

Meet Chalamar Miller

Chalamar Miller has seen the rough side of life since a very young age. But, thanks to her personal hard work and some guidance from Jacob's Ladder Job Center, Inc., her future is a bright one.



Chalamar at work

A Connecticut native, Chalamar and her siblings were removed from their parents' home when Chalamar was only ten years old. "My mother is schizophrenic and both my parents had become addicted to crack," she says sadly. "One of my older siblings called the Division of Children and Families (DCF) after we had a violent encounter with someone my parents owed money to."

From the age of ten on, Chalamar and her brother lived in a series of foster homes. Most of the foster families had existing children, so Chalamar and her brother were not really priorities. "I felt like we were taken in as a way for the families to earn extra income to spend on themselves and their children," she says. "One family we lived with even put a lock on their refrigerator so we wouldn't have any access to the food!"

Upon graduating from high school, Chalamar entered the University of Connecticut and continued to receive support from DCF. She enjoyed college, but felt uncomfortable in the predominately white environment.

In her sophomore year of college, Chalamar met a man and fell in love. Unfortunately for her, he was not a good man. Chalamar dropped out of college, so she no longer qualified for help from DCF. At the age of 20, she found herself roaming the city streets with her

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Message from the Executive Director



Steffi Travis

The deadline for writing this article was past due, but my temples throbbed, my mind was jumbled with thoughts of pressing deadlines, year end reports, fundraising issues, a hectic holiday schedule, travel plans and I had writer's block. Then my friend Susan called and asked, "How are things going?" I responded with a litany of complaints about how I wasn't ready for the holidays.

"You sound so anxious...so self-absorbed. Where is God in your life today, Steffi?" was Susan's response. I mumbled something about missing church for two weeks because of out of town travels. Her response was quick and gently reproachful. "I didn't ask about your church attendance," she continued. "It sounds like your priorities are out of whack. Let's pray, now." So over the unprotected AT&T lines, Susan prayed for me, my family and my work. She ended the conversation with praise to our Lord for loving me so unconditionally. After the call, I punched the Do Not Disturb button on my intercom line, closed the office door, popped in a favorite CD of hymns and plopped into my corner chair. I opened my bible, read and prayed. In fifteen minutes I was transformed. My headache disappeared, my spirits were lifted and there was a song in my heart. There was also a story to share.

I truly believe that God spoke to Susan and she called to encourage me so I could communicate His Love to you.

We have crossed into a new year bringing with us new resolutions for personal improvement and hopes for a better tomorrow. I say to all, let us "be still and know God" each day, each week throughout the year so we know His will for each of us. We will be better able to disciple friends, family members and even strangers.

Godspeed,

Steffi

Letter from the Board Chair

First, let me say how excited I am about the coming year. If the economy continues to improve, there will be even more job opportunities for our clients.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not mention we would be in no position to take advantage of this expected increase in economic activity had Downie Saussy not lead this organization so capably over the last two years. Downie was asked to lead Jacob's Ladder at a time when



Will Hardison

we had experienced success, but were now facing skyrocketing unemployment and increased numbers of clients with complex problems. Under his leadership, Downie found the right people and implemented the right processes which enabled Jacob's Ladder to set new placement records almost every month. Everyone associated with Jacob's Ladder has benefited greatly from Downie's enthusiasm for and passionate commitment to this organization. We are fortunate Downie will continue to serve Jacob's Ladder as a member of our Advisory Council. THANK YOU DOWNIE!

In addition, I want everyone who has made an investment in Jacobs Ladder to know our staff of four and our legion of volunteers have performed exceptionally well over the past year. Our primary performance measure is what we term our hire rate percentage. In 2003, our hire rate percentage was 57%, a record to date. This means we helped a total of 148 people find jobs.

As I have mentioned to so many of you in my written appeals, we are very proud of our success but want to do even better. Because we do not charge fees for our services, we count on your continuing financial support to help move our clients from welfare to work. Thank you again for helping us help those who need it most.

I wish you a safe and prosperous 2004.

Respectfully,
Will Hardison



4 Business Buddies

Spotlight on Dennis Drake

When speaking about Jacob's Ladder Job Center, Inc. to potential employers, Program Coordinator Archie Gibson stresses the need for compassion, understanding and role-modeling. "Many of our clients have had unstable work histories and lives," he states. "Employers need to have expectations of the clients they employ, but also be prepared to offer guidance to them as well."

One such exemplary employer is Dennis Drake of Morrison Healthcare (a division of food-service giant Compass Group), who heads up food service at Presbyterian Hospital in Matthews.

As an involved member of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church, Dennis knew about Jacob's Ladder through the church newsletter and his participation in the church choir (choir director Smitty Flynn is on Jacob's Ladder's Board). Dennis realized that he had the opportunity to hire clients and help them turn their lives around.

To date, Dennis has given three clients a "hand up" by hiring them to work for him. Two of those clients had criminal backgrounds, making them among the hardest clients to place.

"I believe in giving people a second chance," says Dennis. "Jacob's Ladder sent me quality people who were determined to turn their lives around. I am pleased to say that all three of my Jacob's Ladder folks are doing great. I plan to hire more and I encourage my counterparts at the other hospitals to do the same."

If you employ entry-level workers, or know someone who does, please contact Archie Gibson, Program Coordinator, at 704.332.5822.



Dennis Drake and Archie Gibson

Client Connection

The Roger Jiles Story

Roger Jiles, a forty-four-year-old high school graduate, came to Charlotte from Detroit in June 2003. Like many, he was lured here by Charlotte's strong economy, temperate climate and family-friendly atmosphere. He says another reason he picked Charlotte was because he "found the Lord" here while visiting with a friend.

He arrived in Charlotte alone and with no place to live and came to Jacob's Ladder for assistance with his job search.

Staff and volunteers were impressed with Roger's drive, and immediately recommended he apply for a job at Krispy Kreme on Woodlawn Road. Krispy Kreme had hired Jacob's Ladder's clients before and were pleased with their work performance.

After being coached on interviewing skills and getting his resume done at Jacob's Ladder, Roger applied for the job and was hired on the spot! January 4, 2004 marked six months of employment for Roger. He now has a place to live and a job he loves.

"Working makes all the difference," he says. "I love my job and they are talking about giving me a promotion. I work hard and am proud to do so."

Roger has a strong work ethic and great skills - but the helping hand from Jacob's Ladder helped him go from homeless to self-sufficient.



Archie Gibson and Roger Giles

Photo



Clients waiting at bus stop



Volunteer Breakfast



Success Seminar: Steven McClure, Director of Human Resources, CPCC

Album



Archie Gibson and Sammy Hicks,
Bank of America African-American
Networking Initiative



Women of Achievement Xmas Party



National Women of Achievement with Jacob's
Ladder clients at Clothing Closet event



Noble's Gives Thanks with Jacobs Ladder

This past Thanksgiving Chef Jimmy Noble and his culinary team at Noble's Restaurant did what they enjoy most, "serving people and serving their community." On Thursday, November 27th, the Noble's team along with the staff of Jacob's Ladder Job Center, Inc. and community volunteers served a traditional Thanksgiving dinner at Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church. Over 200 Belmont/Piedmont Courts residents were treated to a gourmet meal.

Chef Noble is continuing the tradition he established three years ago at his original Restaurant J. Basul Noble in High Point. His other restaurants: Basil's in Greensboro and Noble's Grille in Winston Salem also provided free Thanksgiving meals, serving more than 1,400 North Carolina residents a nourishing Thanksgiving Day dinner.

An ordained minister at St. Peter's World Outreach Center in Winston Salem, Jimmy believes that both his business profession and his faith can be combined to help others on America's day of giving thanks. "God has generously blessed me, my family and my restaurant family. I am honored to have the opportunity to share those blessings with others in my community."



Chef Jimmy Noble and Staff

Noble's Restaurant partnered with the Seigle Avenue community earlier last year to host its first annual "We Are Family" fundraiser. More than \$100,000 was raised to help projects at Seigle Avenue Preschool, Seigle Avenue Partners and Jacob's Ladder Job Center. The second annual gala is planned for March 25, 2004 and will be led by co-chairs Pam DeRamus and Jill Flynn.

Upcoming Events at Jacob's Ladder

Thursday, January 29

Community Resource Fair

Hope Building

600 Seigle Avenue

An event for volunteers to learn about available community resources.

Saturday, February 28

Myers Park Presbyterian Church Service Saturday

JLJC Office

832 Seigle Avenue

Volunteers from Myers Park Presbyterian will come to the Center to work with clients and on client services.

Thursday, March 25

We are the Seigle Family

Noble's Restaurant

A fundraiser benefitting Jacob's Ladder, Seigle Ave. Preschool and Seigle Ave. Partners.

Current Jacob's Ladder Needs

- Volunteers with availability Mon, Tues, Wed or Thurs mornings to do client assessments and mock interviews
- Photography and photo processing
- Financial contributions to help pay for internet access for clients, bus passes, work clothing for employed clients, client incentives and resume paper
- Food for client events
- Coffee and coffee supplies (sugar, half and half, cups, stirrers)
- ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS FOR OUR CLIENTS



boyfriend looking for a place to sleep and food to eat. When their relationship began to sour, Chalamar called a sister who lived in Charlotte and came down to live with her in the spring of 2003.

Chalamar and her sister were both unemployed, although her sister receives some disability income. Money was tight, the apartment small and tempers began to flair. Chalamar was forced to leave her sister's home and, with nowhere else to go, she began living at the Salvation Army's Women's Shelter. It was there that she heard about Jacob's Ladder.

Wanting to turn her life around, Chalamar became a Jacob's Ladder client. She met with volunteers Will Graves and Barbara Braley. She liked the program and was grateful for the support. She began volunteering in the office to sharpen her skills while she searched for a job. The entire staff was impressed by her drive and her work ethic. When a position at Jacob's Ladder became available, Chalamar was offered the position of administrative assistant.

Once unemployed and living in the Women's Shelter, Chalamar now has a rewarding job and has just moved into her first apartment! "I am so thankful that Jacob's Ladder helped me turn my life around. I am going to finish my undergraduate degree and hope to get an MBA. I don't think I could have gotten to this point without the love and support of the staff and volunteers at Jacob's Ladder."

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Our Goals, With Your Help

Jacob's Ladder has become a household word in our community. We must raise \$270,000 a year in order to meet our expenses and provide services to a growing number of clients. To continue our successful work helping people find meaningful employment, we ask for your support.

- \$500
- \$250
- \$150
- \$60 (6 Week Bus Pass for One Client)
- Other _____

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 E-MailAddress: _____
 Phone Number: _____



Thank You For Your Help.

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Jacob's Ladder Job Center, Inc. is a faith-based non-profit organization dedicated to helping unemployed and underemployed individuals to find and keep living wage jobs, one step at a time.

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