

ACADEMY WORKS

Driving up employment for people with disabilities, including Veterans



Running on Purpose: Team Academy to Sponsor 26 Runners in a Fundraising and Friend-Raising Effort

As one of the select non-profit programs in the city to receive access to 26 runner positions, Team Academy will once again field a dedicated cadre of runners and adapted runners in the 2012 Philadelphia Marathon.

We thank our lead sponsor **Geoff Brandon, TD Bank Regional Vice President** for his leadership role in helping us kick our fund raising goal around this effort. **Emily Coder, Outreach Coordinator**, offers, "The event is a great way to reach new business and professional contacts in the region and to let them know that hard work and dedication, for running and for education, always pays off!"

Visit www.gotblisters.org to learn more.



America's Most Convenient Bank®

Many Thanks To Our Lead Sponsor

It's Not Just Who You Know, It's Also Who Knows You: Business Connections Make The Placement Difference

by Emily Coder, Outreach Coordinator | (215) 634-2000 ext. 258

Last month The Academy held another successful mock interview day with representatives from local businesses offering job search advice and opportunities to our students. We had ten HR representatives from **SugarHouse Casino**, **SecurElement**, and **Lowe's** meet with 29 students preparing to hit the streets in their own job search efforts. The day was a huge success and we plan on more events like this over the next few months. **Janet Fiore, President of the Sierra Group Foundation** offers, "Meeting the competitive needs of our business partners lies at the heart of our training model. Business sets the bar for what is competitive and our program and students strive to meet and exceed this threshold – this is what makes success!"

Many thanks to our business friends for the time and feedback offered in these mock interviews. This feedback drives us forward.



Kyle Montgomery, HR Rep at Lowe's, interviewing Academy student Ronald McGettigan at Mock Interview Day



NEVER STOP IMPROVING



2012 Fundraising Update (Since July 1st)

We have raised over \$6400 towards new chairs, we have secured 7 more new computers, and just bought 6 new Livescribe Pens! Thanks for all of your donations.

Academy United Way # is: 49659



My Rainbow in the Sky: Cynthia Lipscomb, Student and Unofficial Community Ambassador

By Cynthia Lipscomb

The Sierra Group Academy became my rainbow in the sky. The doctor told me that I would not be able to carry out my dream and that I couldn't continue working. I was reminded to lean on my faith and recalled that, "where there is no vision the people perish."

An invitation came to me in the mail for a technology Open House saying something about helping people with disabilities make the transition into the work world. I realized that I needed computer skills to return to competitive employment.

As a student at The Academy, I am grateful for **Marie Palladino** - she makes learning the computer exciting. I thank God every day for the Academy because now I can make new dreams and goals. I encourage everyone with a disability that needs computer and business skills to attend The Academy.

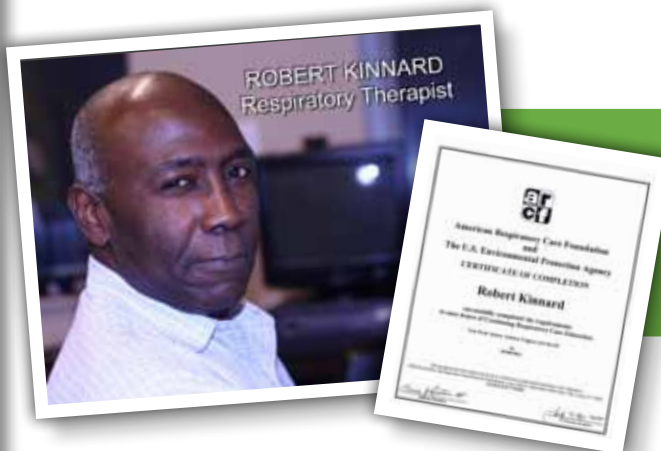
Success Is Greater Than The Classroom: Student Robert Kinnard Works Towards His Respiratory Care Certification

by Michael G. Fiore, BSE, MBA, CFO, The Sierra Group, Inc.

Gaining the skills to meet marketplace demands is important but for many, it's just a start. Through a grant from **The Sierra Group Foundation**, **Robert Kinnard** has been able to join the **American Association of Respiratory Care** so that he can begin to collect the CEU credits needed to reinstate his professional credential as a therapist. Robert offered, "**OVR (the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation)** has been amazing and this new grant from the Foundation has helped me use my current technology and professional training to work

towards a credential that will certainly offer me the job of my dreams – I am honored and amazed that organizations like OVR and The Academy exist with such a singular focus to help people with disabilities achieve vocational success. Technology, training, and professional commitment is changing my life – thank you all."

Janet Fiore, President of The Sierra Group Foundation offered, "Partnerships are everything and we can only do this work because we stand shoulder to shoulder with professionals in business and government – never doubt the power of TEAM".



Academy Student **Robert Kinnard** works on his professional credential while taking classes

Having trouble seeing the computer screen?

ZoomText can help!



"I test, edit, and publish online knowledge base articles for a software company. I never would have been able to succeed in this role without ZoomText."

--Grace Strother

Learn more: www.aisquared.com/sierra

Philadelphia City Councilman David Oh Inspires Job-Seekers

by Michael G. Fiore, BSE, MBA, CFO, The Sierra Group, Inc.

Councilman At-Large David Oh recently motivated students at The Academy with his appearance as a special guest lecturer. From humble beginnings in the Cobb Creek section of Philadelphia, Councilman Oh shared how he was inspired to start his own law practice and, ultimately, serve the people of Philadelphia. “It was tough, but my father instilled in me the values of perseverance and dedication,” said Councilman Oh.

The first Asian-American elected to office in Philadelphia, Councilman Oh serves on many committees including the **Disabled and Handicapped Committee**. A friend of The Academy and job seekers with disabilities, Oh has employed Academy interns in his law-practice at **Zarwin & Baum**. “A lot of what a job is to help success

happen,” says Oh. “You need to make yourself known and never give up.”

Oh ran for City Council three times before ultimately being elected. “He told us, through his personal story, to keep trying and to make yourself known. Councilman Oh didn’t let his losses discourage him and we found this inspiring,” said **Academy job-seeker and committee-woman, Jill Crowding**.

“Part of what makes a good worker is someone that has perspective,” said Councilman Oh. Through invaluable life experiences and skills that they have learned at The Academy, students are ready for competitive employment.

“The Academy has taught me a lot about myself and helped me to gain perspective,” said Academy job-seeker,



Councilman Oh (center) with Fred Singleton (left) and Janet Fiore (right)

Serena Dodson. “Councilman Oh went to school for nine years to get a four-year job. He is proof that no matter how long and hard you have to work, you can never give up.”

Mind Body Connection: Student-Led YES I CAN Task Force brings monthly T'ai Chi lessons to Academy Students & Staff



Academy students doing T'ai Chi during lunch

Student Leaders are always looking for ways to increase the value of the program and to get newer students active in the SPIRIT OF THE ACADEMY. Nice work on setting up our second lunch time T'ai Chi on site lesson and a special Thank You to **T'ai Chi Master Robert Williams** for coming on site to teach and inspire!

Got Blisters?

proof that hard work pays off

Want to get involved in our
Marathon Event?

Visit GotBlisters.org
for more information



The Academy YouTube Channel: Better Tools Lead to Better Outcomes



THOMAS CAULFIELD
Dispatcher

With a goal of becoming a Dispatcher, **Academy student Tom Caulfield** uses The Academy's **YouTube Channel** as well as other online training tools. "Classes are great and they cover a lot. Reviewing lessons on The Academy YouTube channel and other online Academy learning tools after hours in the learning lab really helps me to understand the critical content that I need to know," says Tom. Janet Fiore, President of The Sierra Group Foundation offers, "Tom – and all students – benefit from practice using practical business tools just like any other adult learner in the workforce – The Academy is proud of our investments in these training tools and we are committed to building more resources to help students with disabilities exceed the expectations of the competitive marketplace."

Our students have used our customized classroom training videos over 1300 times...in the last 4 months!