEDs. Evita stated, "When I first took this test it was like night and



*Left to Right: Lolita, Evita, and Mary study to pass the GED test.*

## Did you know...

- Congressman Rush Holt and Senator Shirley Turner visited TASK to discuss a grant the congressman received to employ 15 AmeriCorps Vista workers at local non-profits.
- Hassan Atkins will be our temporary Social Worker while Nakieba Jackson is out on maternity leave.
- Dr. Aryn Gabai comes to TASK every other Friday to provide chiropractic services to TASK patrons.

## An Award-Winning Board

The award ceremonies did not include a red carpet or a fancy gold statue, but these nominations are still a reason for celebration.

This Fall, TASK board members Emilio Papa, Linda Bell, Qareeb Bashir, and Michael Gluck were each honored by different organizations for their outstanding service to our community.



Right to left: Emilio Papa, Linda Bell, Qareeb Bashir, and Michael Gluck

Emilio Papa was honored by “The Rosettes Club”, an organization that offers community activities and provides charitable and social assistance when needed. Emilio was recognized for his volunteerism throughout the community and his commitment to TASK.

The County Commission on the Status of Women awarded Linda Bell with “The Mercer County Woman of Achievement” Award, honoring a female who volunteers time to make the county better.

Qareeb Bashir was recognized by the NAACP for his dedication and service in the Trenton community and for offering his time and talents to better the community in different capacities.

Michael Gluck received the Humanitarian Award from Kidsbridge, an organization dedicated to the celebration of human diversity. Michael was recognized for his work with Kidsbridge and other Trenton-based organizations. Congratulations to all of them on well-deserved honors!

## Dental Program Seeks Oral Surgeon



Last year, TASK received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to launch the Trenton Tooth Project (TTP), a partnership between TASK and the Henry J. Austin Health Center to provide dental care to the low-income individuals TASK serves who do not have dental insurance.

Since the reception of the grant, “We’ve discovered that the patrons who are signed up for this program have more serious dental conditions than we anticipated,” stated Nakieba Jackson, TASK Social Worker and Dental Program Coordinator. “The severity of some of these cases requires oral surgeons and other specialists to get involved, so we are actively seeking oral surgeons to help.”

Through the TTP, The Henry J. Austin Health Center has provided 22 TASK patrons with basic dental work including cleanings, fillings, x-rays, and dentures. Of the 22 patients screened more than half were diagnosed as needing oral surgery.

If you have any recommendations or know an oral surgeon who may be interested in working for TASK at a negotiated rate, please contact Dennis Micai at (609) 695-5456 x 101 or via email at [dennism@trentonsoupkitchen.org](mailto:dennism@trentonsoupkitchen.org).

**TASK served 15,209 meals in September.**

## Feeding Minds continued

day, I got a low score in Math and I don’t think I scored in English. Little by little my grades started going up. I’m so happy. Ms. Kelly and our study group really helped me. Now I only need four points to earn my GED.”

The TASK Adult Education Program is a second or third chance for a lot of individuals. “Many of our students have come to our AEP after being frustrated with or intimidated by other programs,” explained Kelly Hansen. “I’ve had a lot of students tell me that the classroom setting was very intimidating and they were scared to ask questions. Also, books are expensive and it’s hard to find a program like ours that provides learning materials to students free of charge.”

But the thing that really sets our AEP apart is simply—the volunteer tutors. “The students in our program achieve their goals because we have such a wonderful group of volunteers that are willing to work with our students one-on-one, to spend time each week focusing on helping each individual learn how to spell words, construct essays, or understand how to solve math problems,” articulates Kelly.

“Our program focuses wholly on the individual. Students set goals for themselves and work at the pace they need to work at until they understand the lesson and feel comfortable moving on to the next. Without the individual attention of a tutor, this would not be possible. The dedicated volunteer tutors that we have are an inspiring group of individuals.”

John retired from pharmaceutical sales and marketing has been tutoring at the soup kitchen for the past two years. When asked about his experience working with Kpana he responded,



John (left) tutors Adult Education Program Student Kpana a few times each week.

“She’s smart, intelligent, she picks up on things quickly. She’s juggling a lot right now, she’s got I think something like 7 kids and she’s living in a land that she’s not familiar with. She’s inspiring. She’s wonderful to work with.”

Dick comes from a background in business and has been a tutor here for two years as well. His last student passed the GED test and graduated from the AEP. Mary, Evita, and Lolita have found his dedication and commitment has been instrumental in helping them improve. Lolita explained “He gives us the push we need to keep going.” Mary added, “He takes the time at home to grade our work and show us our progress.” Evita admitted, “When I was discouraged and wanted to quit, Dick called me and said, ‘I didn’t give up on you, don’t give up on yourself.’” “We should be coming through that door with our GEDs any day now,” stated Mary, “I can feel it.”

Kpana also plans to receive her GED through TASK. She is practicing her English now so she will be prepared to speak to friends in college.

## Literally Saving Lives

Each Wednesday, volunteer Nurse Practitioner Peg Nucero (pictured below) of St. Francis Medical Center visits TASK to conduct routine check-ups.

In October, a patron not feeling well was referred to Nurse Peg. Peg took his vital signs and diagnosed that something was seriously wrong. She called for the EMTs to take him to the hospital. It turned out that our patron was experiencing kidney failure and had an abdominal aneurism that required immediate surgery. The quick response saved his life. He's now on the road to recovery.

Later that month, she diagnosed a few people with dangerously high blood pressure and was able to write them prescriptions and arrange follow up visits at St. Francis. "Our Comprehensive Care Team is working to treat the whole person," Peg explained. Her team of nurses and social workers recognizes that a prescription does no good if the patient doesn't have the resources to fill it.

Peg's weekly visits to TASK are making preventative care accessible to our patrons. That is no small feat.



## Holiday Gifts Needed

TASK is requesting holiday gifts for our patrons. Donations of the following items (new items only, please) would be appreciated. *Please do not wrap the gifts and remember we serve more men than women and more adults than children.*

### Adult Gifts

*Men's items are unisex to TASK Patrons*

- Knit caps (black, gray, navy, or brown)
- Gloves (large or larger sizes)
- Men's white crew or tube socks
- Hooded ponchos
- Men's hooded sweatshirts (X-large sizes or larger)
- Mini hygiene kits (including: disposable razor, bar of soap with washcloths)
- Blankets
- Towel and wash cloth set

### Children's Gifts

- Hats
- Scarves
- Gloves
- Blankets



## TASK Endowment Campaign Reaches 61% of Goal

Since launching its first-ever endowment campaign in April of last year, TASK has raised \$1,220,550, or 61% of its Keeping the Bowl Full Endowment Campaign goal. In a response to a recent mailing to its existing donor base, TASK received 236 donations/pledges totaling more than \$146,326.



"We are extremely gratified that 236 stalwart supporters of TASK saw fit to make a one-time endowment contribution in addition to their regular donation to TASK," indicated Dennis Micai TASK's Executive Director.

TASK's Keeping the Bowl Full Endowment Campaign is seeking to have a total of \$2,000,000 in endowment funds by December 2012, which will mark the 30th anniversary of TASK. A 30th anniversary celebration and campaign capstone event is being planned for the spring of 2013. This anniversary event will be an opportunity for TASK to thank

the community for its many years of support and to hopefully celebrate the success of the TASK first-ever endowment campaign.

To date, 263 individuals, seven foundations, and six companies have made contributions to the endowment campaign. One hundred percent of TASK board and staff have contributed to the campaign.

The Keeping the Bowl Full Endowment will serve as a permanent savings account for the organization, helping to insulate TASK against any emergencies that may arise.

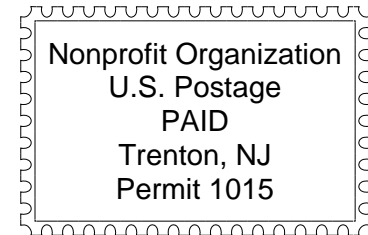
"We are very encouraged by the broad support the campaign is receiving. TASK traditional donors are stepping to the plate and supporting the endowment campaign. We are hearing lots of favorable comments from our supporters regarding TASK's efforts to help the newly needy while at the same time serve our traditional patrons," says Mara Connolly Taft, who, with her husband, Pete Taft, co-chairs the Endowment Committee. The Tafts also worked on the capital campaign 25 years ago to build the Escher Street facility. "During the next phase of the campaign, TASK will be reaching out in a one-to-one way to its most generous supporters as well as selected area corporations."

To make a donation online to the Endowment Campaign, please go to the Endowment donation form at [www.trentonsoupkitchen.org](http://www.trentonsoupkitchen.org) or contact Irwin Stoolmacher, Endowment Campaign Coordinator at 609-393-0855 or [Stoolgroup@aol.com](mailto:Stoolgroup@aol.com) to arrange a one-on-one meeting to discuss the campaign in detail.



## The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

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Trenton, NJ 08605  
(609) 695-5456 (phone)  
(609) 695-1225 (fax)  
[www.trentonsoupkitchen.org](http://www.trentonsoupkitchen.org)



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## Winter 2011 Newsletter

### UPCOMING EVENT

#### **December 6th - 16th. Adopt-A-Family Holiday Donations Needed**

**@ TASK. We are seeking toys, children's clothing, household appliances, winter coats, hats, gloves, (new items preferred). Toys should be for both boys and girls ranging from infancy through 15 years old. Pampers, formula, wipes (all kinds), and hygiene supplies would also be appreciated. For more information, please contact Hassan Atkins at (609) 695-5456 x 104 or [HassanAtkins@trentonsoupkitchen.org](mailto:HassanAtkins@trentonsoupkitchen.org).**

sites. These satellite locations are hugely important as the vast majority of our patrons cannot afford a car and must walk to our feeding sites. TASK serves dinner in Trenton's South Ward Mondays - Thursdays through our collaborations with the First Baptist Church of Trenton and Divine Mercy Parish. We also serve dinner on Thursdays in Trenton's West Ward through a satellite site at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. All meals are prepared at TASK's main location on 72 ½ Escher Street in Trenton, NJ and delivered by TASK staff. Each TASK meal served includes fruit, salad, bread, vegetables, protein, starch, milk, juice, and dessert.

"It is unfortunate that the need for our services continues to grow," explained Dennis Mica, TASK's Executive Director. "But at the same time we're excited to have the opportunity to be working with new community partners and we are prepared to meet the need and provide the services we offer in more communities."

## TASK Meal Service Expands to Hightstown

The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) has partnered with the First United Methodist Church of Hightstown, and Rise: a Community Service Partnership, to create a new satellite soup kitchen. The new soup kitchen provides meals every Thursday evening from the First United Methodist Church located at 187 Stockton Street in Hightstown. This soup kitchen is TASK's fourth satellite site in Mercer County, the first location outside the city of Trenton.

"This is the only weekly soup kitchen in the East Windsor/Hightstown area," indicated Leslie Koppel, Executive Director of Rise. "Rise has close to 400 families registered to receive food through our food pantry. We are happy to expand and work with TASK and the United Methodist Church to provide more services to a community in need."

Each year, TASK serves more than 175,000 meals to the surrounding community. Of these meals, 22,500 are made and shipped to satellite meal service



*The Hightstown Soup Kitchen is a result of a partnership between TASK, the First United Methodist Church, and Rise: a Community Service Partnership.*