

Program instills self-help

by Charles N. Brown

Courier Staff Writer

The Community Leadership Development Institute has given a mother coming off welfare hope for a better future.

"You meet so many positive people. It's important to surround yourself with positive people," said Kim Gary, a McKees Rocks mother of three children.

"The first thing it does is gives you self-esteem, then moves on to helping you use new vocabulary words and gives you affirmation.

"(My children) see me. I talk about the class everyday almost. They're excited. They've seen me go from one way to a whole new way."

That's what Pam Heywood, who oversees the program, and other staff members expect the

participants to gain in the 11 month program. The nonprofit institute helps individual become self-sufficient and strengthens families.

"There's a lot of things that lead to self-sufficiency than just getting a job," said Heywood, whose program is funded by the Sanders Task Force and a federal grant. "You have to change the entire thought process and their surroundings. We're dealing with the whole person."

The 17 current students in the institute from the seven Sanders communities of Rankin, Braddock, Duquesne, Clairton, McKees Rocks, Wilkinsburg and Homestead have participated in program such as business preparation, computer training, personal

SEE SELF-HELP A3



PHOTO BY VENETIA PALM

ALL BUSINESS—Aveda Finney, business and economic development case manager for the Community Development Leadership Institute, shows student Veronica Rice a computer program on business development.

new pgh courier

1-17-01

Program instills self-help, strengthens families

CONTINUED FROM A1

and community leadership and vocabulary and communication skills.

They have also taken field trips to enhance their classroom experience. Other projects include working with middle school students at an overnight camp and exposing young people to science.

The students, who receive a stipend of \$8 an hour while in the program, attend class Mondays through Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

One of the programs the students are excited about is the mentor and shadowing experience. They have been linked with companies and individuals through the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania, and representatives from UPMC, PNC Bank and Allegheny County Morgue are among groups that have offered to organize internships

and introduce participants to their work environments.

Ernestine Howard, of McKees Rocks, has been shadowing Cmdr. Gwen Elliot of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police.

Interviewing skills she learned helped land her a job as a nursing assistant, and the hands-on experiences have changed her perspective of the police.

"I was scared with the police," said Howard, who road with police on domestic violence calls and into heavy drug trafficking areas. "But it gave me a chance to see things differently."

Gary, who will complete an internship with St. Clair Associates, administrators of the task force, has been offered a full-time job as an administrative assistant there.

But she requested the company allow her to continue the institute program before starting full time.

Veronica Rice, of Rankin, started in the program in October. Since then, she has learned business preparation, mentoring and how to conduct herself at business functions.

"We do just about everything," said Rice who through the program, secured a part-time job working at a hair salon. "It's a lot of knowledge, as far as the different programs to enhance you. My goal is to become financially independent and to become a business owner in the community to provide jobs for people in the community. I'd like to be a role model."

Heywood said the institute is achieving its goals.

"Students are seeing the value of the program," she said. "We see our flowers starting to bloom now. I noticed a bunch of enthusiastic, talented leaders who needed assistance to bring that talent out."