

NYC WORKFORCE WEEKLY

Spotlight on Opportunity Award Winners

Promoting Middle Skills Jobs Award

DISCOVERBOOKKEEPING, The Bookkeeping Center

Every business needs to keep track of its finances, and The Bookkeeping Center is determined to provide them with help. Its main program DISCOVERBOOKKEEPING is a comprehensive course offered at no to little cost to low income and unemployed adults with at least a high school diploma or GED. The program consists of four 10-week semesters: manual bookkeeping, which helps participants understand and articulate basic principles; computerized accounting, including QuickBooks, Peachtree and MYOB; advanced bookkeeping, featuring job-readiness workshops and preparation for the AIPB Certification Exam; and a final job placement semester. (see *Workforce Weekly*, July 9, 2010). Well over half of their current graduates are working today in bookkeeping or accounting, and participants' test scores are steadily rising.

"Our unique program helps individuals who do not have access to traditional educational opportunities achieve a sustainable career. Our dedicated team is focused on maximizing our program's effectiveness through accountability and results," says executive director Thomas P. Graham IV.

Kathy Schrier, director of The Actors Fund Work Program and NYCETC board secretary, chaired the panel of judges that selected the 2011 Opportunity Award winners. She said, "The Bookkeeping Center offers a demanding program that prepares individuals with high school educations for demanding work with the possibility of advancement in the world of business. TBKC demonstrates the skills of NYCETC members and the potential of the participants in our programs."

Graduate Olga Onur of Brooklyn says, "The importance of TBKC is the combination of the program and the extra help on how to conduct yourself on a job interview. I got a job with a local real estate management company. I like feeling that my books are in order and that I am responsible for them." She particularly praises her instructor Maurice Smith, who freely invites students and graduates to call him with bookkeeping questions. "He's very helpful. He provides us with his experience of 30 years," Onur says.

Before finding TBKC, current student Asia Smith of Brooklyn worked for a local plumbing supply store doing customer service, then briefly had her own business. She says, "It took a long time for me to learn what I wanted to do. When I got into bookkeeping, I loved it. I learned what I should have done when I had my business." She plans to own her own firm in the future and is now enrolled in TBKC's advanced bookkeeping semester as well as taking accounting courses at Kingsborough College where she is working toward a degree.

Becky Howland, a fine artist, was one of the first TBKC graduates. She says, "I was looking for a way to make steady income and I found TBKC through a NYC Business Solutions Center. Learning manual computing gave me a different relationship to a pencil. It felt very old fashioned, but it was much better than jumping into the software without knowing the principles. I was studying at TBKC in the fall of 2008 when the bottom fell out. People were frightened with good reason. Maurice told us that we are an industry that does not get affected because as long as there are companies, there will be transactions. It took me some time to get my first job. In the beginning, I tried to keep my art and business careers separate, but TBKC helped me to put art on my bookkeeping resume. I would not be working if I had not made that change."

To learn more about The Bookkeeping Center, go to www.tbkc.org