

# Projects With Industry

*A program designed by the National Council on Aging, to help older people with disabilities re-enter the job market, with training, job skills and confidence.*

By C. C. Birt

If you are a person with a disability, over 40, and looking to get into the job market, there's a new program designed especially for you. It's a recently funded "Projects with Industry" program operated by the National Council on Aging.

The program, which provides training and employment in the field of customer service, is a partnership between community colleges, businesses and rehabilitation/training agencies. The National Council on Aging is sponsoring this program through a grant

from the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education.

Debra Perry, the National Coordinator for this project says, "the bottom line is to get jobs for people with disabilities." She says the business link is essential. "There's not much sense training and preparing people with disabilities for jobs that don't exist within the community."

Only three sites are funded for the five year demonstration project. Perry says, these agencies were selected because of their affiliation with the National Council on Aging and also

*Continued on Page 18*



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*From Page 16*

because they allow the Council to tap into other federally funded employment programs—such as Title V of the Older Americans Act and its experimental 502(E) program and the Job Training Partnership Act, JTPA—to generate money for the cost of tuition.

Basically it works like this. Rehabilitation agencies provide-referrals; community colleges provide-training; and businesses provide-jobs. Within each community the businesses, community colleges and rehabilitation agencies work together to design a training program in customer service skills.

David Parker, a veteran from Rochester, New York who suffers from a number of disabilities, has been out of the work force since 1989. He says he sees this new "Projects with Industry" program as being a big help. Parker says, "I'm still fairly young and think I can contribute to the work force another 20 years."

**Getting In Touch...**

*Agencies selected for funding are:*

**Broome County Office For Aging**  
P. O. Box 1766, Binghamton, NY 13902  
Phone: (607) 778-0955

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**Regional Council On Aging-Grow Employment Servs.**  
79 N. Clinton Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604  
Phone: (716) 454-3224

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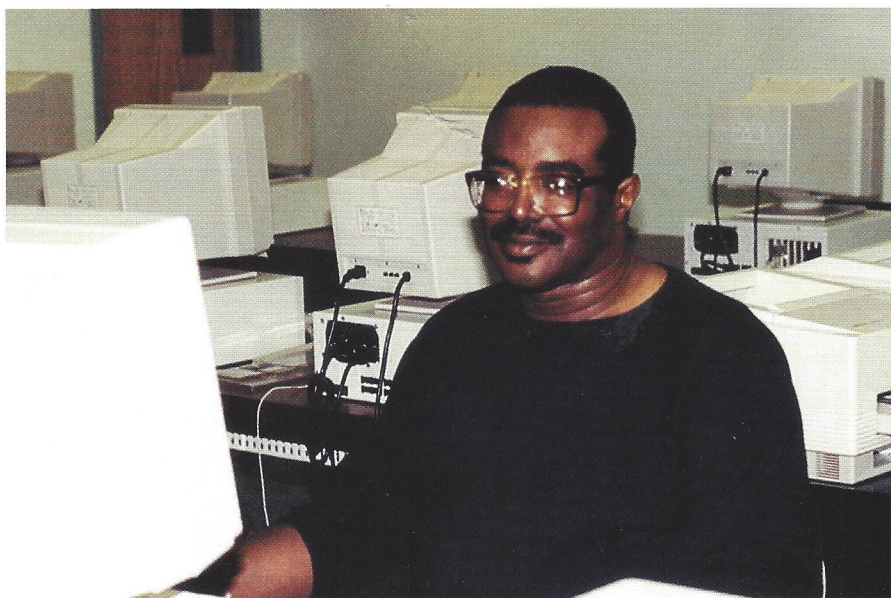
**Vermont Assocs. for Training & Development, Inc.**  
P. O. Box. 107, St. Albans, VT 05478  
Phone: (802) 879-7647

For Anne Hellis of Rochester, New York, who suffers from back problems and a knee injury, it's a chance to get back into the job market after two years. Hellis says the computer and communication skill classes have benefited her greatly. "It's given me more confidence", she says.

According to Perry the program is really dealing with two issues. "We're dealing with people who have had a disability their whole life and aged with that disability...and with people

who as they age, acquire disabilities." The program is in it's early stages but Perry says, "generally with older workers what we see is dependability, strong work ethics and a lot of different work experience." She cautions however, that this program won't get rid of every roadblock for older people with disabilities. There are still stereotypes to overcome and battles to be won while trying to help people understand the different aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In time, this program could mark the beginning of a new era in which people with disabilities and the business community can work together to mutually benefit each other. ☺



Student David Parker: "I want to be productive...I think I still have a lot to offer."