

# SOAR Career Solutions

Recognize your potential  
Realize your dreams

A Biannual Newsletter

Fall 2009

## SOAR Celebrates Second Chance Act Funding

"At SOAR we believe in second chances," asserts Executive Director Rebecca Ellenson. "Five years ago we had a vision—to create a safer Duluth by giving ex-offenders a second chance to live productive law-abiding lives." The idea was to develop a sustainable, comprehensive, and coordinated re-entry program that would reduce recidivism. In 2005, that idea became a three year pilot project called CORP (Community Offender Re-entry Program).

*"SOAR is part of a national movement to stop the costly 'catch and release' cycle."*

*Rebecca Ellenson,  
SOAR Executive Director*

SOAR developed CORP anticipating that the Second Chance Act would pass in Congress. When the Act finally passed, CORP had already existed for three years as a model program for a city its size. The pilot project results were very positive.\*

This October, the long hoped for renewable federal funding was secured! SOAR is one of the first nonprofits nationwide (of 507 applicants, 36 were selected) to be awarded the Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant.

With this funding, CORP will hire more staff, expand into its own

space across the hall, serve more clients and continue to help create a safer Duluth.

"SOAR is part of a national movement to stop the costly 'catch and release' cycle," explains Ellenson. "We're helping to create systems change in our country."

CORP clients lavish high praise.

"CORP is life changing!"

"If it wasn't for CORP, I'd probably be back in jail."

"At CORP they boost your spirits and show you what's possible."

Now, with federal funding for the expansion of CORP, even more will be possible.

\*see CORP report at [www.SOARCAREERS.org](http://www.SOARCAREERS.org)



CORP staff moves into new space across the hall. Sara Carlson (left) Mentor Coordinator, Krista Olsen (middle) Case Manager, Kim Dowell (right) Program Director.

To learn more visit [www.soarcareers.org](http://www.soarcareers.org)

# From the Director

Four years ago, our staff and board created the following vision statement: SOAR is the employment services leader in the Northland. Our innovative programs serve people at all levels of career and personal development and our collaborative partnerships are an essential community resource.

I am proud to say that we have successfully lived into our vision! We've grown from a fairly self-contained organization to one that partners and collaborates with a vast array of institutions. Some are Lake Superior College, Duluth Workforce Center, The Center for Drug and Alcohol Treatment, MRC Duluth, Adult Learning Center, MN Teen Challenge Northland Campus and CHUM. We are now recognized on a regional, state, and national level (see front page) for our innovative, holistic and personalized approach to providing career services.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes many agencies to help people in poverty secure living wage jobs. With our many collaborators we're working together for the benefit of our clients and, thus, for a stronger, healthier community.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Ellenson  
Executive Director

# SOAR's Wish List

## Office Supplies

Copy paper – 20#/80 brightness  
Flip charts – 27" x 34" paper  
Markers for flip charts  
Markers for dry erase board  
Legal pads  
Postage stamps  
Post-it note pads  
3 x 5 cards  
Gift Certificate to office supply store  
Gift cards to Target, Super One (client incentives)

## Larger Office Items

Wall Brochure racks—clear acrylic  
Computers or laptops—New  
Tri-Fold Display boards  
2GB Flash Drives  
Flip Cam  
Laser pointers  
Rubbermaid Cart with wheels  
Smart Boards—Wireless (2)  
Television—New

*A gift of money to SOAR helps purchase these items.*

## Volunteer

Be a mock interviewer.

Share your expertise as a guest speaker.

Be a CORP mentor.

Help at special events.

Tell a friend—share news about SOAR.



**SOAR thanks United Way of Greater Duluth, Republic Bank and Duluth Grill for generous donations of toiletries during United Way Day of Giving. Pictured with donated items, Melissa Abbett of Republic Bank.**

## Did you know?

You can donate to SOAR online:  
[www.SOARCareers.org](http://www.SOARCareers.org)

"I've gained lots of new skills while working with SOAR. And it's helped me with my attitude. I now try hard at things I want to do."

*Sam, Duluth at Work participant whose life "wasn't going anywhere" before he came to SOAR*

## Duluth at Work: Long Term Support to Lift People Out of Poverty

Stuart, age 53, felt beaten down. He was unable to find work even though he had carpentry skills. Now, as a participant in SOAR's Duluth at Work program, he's received Basic Machine Operator training. He says, "It's given me a better outlook on my future."

At age 25, Sarah came to SOAR with work experience in fast food restaurants. She saw no way out of poverty. Now, as a Duluth at Work participant, she has a 5 year plan which includes job skills training and an AA degree. She says, "I'm on my way to financial stability."

Bob, age 39, came to SOAR unemployed. He'd worked mainly in maintenance for \$6.50-\$8 an hour, and was stuck in poverty. Now, participating in Duluth at Work, he's received his welding certification and has hope for the future. He says, "These programs have opened new doors for me."

Is this the end of the story? No.

SOAR will continue to support these and other highly motivated people who are living in poverty. With Duluth at Work funding, SOAR provides them with three years of customized case management, career development services and training opportunities. The goal is to lift people out of poverty by providing them with enough long term support to make significant and lasting changes in their lives. As one participant says, "This is making my future more solid."



**Caroline learns welding in Duluth at Work training at Lake Superior College.**

## Did you know?

In NE Minnesota . . .

The livable wage for a family of two (one adult, one child) is \$14.15.



The median wage is \$8.50, leaving a gap of \$5.65.



Through Duluth at Work, SOAR is helping to fill this gap.

*"These programs have opened new doors for me."*

*Bob,  
Duluth at Work participant*

"I feel great about my future now that I have more of an education through SOAR. And I'm not done yet. I'm going to Lake Superior College to finish my generals within the next two years."

*Lisa, Duluth at Work participant*

# SOAR Career Solution Workshops

## The Works

*This four-week workshop helps participants discover their career dreams, gain job seeking skills, and learn how to market themselves to get a job they will love.*

*"I rave about this workshop. It helped me be more confident in finding a job."*

*Dan, graduate of The Works*

## Fast Track

*This one-week workshop gives participants the tools to get a job NOW. It includes secrets to a winning job application and a successful interview.*

*"All the help you gave me far exceeded my expectations. I found resume writing, the interest profile, and the Quantified Selling Points most helpful. Thank you so much!"*

*Jen, graduate of Fast Track*

## STEPS

*This one-week pre-employment workshop, based on cognitive psychology, helps participants adopt positive beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors and build confidence and self-esteem.*

*"This class helps you become motivated and reminds you of your own worth."*

*Lee, graduate of STEPS*

## Computer Basics

*This three-week basic computer course helps participants overcome computer anxiety and gain confidence in using computers.*

*"Great class! I learned a lot. Being taught computers is very exciting. Very informative. We'll be able to use this skill for the rest of our lives."*

*Mae, graduate of Computer Basics*

## Information Session

**Mondays — 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

*SOAR provides an Information Session about all workshops and services available. All potential clients are asked to attend. Information Sessions are on Mondays 2:00 -3:00 p.m. For updates check [www.SOARCareers.org](http://www.SOARCareers.org) or call 722-3126.*

## *When are the workshops?*

**STEPS** is offered once a month.

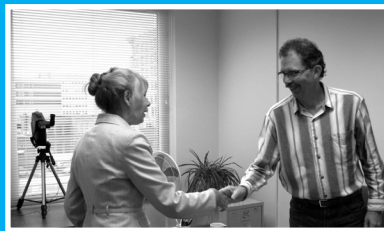
**Computer Basics** is offered once a month.

**The Works** and **Fast Track** are offered on alternating months.

*Call SOAR for upcoming workshop dates at 722-3126.*



Kathy works on possible answers to interview questions in The Works



Kathy (left) meets Frank Jewel for a video taped mock interview in The Works



Kathy (center) celebrating with her instructors, Jason (left) and Amy (right) on Graduation Day of The Works

# Career Explorations: Finding a Career That's a Good Match

"Am I choosing the right career path?" Many SOAR clients ask this question. Now, with funding from NTAR Leadership Center, SOAR has created Career Explorations. It's a program designed to help clients, including those with disabilities, answer that question.

What better way to test your interest than to visit an actual work site or training venue? Clients who are interested in fields in the trades now have that opportunity. Some recent SOAR hosts include: Duluth Pack, Genesis Attachments, Northstar Aerospace, HydroSolutions, Aerostich, and Lake Superior College—to meet instructors in the trades.

Because of these visits, some clients are now considering a new field. Others have eliminated one they thought they wanted. "SOAR believes that people are more likely to succeed when they find career paths they truly love," says Marya Farrell, the coordinator of the program. Career Explorations is designed to help clients find that path.

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*"SOAR believes that people are more likely to succeed when they find career paths they truly love."*

*Marya Farrell, Outreach Specialist*

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Career Exploration group watches Dan LaTour attaching rivets onto a bag at Duluth Pack



Career Exploration participants feel the heat from a recent weld on a mobile shear at Genesis Attachments.

*"I loved the tours and seeing what is actually done in that work place—a firsthand being-there-at-the-factory experience."*

*Nancy, Career Explorations participant*

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## 2009 SOAR Staff



SOAR Staff, back row: Jason Beckman, Alexis Carlson, David Mattson, Patti Quirk.  
Front row: Krista Olsen, Rebecca Ellenson, Amy Westbrook, Cathy Lasley,  
Linda Glaser, Kim Dowell.

"SOAR gives people like me a future and hope."

*Michel, graduate of Fast Track*

"SOAR is a great place to help people connect with their abilities."

*Matthew, graduate of The Works*

"We need to have work as the centerpiece for any social policy."

*President Barack Obama*

