



RCD Women's News

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"I did not give up" building on a solid foundation

By Debra Cadet, Solid Foundations Work Experience Co-ordinator - OLMEC

"I have been trying to get a job and now I am really excited, as I did not give up and feel this work experience opportunity will get me into paid work." Says Lara (real name withheld) who has recently been successful in gaining work experience at WAMT (Women and Manual Trades) the national organisation representing tradeswomen in building and construction.

Lara found her work placement through Solid Foundations, a programme run by the charity Olmec

Olmec was established in 2003 as a community investment foundation by Presentation, a social investment agency that provides affordable housing and community regeneration. We work with community organisations and individuals in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to design and deliver innovative projects that act as catalysts for change. We empower communities through our community led approach.

"Michael (Solid Foundations Employment Advisor) helped me with the preparation for the WAMT interview, giving me confidence and guidance" says Lara.

Virna Josianne Tchamba, originally from Cameroon also benefited from a Solid Foundations work experience. She had obtained an MA in International Business from London Metropolitan University in 2006 which included a module on Human Resource Management. Her goal was to move into working for a Human Resources department. After a six month work placement to gain experience, Virna started a paid job as an HR Administrator at Penrose Housing Association. Virna is still working at Penrose a year and a half later.

Speaking about why she chose to volunteer through the Solid Foundations programme Virna said: "They help familiarise you with the labour market by finding you work experience in an organisation and they also provide additional training.

"The work placement helped me gain the skills, experience and confidence I needed to find a job on the open market. I am grateful to Solid Foundations and thank them because I was able to secure a job after the work experience."

Solid Foundations work experience positions are designed to be as real to life as possible. Each step of the process is aimed at bringing people closer to the employment market and increasing their confidence.

Up to 30 three or six month work experience positions are offered per year and they are always looking for new applicants as well as organisations to host positions.

As Virna found, work experience can help make the difference when trying to get back into employment.

If you are interested in finding out more about Solid Foundations and the work experience positions they currently have on offer please visit www.olmec-ec.org.uk or contact **Debra Cadet** on Debra.Cadet@olmec-ec.org.uk or call: **020 7091 9483**.

Funding news

The Schwab and Westheimer Trusts provide educational funding in the form of grants to young asylum seekers and refugees where alternative sources of funding are inadequate. Previous funding has included assistance with course fees, English tuition, computers, childcare, and transport.

See: www.schwabwestheimertrust.org.uk.

The Peter Cruddas Foundation is a grant making Foundation that aims to support charitable works that benefit disadvantaged and disengaged young people. Your organisation must be a registered charity or an organisation/individual supported by a UK charity. Applications can be made any time. See:

www.thepetercruddasfoundation.org/about_us.html.

The Youth of Today Leadership Fund aims to increase the opportunities for young people to lead change in their communities. Grants of up to £20,000 are available for organisations working with young people to scale up their projects to the next level. Deadline: 31 July 2009. See:

www.theyouthoftoday.org/fund-your-dream-project.

Training

Social enterprise and the women's sector

Date: Wednesday 14 October 2009

Time: 9.30am - 3.30pm

Who is it for?

Organisations that want to explore the possibility of earning a trading income

What's it about?

A social enterprise is a business with primarily social aims, whose profits are put back into the organisation or the community it serves. This course will help women's organisations to understand what social enterprise is, how it relates to them and how to take advantage of the range of opportunities on offer.

What will I take away?

- Understanding of what social enterprise is
- Examples of social enterprises and their structures
- Ideas for innovative ways to generate an income

This training is free and open to all women's organisations in London. For more information contact **Samantha**, Development Assistant, on **020 7324 3031** or at: development@wrc.org.uk.

The Testimony Project

The Testimony Project is dedicated to giving a voice to those whose stories would otherwise not be heard – refugee women seeking asylum in the UK. The Testimony Project harnesses the power of the Internet to tell the stories of refugee women who are seeking asylum in the UK today, and to provide them with a source of information, advice and community. For more information about the project, please go to www.testimonyproject.org.



The Women's Charter – a year on

A year ago Asylum Aid launched the Charter of rights of women seeking asylum: a framework of principles aiming to create a gender-sensitive culture within the UK Border Agency. Over the past year the Charter has been endorsed by over 140 organisations including Amnesty International UK, Oxfam, Liberty and Refugee Council. To sign up to the Charter visit:

www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/publications/108/WAN_Issue_84_final_pdf.pdf.

If you would like to submit an article to *RCO Women's News* about your RCO's work, or would like to write about a topical issue, please email: development@refugeecouncil.org.uk.