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Grant will help Morris day laborers and others find jobs

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MORRISTOWN — United Way of Morris County has approved a special grant of \$20,000 to support Pathways to Work, a referral service established at Morristown's Neighborhood House to connect people in need of daily, seasonal, or temporary employment with employers who need skilled or unskilled labor.

"In the current economy, there is a great need for jobs programs like Pathways to Work," said David Walker, chief executive officer of Neighborhood House. "Although this program is still in its infancy, a very diverse group of women and men who registered at Pathways to Work have already landed jobs."

Pathways to Work was started about a year ago, Walker said. The effort grew out of a program created about five years ago with the Morristown Clergy Council to help day workers and potential employers meet, Walker said.

Pathways to Work has enrolled 200 workers so far, he said.

Day laborers and other potential part-time workers are in a category called casual laborers -- women and men without fulltime jobs who seek temporary work to support themselves and their families. Pathways to Work was established in an effort to offer a safe location for casual laborers to congregate while they wait for work placement.

Using Neighborhood House as the center discourages the use of pickup sites -- street corners, vacant lots, and shopping centers -- which have proliferated in the Morristown area and become a concern for the community.

The program also offers its registered workers access to education and training in areas such as job skills, language, safety, civics, workers' rights and duties.

"No one can lead a stable life and support their family without a stable income," said United Way chief executive officer John Franklin. "Pathways provides not only a fair wage, but opportunities for education and training in various aspects of life. With this training, some of these individuals will move on to attain fulltime jobs."

The worker's center is located at Morristown Neighborhood House at 12 Flagler St.

The referral service is free and open seven days a week. Compensation and terms are negotiated by the employer and the prospective employee, but translators are available when necessary to make communication more comfortable.

Currently, many skilled and unskilled workers are enrolled in this program, offering employers access to painters, gardeners, carpenters, masons, etc. To register as a casual laborer, or to hire a worker, log on to www.pathwaystoworkers.org or call Rosa Chilquillo, project coordinator at Morristown Neighborhood House, at 973-647-8495.