

## FIRN CLIENT STORIES

### Employment Counseling

**“Learning the System”.** Although “Ike” was an experienced small shop owner for 7 years in Liberia, he risked losing interview opportunities or alienating employers due to his unfamiliarity with American basic job search formalities. He had been late to an interview with a local retailer after relying on public transportation without understanding the area’s transit system and capabilities. Ike received coaching on how to call and speak with an employer about a job, reschedule an interview and present his skills. He also learned how to obtain HoCo transit information via the phone and online, select job leads within a reasonable geographic area, and find opportunities near bus routes. Once familiar with the bus system, Ike learned about several job openings from friends and family, successfully interviewed with a local assisted living facility, and landed a new job there as a custodian earning \$10 per hour in July 2007 – only two months after immigrating to the U.S.

**Transitioning to a New Field.** “Fay” enrolled in the FIRN New Live, New Jobs program in April 2007, seeking assistance in transitioning from her field of Certified Nursing Assistant. A part-time caregiver for the elderly, she had left a full time supervisory position after 11 years because late work hours conflicted with her responsibilities as a single parent. The coach helped Fay to outline a plan of action, coached her over several months about the feasibility of leaving her current field and training in another, and referred her to outside community services (Workforce Center, Employment and Training) to research options for re-training. Fay decided to seek work in an Allied Health-related field with standard hours, in order to retain her salary level and meet the needs of her family. Fay obtained part-time employment (30 hours/week) at \$10.50 hour with a local nonprofit organization in August 2007 and, following training, became a full-time employee with benefits in October. During her training, she also became recertified as a medicine aide, which will give her latitude at her new workplace.

**First Job After College.** “Mary” was referred to the FIRN New Live, New Jobs program in late May 2006 by a member of her church for help in finding a job. She had arrived in the U.S. in 1999 from Cameroon and was a recent graduate from a college in the U.S. with a BA in Accounting. Based on her intake, we enrolled her in the COEP Employment Connection, Career Management Program, which gave her access to the Virtual Career Center (VCC). But first she needed to strengthen her resume. Working with her career coach, Mary significantly improved her resume and honed her job searching techniques. Her job coach also referred her to Success In Style, where she received four interview outfits. A single parent, she also received coaching on childcare, including building a support system for backup childcare. She already had an appointment to apply for childcare vouchers through the County. In August 2007, she accepted a “temporary-to-permanent” position in the Accounts Receivable Department of an area hospital.