

STEP AFRiKA!

July 2, 2009

Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services Operation Center
1515 Wilson Boulevard, suite 100
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear DHHS,

Thanks to the two-tier approach of technical assistance and capacity building grants provided by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE), Step Afrika! is a dramatically different organization than it was in 2004. We have grown from a founder led organization with a home office to a three-person management team housed in the beautiful Atlas Performing Arts Center. Our administrative offices, rehearsal space and performances are consolidated in a community-based venue thriving in a neighborhood currently being revitalized. The location presents opportunities for community engagement and developing partnerships with local schools and community-based organizations.

Since 2004 Step Afrika has benefited from the TA expertise of Virginia Kase and her staff in human resources, program development, financial management, and organizational development. Additionally small grants have enabled Step Afrika to complete an IT assessment, procured the recommended hardware, obtain our first audit as well as to implement a comprehensive development plan. TA while critical to strengthening organizational infrastructure is often the most difficult to fund.

Let me share one impact. In 2008 CNE consultant, Henrietta Smith of Vital Business Solutions, utilized job analysis techniques to develop a staff recruitment process, staff orientation, and annual staff evaluation. Smith developed consultant contracts, an employee manual and policy for employee benefits. As a result we began the transition of our company from consultants to seasonal employees, launched a "health care initiative", held a two-day interactive staff orientation., and developed an Employee Manual in a binder format which can be easily updated. Job descriptions were also crafted to clearly establish a division of labor to best utilize the talents of the professional dancers as well as encourage each artist to contribute fully as team members. Roles are structured for staff to train and supervise new members in art education, stage management, tour management, and rehearsal management.

While it will take time to perfect the new human resource structure, we are confident that that our efforts will be successful. Step Afrika strongly supports that DHHS continue to fund this program.

Sincerely,

C. Brian Williams, Founder and Executive Director



Step Afrika! has been selected as one of the Greater Washington's "Best Small Charities" by the Catalogue for Philanthropy in 2008.



ASCENSIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC.

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202-889-4344

Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Service
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20447

Re: CCF - Communities Empowering Youth Program

July 7, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise's (CNE) grant application. My name is Dr. Satira Streeter and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Ascensions Community Services, Inc., a mental wellness organization. We provide free psychological services to DC families that reside in Wards 7 & 8. Unfortunately, I am the only Licensed Clinical Psychologist in Ward 8 and the need for psychological intervention is often critical to save lives and families. Because of CNE's help we went from serving 17 families in 2004 to having served 567 families to date. We received our first grant from CNE in 2004 when Ascensions was being run from my home and I was the only volunteer serving families. Because of the funding received from CNE we are currently a full functioning Mental Health center with computers, furniture, electronic equipment, and evaluation materials. We have also relocated to our own building in Anacostia DC and have four therapists and an office manager to help carry out this very important work.

We are now recognized as a premiere non-profit in the Washington area being featured in the Catalogue for Philanthropy, on NBC nightly news, and in various newsprint medias including The Washington Times, East of the River Magazine, the Washingtonian, and as a Local Hero in the Verizon Yellow Pages. Currently, we are in the final 15 organizations being considered out of 500 for a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Leaders award. I am convinced that none of this would have been possible if it had not been for the time and energy CNE offered us in the very beginning.

More important than the funding Ascensions has received, has been the technical assistance (TA) that CNE has provided to us. We have received critical TA in the areas of Board

Development, program evaluation, technology, accounting, and human resources. The Board Development TA proved to be most crucial in that it assisted us in what qualities to identify as we expanded our Board. Our assistant also came out to do a Board workshop so that every Board member could fully understand their role and responsibilities. Our program evaluation TA has yielded a solid logic model and computer data entry spreadsheet that helps us develop actual statistics regarding those we serve and the progress they have made. Our technology TA helped us to choose the computers, software, and projection equipment to fit the needs of our organization. We also received instruction in how to use our new equipment and a tutorial regarding some of our software. The accounting TA assisted us in expanding our use of Quickbooks accounting program so that we could use the features that would best assist us in creating our budget and producing accurate financial reports. Out of our human resources TA we were assisted in developing a consultant manual which has been a foundation tool as we maintain relationships with our current consultants and seek new ones.

In addition to the personalized Technical Assistance that we received from CNE, they have also connected us with other non-profits in the DC area that have similar missions, through the Hands Across Network. During our group sessions and workshops we have learned from the CNE staff and consultants as well as each other. This has helped me to gain knowledge and feel less alienated as I have listen to the challenges and successes of other area Executive Directors.

Ascensions' board of directors and I are deeply grateful for the assistance CNE has provided over the last five years and we are honored that they saw our mission and work as worthy of the money, time, and effort they have bestowed to us. We asked that you would support them so that they can continue to support organizations like us that our committed to serving the community through quality programs and services.

Sincerely,

Dr. Satira S. Streeter
Executive Director/Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Ascensions Community Services, Inc.

