

My View So Far

by Steve Swayne, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My first nine months as Executive Director at StepUP Ministry have exceeded my expectations.

First, I thought my understanding of the organization from my initial time here was pretty complete, but surprises never stop coming. While I knew the staff, I didn't understand how dedicated they are to our mission, how personal their hopes are for our clients, and how thoughtful they are of each other. My term for this is "compassionate accountability." We insist that our clients behave responsibly and demonstrate daily that they are committed to establishing a framework for successful living. Our staff goes out of their way to help deserving participants move ahead.

Second, I am continually surprised at the number of people in our affluent society who do not possess the job skills or the life skills to be successfully self-sufficient. I am more committed now than ever to helping this agency effect lasting changes for many who otherwise would be "lost." And, I am more appreciative than ever of the countless volunteer hours and the donor support that make it possible for StepUP to exist.

Third, my Executive Director's vantage point has opened the window on many collaborations with the City of Raleigh, Wake County and other non-profit agencies. These partnerships work.

LOOKING AHEAD We have already begun to improve our curricula, both in the job readiness program and in the Life Skills program. Along with those substantive improvements, we plan to engage many more talented volunteers to walk alongside our participants as they learn new approaches for success.

We are hard at work to establish apprenticeship classes to teach specific job skills, especially in manufacturing and biotechnology. A sound apprenticeship program is the "missing piece" if we are to achieve our goals.

Thanks to all of you for your support. And thanks to all of you for your continued interest.

My goal is to grow this organization into the leanest, most effective job training and placement service for disadvantaged people in North Carolina. We hope to continue to directly and positively help our community become a socio-economic leader.

— STEVE SWAYNE



ABOUT STEVE:

Executive Director Steve Swayne joined StepUP about 20 months ago as Associate Director. In January, he was asked by the Board to become the agency's top executive. Before coming to StepUP, Steve was co-owner in an entrepreneurial marketing and printing business. In just four years, the business grew from a fledgling operation to a company with more than 70 employees doing more than \$15 million in business each year. Steve says, "the successful growth and then sale of the business has afforded me an unusual opportunity to pursue my personal passion on a day-to-day basis at StepUP."

Steve and his wife Laura live in Raleigh with their four children.

StepUP Hosts Governor Perdue's Announcement of StreetSafe Task Force

ON SEPTEMBER 16, Governor Beverly Perdue announced the creation of the StreetSafe Task Force, charged with developing a plan to combat recidivism and integrate offenders safely back into their communities.

She chose StepUP Ministry to host her press conference. A key factor in her choice was StepUP's successful and extremely cost-effective program for training and placing ex-offenders, those who are recovering from substance abuse, and other unemployed persons. StepUP's cost per job placement is approximately \$1,200 compared with \$5,000 at the N.C. Employment Security Commission.

The economics are clear. In North Carolina, 28,000 people are released from prison every year, and within three years, 36-40% of those will be incarcerated again. North

Carolina spends \$27,911 per year for every offender in our state prisons. Our communities must "step up" and create innovative and supportive programs for people who have no foothold in economic or personal success, other than an intense desire to effect substantive changes.

The StreetSafe Task Force is composed of 34 members and is co-chaired by Attorney General Roy Cooper and Secretary of Correction Alvin Keller.

Our StepUP Ministry is a model program in North Carolina because we not only build relationships with employers to promote job placements; we work with our applicants to help them develop appropriate personal skills for the workplace. Moreover, we evaluate the probabilities for success through our contact with applicants as they go through our training.

Are we blowing our own horn? You bet! And North Carolina's Governor and Attorney General are helping us do it.

Friends Make All the Difference

HERE'S THE PRELUDE to Governor Perdue's visit. On August 6, North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper visited StepUP Ministry with his staff. Over a friendly lunch, StepUP representatives Robert Battle, Kemp Reece and Steve Swayne talked with their guests about StepUP's accomplishments which included placing over 875 people in jobs in four plus years, with 683 being ex-offenders. The average wage for a starting hire is \$10.13 and the average cost to StepUP to place a participant in a job is \$1,200. The lunch was designed for StepUP to learn more about the StreetSafe initiative and Attorney General Cooper's staff to learn more about the work StepUP performs in the community.

Attorney General Cooper was so impressed he suggested that Governor Perdue hold her press conference announcing the creation of the StreetSafe Task Force at StepUP Ministry.

Thanks to all of our friends for helping us raise awareness in our community about the fantastic work that is accomplished every day at StepUP.



Attorney General Cooper and Governor Perdue are welcomed by StepUP's Steve Swayne and Robert Battle.

StepUP Welcomes Laura Martin



LAURA MARTIN will be directing our effort to assist homeless military veterans in finding employment. The U.S. Department of Labor is funding a grant to StepUP and the South Wilmington Street Center, Raleigh's primary shelter for homeless men, to focus on helping our veterans who find it difficult to integrate into civilian life.

Through this **Heroes at Work** grant, Laura's goal is to assist 100 homeless vets build a sustainable pathway to stable employment over the next nine months.

Previously, Laura was with Wake County Human Services, where she served as Employment Liaison for the Raleigh/Wake Partnership to End Homelessness. Her personal commitment to solving the problem of homelessness has resulted in many volunteer assignments, most recently as a member of Raleigh's Affordable Housing Task Force. Locally, our homeless veterans will find their world a better place because Laura is working on their behalf at StepUP.

Heroes at Work

AT PRESENT, Wake County cannot accurately number its homeless population. Census data reflects only those people living in residences. Once a year, an attempt is made to number the homeless population by a literal headcount in various shelters and transitional housing programs, in "camps" as well as on the streets.

On January 28, 2009, there were 1,152 homeless people in Wake County. An estimated 17% of them are veterans. In 2008, the South Wilmington Street Center served 220 homeless veterans. No statistics on length of time since discharge or length of time homeless are available.

As the result of the new **Heroes at Work Grant**, Wake County will understand much more about our homeless veteran population and the types of employment they can sustain. And our veterans will benefit from our improved ability to support their efforts to build productive civilian lives.

StepUP Celebrates StepAHEAD Scholars

Helen Evans Scholarship Recipient: Terrance Walker
Hutchison Scholarship Recipient: Wendy Adams

StepUP Gratefully Acknowledges Financial Gifts Received

IN HONOR OF...

Robert Battle
Mary Jane Clark
Paul Creech
Sheldon Fox
Ann Hamrick
Lane Huggins
Molly Nichols
Rudolph Norris
Kemp Reece
Helen and Dick Rose
Jan and Art Ross
Steve Swayne
Barbara Ward
Gregg Warren
Bob Wright

IN MEMORY OF...

Jeannette Barclay
T.L. Cashwell, Jr.
Heman Clark
Mildred and Roy Elliott
Helen Baldwin (Wolfe) Evans
Matthew Huggins
Bill Pittman
Edward Tie

StepUP Recognizes the Following Foundation and Organization Support

The Burt's Bees Greater Good Foundation
Carolina Hurricanes Kid's 'N Community Foundation
Hillsdale Fund
North Carolina Department of Justice Clothing Drive
North Carolina Theatre Share the Stars Program
Shared Giving Circle
William C. Ethridge Foundation

Upcoming Dates

December 10 – Life Skills Graduation
December 15 – Holiday Party
January 17 – StepUP Sunday at White Memorial
March 25 – Life Skills Graduation
Spring 2010 – Band Together Event

StepUP Ministry is an interfaith community that prepares people who are ready and willing to make positive changes in their lives to become self-sufficient.

STEPUP MISSION



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Looking for alternative holiday gifts? Consider a gift to StepUP Ministry.



Donations to StepUP are a wonderful way to honor special people in your life for the holidays, birthdays or any special occasions. It's a great way to honor clients and professional contacts too. Simply write a check to StepUP Ministry for a minimum donation of \$20 and we will send a gift acknowledgment to each honoree you designate.