

# The Inside Scoop

THE WORKSOURCE STAFF NEWSLETTER

Fall 2004

## North Channel Job Fair

June 18, 2004

To The WorkSource:

Our office would like to thank you for assisting us with coordinating our 2nd Annual North Channel Job Fair on June 7, 2004. We appreciate all of your time and energy in helping our community find employment.

Thank you again for your involvement, without your help the fair would not have been as successful as it was. We look forward to continuing to work with you. Please do not hesitate to call on our office whenever we may be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Gene Green  
Member of Congress  
House of Representatives

— Submitted by Michele Willis  
on behalf of the  
Northshore office

## Welcome to This Special Issue of The Inside Scoop

- This issue is all about customer service and excellence
- It is about staff in our workforce system who are doing their jobs well
- It is about some customers who have been helped through staff efforts and notes of thanks and appreciation
- It is about contractor initiatives and their best practices
- It is about some youth initiatives and accomplishments

The Inside Scoop welcomes all success stories and letters/notes of staff appreciation from our resident and employer customers. Just e-mail to [newsletter@theworksource.org](mailto:newsletter@theworksource.org) and we will include it in our next issue.

## Letters from Houston Police Department

September 17, 2004

The Information Fair that you hosted on 8/13/04 certainly was a positive event. Moreover, the public service announcements and/or Web site promotions that you created were effective in promoting record registrations.

The number of applicants that registered both online and in person was 951. On the examination date, 667 applicants showed up to take the exam, which was a record for us. The 70 percent rate was quite respectable, exceeding the 50 percent average. Out of the 667,660 passed and seven failed.

You made it possible and we appreciate all of your help. We look forward to networking with you in the future.

Cordially,

Mike Klutchka  
Houston Police Department HR Division  
Employment Services Unit

August 24, 2004

Dear Ms. Willis:

Thank you for your assistance at the August 13, 2004, Houston Police Department recruiting event known as the "Informational Open House" held at the North Harris College Parkway Center facility.

Without the generous contributions that you made in organization, time, preparation, advertising and the use of your facilities, our recruiting efforts would not have been successful.

I particularly appreciate your efforts in making the event a success and attracting the quality of candidates that were in attendance.

As of the closing of the registration on Friday, August 20, 2004, there were 900 registered applicants for the upcoming September 7, 2004 examination.

Sincerely,

M.D. Graham, Captain  
Human Resources Division

— Submitted by Michele Willis  
on behalf of the Downtown office

# Super Secret Shopping

by Pauline Gallien, ITEP—Manager of Special Projects

Customer service is so important to us. In our efforts toward continuous improvement in this area, Interfaith conducted Secret Shopping during the week of August 23–27. During this week, seven very “secret” shoppers visited each of the Interfaith-operated offices of The WorkSource. Each office was visited three times. Shoppers rated each office and staff person they came into contact with in areas such as helpfulness, friendliness, knowledge, ability to deliver what was asked for, responsiveness in addressing the customer’s specific stated request, and identifying the next step in the process.

Shoppers represented typical customers at any office of The WorkSource: Students, restaurant workers, individuals with disabilities, dislocated executives, IT professionals, clerical workers, people looking to change careers, people needing part-time and full-time jobs, etc.

Results have been shared with office managers and staffs at the offices. We see this as an incredible learning opportunity to receive candid, invaluable feedback from real customers. Based on their input, it helps us learn their perceptions of our environment and product, and inspires us to do more of what worked and less of what didn’t! We also plan to recognize staff members who give excellent service!

## SECRET SHOPPERS FEEDBACK – “Positive things we did that secret shoppers liked!”

### Greeter

- Greeter welcomed her before she even got in the door, said “How may we help you.”
- Gave immediate assistance; told customer exactly what to do and got customer help because of a vision disability
- Acknowledged customer when she came in even though Greeter was with someone
- Offered a welcome kit with list of services and gave a brief tour and list of helpful Web sites

### Resource Specialist

- Offered frequent assistance; showed customer how to use resume wizard and search for job leads using occupational categories
- Provided immediate assistance with resume; sat down with customer to make improvements
- Went above and beyond her job to help customer completely
- Very diplomatically asked customer to remove drink and step outside to use cell phone

### EC

- Revamped job search parameters and went through each part step by step; gave card and invited customer to call if further help was needed
- Helped with two different resumes; was incredibly knowledgeable and helpful with background issues on customer’s resume and interview tips; informed her of upcoming classes, and stayed well after hours with her; was kind and did not force her out of there; really liked what she was doing; really positive
- Gladly tried to help get customer into a new career field; did not rush him along; was pleasant
- Was outstanding; made multiple phone calls and looked in computer to find work history

dates; spent a lot of time with customer; showed much care and concern; 4 stars for this EC

- Received outstanding service from EC new to the job; was intuitive, friendly and on-task; established empathy, rapport by mentioning her own job search; gave good info and leads and softly sold the services of The WorkSource
- Gave wonderful leads that seemed a perfect match to customer’s skills; gave additional tips on her online resume; sent her for a typing test; called a specific employer he was referring her to; gave her his card and told her to keep in touch

### FAS

- Engaged in a productive exchange of Q & A; seemed to know her stuff
- Checked to see if The WorkSource could offer him tuition money; gave the customer a list of prospective scholarships to check out, many of which applied to the customer’s specific background and credentials

### Atmosphere

- Quiet, professional, presentable, pleasant environment
- Good reference materials readily available for people to read, including literature about upcoming workshops
- Very positive experience; everyone was uplifting and facility (though small) was well-organized and professional.

### Blind Customer Feedback

- Staff went out of their way to make the experience a good one
- One office had Braille overlay on keyboard

## Northline Serves Area High School Youth with Developmental Challenges

– Submitted by the Northline staff

September 15, 2004

Northline helped students with developmental challenges at Sam Houston High School to kick off another successful semester. Ten students showed up at our center on Thursday, with their program coordinator and several support staff, to attend the first “Get a Better Job Faster and Make More Money” seminar of the 2004–2005 school year.

This ongoing and successful program introduces students to the basic skills needed to get a job and keep a job. The entire special education class comes to the Northline office on the first Thursday of the month.

Steve Kologinczak, Northlines’ facilitator has the pleasure of presenting the seminars to this highly motivated group. Steve says, “The people in this group are just fabulous to work with. They all have a burning desire to get a job and prove they can do the same things as everyone else. They participate enthusiastically in the seminars and show a lot of gratitude for any help they receive.”

Apparently our team efforts here are paying off, too. Jimmy Nicks reported that two students from last year’s graduating class have landed jobs. Nicks also attributed a large measure of the students’ success landing jobs to the support they received from staff here at Northline.

Here’s one more example of the Northline team working to fulfill their motto – “Working Hard to help **YOU SUCCEED!**” – with innovative new approaches.

# ITEP and ACS Recognized for Best Practices



At its August 2004 meeting, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board recognized two of its contractors for initiatives that reflected “best practices” within the system. It plans to present other examples at future meetings when excellence in service is noted and when the Board’s mission and vision are implemented. Here is what the Board had to say about ITEP and ACS, and what they did:

## Interfaith of The Woodlands: Implementing Change

**THE BOARD:** We would like to recognize Interfaith for excellence in implementing change in the way The WorkSource career offices deliver services to resident customers.

A workgroup comprised of Board and career office contractor staff met for four months to develop new, customer-focused and service oriented operating procedures

### Guiding principles included:



Carol Mitchener,  
Grants Director for ITEP

- We are here to help resident customer(s) get a job, keep a job, and/or get a better job
- We do this by providing a set of services – not programs – for all our resident customers
- We ask our customers what they want and need from us and then listen to what they say. We do not offer a “one size fits all” solution to success in the workplace.
- We do not stereotype our customers by their circumstances or the funding source that supports their service from The WorkSource.

Each office has professional staff available, who are expert in providing The WorkSource services.

Career office contractors had to explain the guiding principles to hundreds of staff members in the field and teach all of them how individual job duties and performance expectations would change, how staff relationships and interactions with customers are different, and how internal operating procedures were changing.

**ITEP:** Interfaith used exemplary practices in helping staff understand, plan, and own the changes for themselves. Interfaith mapped out the change in one office (Northwest), and then rolled the changes out to the additional 12 offices they manage all over the region. Interfaith successfully implemented changes quickly with little or no inconvenience to our resident or business customers.

### Results include:

- A firm commitment to the Board’s mission and values, exemplified in the direct services offered resident customers every day.
- Positive feedback from customers, who appear to recognize and appreciate the change in approach
- Offices that are more customer-friendly and customer-oriented
- More efficient use of staff and resources
- ACS State and Local Solutions: Promoting Good Business Practice

**THE BOARD:** We would like to recognize ACS for its commitment to ethical business practices.

This is an issue on the minds of all of us who are doing business today.

We have had some issues with data integrity reported in the WorkSource Management Information Systems.

Reliable data is necessary to determine whether The WorkSource is operating in accordance with the Board’s values of innovation, productivity, accountability and results.

Ethics training helps to draw a bright line between what is acceptable behavior in reporting and what isn’t.

ACS provides regular ethics training (including an online course and periodic updates and refreshers) to all staff of The WorkSource in the offices it manages.

### Results include:

- Office staff who clearly understand their responsibilities to be honest in their business lives
- A shared commitment to report and correct mistakes
- A higher standard of care in delivering public workforce services



Carole Anderson,  
Project Director for ACS

# Spring Branch Employer Applauds Work of Local Office

J. Ray McDermott is a Spring Branch area employer the Spring Branch office has been working with in conjunction with the Spring Branch ISD. Priscilla Smith helped cultivate this relationship several years ago and the partnership has been working well for all. The result has been a successful youth initiative for The WorkSource.

The following letter was sent from the employer to staff at the Spring Branch office:

August 26, 2004

On behalf of J. Ray McDermott let me express our sincere appreciation for being invited to participate in your program today. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to discuss in an open forum the Engineering profession with your students and faculty. My very brief exposure today to Spring Woods High School and The Guthrie Center was both educational and enjoyable.

I applaud the support provided by The Work Source through Vera (Dillard) and I'm confident many students will benefit from her efforts in continuing to find ways to encourage students and prepare them for life after graduation. Likewise, Paula Weber\*, I commend your efforts to stimulate dialogue between students and industry in order to provide a glimpse into the world outside High School.

Please feel free to call upon us in the future should you wish J. Ray McDermott to participate in future events, and if I personally can be of assistance please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Regards,

Gordon L. Wilkinson  
J. Ray McDermott, Inc.  
Business Development

\*INSIDE SCOOP NOTE: Paula Weber is the Assistant Principal at Spring Woods High School

## YO! Houston – The Latest

Submitted by Darrell Miles

In its fourth year of a five-year effort, YO! Houston/The WorkSource has exceeded expectations by attracting 5,000+ young adults, ages 14 to 21 into this demonstration project.

The targeted youth population in this demonstration grant is in four of Houston's many Enterprise Zones. Participation and interest from 700+ employers aided in having over 2,200 multiple long-term occupational/job placements over the 4-year period. Continued progress reports and monitoring helped in developing and maintaining relationships with employers, as well as providing ongoing support to youth on an as-needed basis to ensure employment and training longevity, completion and continuity.

Program emphasis is placed on continuing education, job placements, vocational training, as well as recreational/developmental activities to support the total well-being of each young person. This different approach also required young adults in the program to have regular monthly communication with youth staff. This method has measured retention of jobs and occupational trainings. It has fluctuated from 70 percent to 81 percent over this same period.

The youth have won several outstanding honors through National Skills/Awards competition against 36 national mirror programs. YO! Houston/The WorkSource is expected to continue the youth developmental/work-based methodology after the demonstration grant has expired. The four centrally located youth centers also attracted 3,000+ WIA eligible youth in areas outlying the Zones, who are also served through local career offices of TheWorkSource within Houston's city limits.

## Spring Branch Youth Graduate and Receive Scholarships

Several Spring Branch ISD youth, who have worked throughout the year with staff from The WorkSource-Spring Branch office, were awarded scholarships by the Career and Technology Education Advisory Board at its 2003-2004 reception held on May 12, 2004. Vera Dillard, personal services representative and financial aid specialist, who worked weekly with these students, attended their graduation. Students receiving scholarships and recognition were:

**Gilda Alvarenga**, Memorial High School/The Guthrie Center – \$250 Cosmetology Program Scholarship

**Claudia Sanchez**, Northbrook High School/The Guthrie Center – \$250 Cosmetology Program Scholarship

**Sandra Lopez**, Northbrook High School – \$1,000 Exemplary CATE (Career and Technology Education) Scholarship

**Miguel Ocon**, Northbrook High School – \$1,000 Institute of Hispanic Culture Scholarship; \$1,500 Rotary Club Scholarship; \$1,000 University of Houston Top 10% Scholarship

**Megan Flagler**, Northbrook High School – won a National Student Leadership Competition award from Distributive Education Clubs of America

The following article appeared in the Houston Chronicle "This Week" on August 12, 2004. Youth participating in the show production came from the Northshore office, where Sharon Watson is the Youth PSR and Antoinette Llorens is the office manager.

# Teens Put Best Feet Forward

Eastside Teens Get On-the-Job Training – By TOM BEHRENS, Houston Chronicle correspondent



Seventy area youth between the ages of 14 and 21 seized the opportunity this summer to make money while having fun and, as a bonus, learn necessary life skills.

The musical, *Broadway KATCO Style*, was completely put together by the youth, responsible for all phases of the production and presentation.

"This year we did a tribute to Gershwin and Rodgers and Hammerstein," said the director of the program, Kathy Taylor-Brown. Taylor-Brown is the lead singer of the gospel singing group, Kathy Taylor-Brown and Favor. She is also minister of music at Windsor Village United Methodist Church.

"We try to do Broadway music because it is the kind of music that they don't hear all the time," referring to the youth in the production. "I am just trying to introduce them to another venue of music and dance as well.

## Fascinating rhythm

"The rhythm that they have naturally, they can perfect it and make it something worthwhile and useful today," Taylor-Brown said.

Youth participation ranged from set design to singing, dancing and speaking roles.

The youth chose the name for the July 23 program, *Broadway KATCO Style*, which was staged at Hannah Hall on the Texas Southern University campus.

"We did a song from 'Cats, Calico Cats,' and 'Summer Loving' from *Grease*," said Taylor-Brown. "The evening's repertoire included 11 different musical presentations, each introduced by a cast member giving a brief description of where the number took place in the original show."

The production was the culmination of a six-week summer youth job program, said Herbert Taylor, brother of Taylor-Brown.

"The need for teachers and the opportunity to help the kids is what got me involved," said Taylor. He teaches public speaking and public relations, including advertising, in Galena Park.

## Minimum-wage jobs

"They receive minimum wage funded by The WorkSource. We do get a lot of contributions in the form of materials or things like that from other sources," added Taylor.

"The youth at KATCO actually worked 30 hours a week," said Sharon Watson, a youth counselor with The WorkSource.

## YOUTH THEATER PROJECT

The WorkSource receives its funding from the Houston-Galveston Area Council. The youth enrolled in the program at one point had to express a desire to be in theater arts or something connected with arts and music.

"Usually, the way the kids come to us every year is that we usually send out flyers to the schools within the area of the center," Watson said.



The center is located at 14355 Wallisville Road (The WorkSource – Northshore). The teachers encourage the kids to call and make appointments to come in if they are interested in working for the summer.

## Teaching job readiness

"At The WorkSource, we believe youth should be taught job readiness skills and should have fun while doing it," Watson said. "The program was actually a learning process – how to get up in the morning, how to go to work, how to call your boss if you are going to be late or if you are not coming in – just teaching them responsibility, but at the same time giving them some goals to reach for." This is the sixth year Taylor-Brown has directed the theater arts program for the youth.

"What we try to do is pull out their best gifts," said Taylor-Brown.

"Some of them don't know they can sing, dance, draw or anything before they come to the program.

"Our job is to pull out what we see the students have. One of our strongest beliefs is that all children have gifts and talents and it is our responsibility as adults to find them and help show them the way," Taylor-Brown said.

## End of summer boredom

"Instead of being bored this summer," said Caroline Law, a member of the cast. "KATCO provided me with a pleasant working experience. It gives teens an opportunity to find and use their hidden talents."

"When I first came to KATCO, I chose choir as my number one class to join because I like to sing, but I didn't know what was ahead of me," said Tiffany Payne.

"One day, Ms. Kathy asked all the girls to sing alone, going down each row. I was very nervous. Some girls got picked who were really good. Then it was my turn.

"I don't even remember how I sounded. All I know is that she told me I had a part in the show," Tiffany said. "I couldn't believe it because I have never been picked for anything."

# Location Success Stories...

## Huntsville

When Tori came into the Choices program, she was in the process of changing her name because she was getting a divorce. Her self-esteem was low. She didn't feel confident about her skills and abilities and needed help in believing in herself again.

With prompting and encouragement, Tori confided her dream was to be a reporter. She said she would take any job that would permit her to take care of herself and her young daughter. She did job search for several weeks, but was unsuccessful. She decided to do community service at The WorkSource office and got the "extra push" she needed. Once her self-esteem was raised, Tori was unstoppable. She began to actively pursue her dream of becoming a reporter. Within a month, she was writing articles for the local newspaper. The day she was hired she wrote an article that appeared on the front page!

One year later, Tori has a new husband and a new home in a neighboring town. About two months ago, she was employed as the grant writer for the City of Huntsville at an annual salary of \$40,000. Her duties include attending city council meetings and other functions. She is respected in the community and occasionally writes for the newspaper to get the inside scoop on all the happenings in Huntsville. Recently, she told staff The WorkSource helped her to realize she had skills and was worthwhile even though she didn't feel worthwhile. She said the encouragement she received at The WorkSource helped her pursue her dreams.

— Submitted by Rhonda Hollaar

## Lake Jackson

Tamara, a single mother with one child, was a TANF recipient and had no immediate plans for her life. She had never held a job and only had experience working with others through her participation with Special Olympics. Because of the age of her child, Tamara was not required to participate in an employment program, but chose to do so to gain work skills.

While volunteering in our Lake Jackson office, Tamara discovered first hand what being part of the workforce means. She was prompt in her arrival at work and completed every task with zeal and an inquisitive spirit for learning. Our staff helped her focus on setting goals and planning her future. Tamara expressed a desire to work with the elderly and was re-assigned to work with Helping Hands & Hearts Hospice of Lake Jackson. Coincidentally, Tamara found herself working with a former acquaintance from Special Olympics.

Almost overnight, Tamara's confidence exploded and she became the person she never dreamed she could be. The office manager at Helping Hands & Hearts called our career office to let us know how impressed the organization was with Tamara's work ethic and enthusiasm. They were so impressed that they recommended Tamara for employment with another organization.

The day Tamara came back to our office to show us her first paycheck, we could see the look of accomplishment and pride in her face. Tamara is already setting new goals and we'll be right there with her to make it happen.

— Submitted by Cynthia Sprayberry

## Northline – ERA Project Success Story

Ms. P entered the ERA project in July 2001. At that time, she was depressed, had strained her familial relationships, and was attempting to hold together a formed family of herself, a newborn, and the child's father, who was not responding well to fatherhood.

Not far into her program participation, Ms. P's relationship with the child's father failed. This was a devastating development for her. The loss was literal and symbolic as Ms. P's own father was absent from her childhood and she had promised herself not to repeat that painful pattern. Her depression became worse and she lost hope. However, she continued to attend the ERA support groups. In the groups, she learned others had similar expectations dashed and that she could only control her own behavior. She was able to observe others overcoming similar obstacles and became a little more optimistic.

As her mood improved, she became more productive. She grew determined to take responsibility for herself and enrolled in job skills training. Ms. P completed her training and was immediately rewarded with a pay increase from \$7.50 an hour to \$11 per hour.

Encouraged by this success, she enrolled in a peace officer certification program through the University of Houston. She graduated six months later and was hired by the University of Houston Police Department with a starting salary of \$38,000. In addition to a living wage and excellent benefits, she is free to pursue her dream of obtaining a master's degree in criminal justice. Her current employer encourages this pursuit with tuition reimbursement and flexing her schedule so she can attend class.

Ms P is pleased to report that her life is on track and she owes her latest success to the help given her through the ERA project.

— Submitted by Michael L Pugh

## The WorkSource – Downtown

During the week of March 22, after having suffered the consequences of some poor decisions, I started a journey toward re-establishing myself as a productive member of society. One of my goals was to find, not just “a job,” but rather a career-building job that suited my skills, experience and interests. I knew within myself that this task would not be easy. Among other things, my employment history was, at best, inconsistent. Even though my experiences were above average, my attitude and motivation were genuine; I now carried some additional baggage into the job search process: a felony conviction.

In the April 27 edition of USA Today, it stated that the average length of unemployment is 15 weeks, which is short of four months. However, I’m writing this message to encourage you. Most people accept the reality that they have been given. Do not let statistics or the opinions of others deter you from diligently seeking to succeed. Remember, “Someone’s opinion of you does not have to be a reflection of you.” You can alter your course with courage, persistence and proper assistance.

My journey to employment has transitioned me from “being interviewed” to becoming an “interviewer.” It did not happen overnight, but it did happen! I had to use the resources available to disenfranchised workers, like myself. These resources are available, if you choose to use them. The WorkSource at 600 Jefferson has been one of those instrumental resources responsible for my success. The RIO representative, Ms. Tammy Osbey, and the Resource Room Specialist, Mr. Sheldon DeBraine, started me on my road to understanding “The System” and how to best utilize its resources. Both used a straight-forward, no nonsense approach. Ms. Osbey, let me know in no uncertain terms, that the system would work in direct relationship to the effort I put into it. I’m writing to let you know this is sound advice.

I had to be willing to do the things each day that others wouldn’t do, so that in the future I would have the things others wouldn’t have — a career-building job that suited my skills, experience and interests.

Today, is May 10. Seven weeks ago I accessed The WorkSource. Today, I am sitting in a temporary office space at The WorkSource at 600 Jefferson, interviewing and screening applicants as a representative of a placement agency, Wilson & Associates. I cut that 15-week projection into seven. I beat the odds and so can you!

### How did this happen?

- 1) I made a commitment to myself — I realized that I could not change the past, but I can alter my future because my future begins each day of my life. I would not let other people’s opinions define my future. “Hold fast to your dreams, for if dreams die, life is like a broken winged bird that cannot fly.” Langston Hughes
- 2) I made a commitment to keep my commitment — I did those things that were suggested and a little more. Most people do a little less than the minimum. I set myself apart by doing more than the minimum and staying focused on my goal. I began each day with the end in mind. I asked myself, “If I want to be employed tomorrow, what am I doing today to contribute to that goal?” Rather than count the days, make the days count!

I have achieved a measure of success today because of my faith in God, proper attitude, preparation and utilizing the resources of organizations like The WorkSource. If you take anything from this message, please BE ENCOURAGED and remember: always strive to get to the top because the bottom is always crowded.

– J. Douglas Leftwich

## Liberty

When Heather decided to move from Michigan to Texas, she had no idea that she would land in the unlikely rural area of Liberty. She was determined to find a job, but found that without skills she was unable to secure employment to sustain herself and her three children. Her only available option was to apply for TANF and Food Stamps to care for herself and her family.

As a condition of receiving TANF, Heather was led to our career office to participate in an employment program. She began volunteering at the office to gain work skills that would be transferable to an employment situation. While working with the staff at the career office, Heather found optimism, encouragement and a sense of belonging. She shared that she began feeling good about herself and her self-esteem grew.

Heather stated, “The WorkSource staff gave me the encouragement I needed to keep my hopes up.” She felt that the door of opportunity had been opened for her. That opportunity became reality with a greeter position in the career office. Heather applied, interviewed and was hired. She says that she felt it was a miracle that she even got an interview.

Heather began working as a staff member in our career office December 2003. She serves as an excellent role model for her children and others who feel there is no hope.

— Submitted by Angela Banks

# Fulfilling One's Dream – An Olympic Effort

Congratulations are in order for Sherri Lee, the BC at the Greenspoint office. She is the godmother of a Silver Medal winner at the recent Olympics in Athens, Greece. Here is the letter she sent to BC Wendy Adams...



August 31, 2004

Great news! My goddaughter, Nia Nicole Abdallah, received a silver medal in tae kwon do at the Olympics in Athens, Greece this past Saturday. Needless to say, I and the rest of her family and friends are so proud. She is the first American woman, as well as African American, to ever receive a medal in this sport. Her mother and I want to thank everyone for their prayers and support. There is an article in this past Saturday's Houston Chronicle concerning her win. This win is so fantastic!!!!!!

Sincerely,  
Sherri

## HOUSTONIAN IS FIRST U.S. WOMAN TO WIN A MEDAL IN TAE KWON DO

By DAVID BARRON

ATHENS, GREECE – From the laurel wreath atop her head to the bandage on her injured big left toe, Nia Abdallah of Houston was every inch an Olympic medalist Friday night. As friends and family shouted “N-I-A, U-S-A” into the teeth of a sometimes hostile crowd at the Faliro Sports Pavilion, Abdallah, 20, won a silver medal in the Olympic featherweight division of women’s tae kwon do. Abdallah defeated opponents from Russia, Italy and Thailand before losing to Jang Ji Won of South Korea 2-1 in the gold-medal match. She is the first U.S. woman to win a tae kwon do medal at the Olympics.



Abdallah, an unorthodox stylist who prefers defense and counterattacks to frontal assaults, got off to a fast start with a 16-9 win over Margarita Mkrtychyan of Russia in her opening match, then edged Cristina Corsi of Italy 2-1 to advance to the semifinals. Despite a foot injury suffered in the second match, she also took an early lead in the semifinals against Nootcharin Sukkongdumnoen of Thailand before holding on for an 8-7 victory that put her in the gold-medal match against the experienced Korean, a former world champion. Jang was the first of four opponents to score the first points against Abdallah, and she added a two-point kick to Abdallah’s head in the second round that forced the younger fighter to abandon her defensive mode in search of quick points.

Abdallah has been fighting since age 9, when she and stepfather Thomas Duhart conspired to get her into the sport over her mother’s objections. Abdallah said she opted out of gymnastics because “I busted a lip when I hit it on the (vaulting) horse and said, ‘I’m not gonna do that any more.’ It’s funny how I ended up in a contact sport. I guess I like to beat up people.”

In her only major international competition before the Olympics, she qualified her weight class for the Games by finishing third at the Pan-American Games. Because of the arrangement of weight classes for the Olympics, she had to lose 15 pounds in the final week before Friday’s event to make the 125-pound limit. Despite a raucous crowd that frequently booed her friends’ and family’s cheers throughout the match, she was applauded when on the medal podium.

Abdallah plans to take some time off after the Olympics. She then will move from Colorado Springs, Colo., her current training base, back to Houston. From there, if former Olympic team leader John Holloway is correct, she’ll set her sights on the next Olympics. “She has heart, desire and passion for the Olympic dream,” Holloway said. “She knew she could do it, and she’ll be in Beijing.”



# Letters of Customer Satisfaction

## Southwest

To Diana Howard:

Dear Diana,

If you were to see me today, you would not recognize me. Through your help, I received employment at RBC Mortgage, where I process loans for various investors. Thank you for your advice and encouragement!

Sincerely,  
Susan Reumont



## Northeast

To Aura Ruiz, Office Manager, from an employer:

Your people were great and a pleasure to work with!

Cynthia A. Mallon  
Vice President of Human Resources  
Southwest Housing Management  
Dallas, TX 75206



## Feedback from The WorkSource Web site "Contact Us":

On August 16, 2004, I called a friend and asked about a WorkSource place that can provide good service. She referred me to the Pasadena office and an employment counselor, Tracy Blake. This young lady was awesome. She was strictly business and took care of all my needs in a matter of minutes.

– LaFronda Andrews



## Spring Branch

Jannelle is 28 years old with a small child. She will be graduating from the Occupational Therapy Program at North Harris County College in May 2005. Vera Dillard from our Spring Branch office assisted her. I hear she is a good student. We have been helping her with tuition, books and child care. We will continue to assist her.

– Submitted by Ron Rodriguez

August 11, 2004

Hello Mrs. Dillard,

I really want to thank you for all of your help getting me through this last year of school. You have made it possible for me to continue school and now look forward to graduating in May '05. I am really excited and grateful for all of your help. You have made a huge difference in my life and I thank you for it.

Sincerely,  
Jannelle

June 17, 2004

Dear Mrs. Dillard:

I came by to let you know I passed my State Board Exam. I received my results the other day. I came by to give you the good news and to thank you again for all that you've done for me to accomplish my dream. Thank you so much.

I will see you soon. I'll come by and give some co-workers haircuts which they are asking for.

Love,  
Claudia Sanchez  
P.S. Thanks a lot!! I passed!!!



Thank you card received from a single mom with 8-year-old twin boys, who graduated as an LVN...

Vera,

Many thanks for all you've done. Thanks for helping me and making my dream become a reality. God bless you!

Katherine R.



## Denver Harbor

September 16, 2004

Margarita,

I want to express my personal appreciation to you for having an "ON FIRE STAFF" with members like Mr. Rosendo Quinones and Mr. Heriberto Garcia. Their service level goes above and beyond many of The WorkSource representatives that I have personally worked with throughout Houston. I can say that from both ends as an ex-employer representative with CCC Interactive and as a current job seeker.

As a result of this kind of superior service and can do attitude, when I land my next job, I will be using these gentleman again, and again. I will also pass the word about your center and services to other employers and recruiters that I know in the city.

I have just begun to use the services of Mr. Lionel Garcia, so we will be working on a long-term employer and BC relationship for the future when I land the next position.

Thank you, Denver Harbor Center, for standing out among the rest! Make it a great day!

Sincerely,  
George Hernandez

– Submitted by Margarita Flores

# More Letters of Customer Satisfaction

## Northline

June 21, 2004

Mr. Steve Kologinczak,

I'd like to drop a thank you note for helping to improve my interviewing skills. Your advice and techniques really do work! Please share this with all who attend your interviewing skills seminar.

I was unemployed for over four weeks. I was given the opportunity to interview with a steel supply company. Coincidentally, I got a phone call the same day I attended your seminar to interview the day after the seminar. I got there 30 minutes early to fill out the application and took a math test. After that I interviewed with the sales manager. The first thing I did was to provide my interviewer, who is the sales manager, with a copy of my resume. He reviewed my resume and started telling me about the history of his company and what they did as a company. I told him that I had looked up his company and gave compliments about it. Then I gave him my 30-second commercial. I told him what a fine contribution I could make to the company by using my work experience, interpersonal, computer skills in Windows, MS Word, Excel, and my bilingual skills.

I was asked the reason I was not working at my previous job. Since I had been terminated, I was honest with them and told them the truth. I quickly explained what had happened and what I had learned from that experience. The interview was a success. When it was time to ask for the job, I asked the question I had rehearsed the night before and early morning, to sound as natural as I could sound: "Is there anything you can see that would keep me from doing an excellent job for you?" I asked this question to the sales manager and he could not think of anything. So I went ahead and asked the following question: "Then what do I need to do to get started?" So he went and brought the son of the owner of the company, who runs the company, and I interviewed with him as well. I went through the same process with him and asked the same questions. He said he could not see any red flags, so he and the sales manager had a little talk. They then came back and told me that they were going to offer me a job. So I said, "Great, I look forward to working with you!"

Mr. Kologinczak, I believe that if I had not attended your seminar and sharpened my interview skills with you, my interviewers would have not thought about giving me a job and (I would have) lost this opportunity to someone else who may have done a better interview.

I will never forget your advice. I thank you very much from my heart!

Sincerely,  
David Pineda

## Northeast

Hello, my name is Clayton L. Wilson, and I am writing on behalf of Joyce Richardson-Lambert.

I was in need of a new resume for a career change. To be honest, I've never had much luck with The WorkSource employees, but decided to try one more time. Joyce sat down with me and she assisted me in creating a new resume. She worked with me for about one and a half hours. And she was sick that day! She showed knowledge and professionalism, the likes that I have never seen before at a WorkSource facility. After we finished, I had to change my mind about The WorkSource endeavor.

Good workers are few and far between, but an excellent worker like Joyce truly is a very rare treasure indeed.

— Submitted by Aura Ruiz



## Greenspoint

September 28, 2004

Dear Employment Counselor Mr. Willie Nelson Jr:

Hi!! Just a few lines to thank you for being the employment counselor to really take the time and effort to assure me that I'd receive every opportunity in obtaining employment, even if it was across the Indian and Atlantic Ocean. Thanks for caring.

OK, about my experience in Baghdad Iraq, I am proud to be a part of the support group that serves the U.S. Military. I live in a tent with seven other woman and the challenge is greater than the Iraq war. But it is temporary... We work 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (12 hrs) daily and seven days a week. It has been an incredible experience; however, the most rewarding aspect is helping others, and of course the money (income).

I also work with staff from the Philippines, and they are very precious people. My heart goes out to them as far as their suffering (financially) in their country. It makes you appreciate and be proud to be an American. Even though they have financial problems, they are a very happy people. They call me Mama Bennie. Well so much for now, I can tell all my friends that I got a job at The Worksource - Greenspoint and it was Willie Nelson Jr. who made it happen.

Mr. Willie Nelson Jr., keep up the good work and God will bless you.

Chow,  
Bennie Williams  
KBR Employee

# Another Letter of Customer Satisfaction

## Southwest

August 4, 2004

Dear Ms. Esther Azard:

My name is Angelica Docdocil and I am writing you this letter about my positive experience during my visit at your office last August 3, 2004.

I called your office in the morning of August 3 inquiring about two positions posted on your Web site. The receptionist referred me to the voice mail of counselor Delia Mays (I hope I got her name right). I left a message regarding the positions I was interested in. While waiting for her response, I realized it would be a better idea for me to come to your office and inquire in person. Counselor Paulette Washington saw me. Ms. Azard, I would like you to know that Ms. Washington performed a superb job in serving me. She was very helpful, understanding and took time searching a job match for me. She also gave me a few helpful tips for my career search.

Later that day, Ms. Mays returned my call and left a message on my voice mail regarding the two positions. Although, Ms. Washington already helped me with my inquiries, I just want you to know how much I appreciated Ms. Mays calling me back.

I would like to commend Ms. Washington and Ms. Mays for their excellent customer service. I understand how little these workers are credited for their job well done because I myself have worked in the social services. I know how it feels when someone we served appreciates our time and service.

Sincerely,

Angelica Docdocil

## More Area Success Stories

### Wharton

Cherie, a divorced mother with five children, moved from South Houston to Wharton with hopes of changing her situation. After arriving in Wharton, Cherie and her children did not have a place to live, and she found herself living with her ex-husband and his family.

Cherie was forced to apply for TANF and food stamps to help provide for herself and her children. Cherie worked diligently with the staff in our Wharton career office to develop her work skills and interviewing techniques. She completed her required job search consistently and always had a positive attitude. Her hard work and determination paid off with her securing employment at Don Elliott Auto World as a service assistant/customer service representative. And to make life sweeter, Cherie was able to move her family into a house of their own.

– Submitted by Demetria Johnson

### Northeast

Becky is a 24-year-old mother of two children, ages three and four. She recently moved to Houston from Brenham, Texas to take care of her ailing grandfather. She applied for a job at Sears in The Woodlands after her move and was hired as a photographer in the portrait department. She has been in the job a couple of months and has done quite well.

Becky's supervisor informed her that Sears will assist her in going back to school. She was also told that there will be a manager's position available later this year for which she will be considered. Her supervisor has recommended her for it. The position will pay up to \$13 an hour. Not only has Becky become successful in her job, but she also has become engaged and soon will marry an electrician.

– Submitted by Nory Angel