

45TH ANNUAL GRADUATION AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY

DISTRICT 1199C  
**Training &  
Upgrading  
Fund**



# CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER

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## TRIUMPH OF EDUCATION

Eleven years ago, Festina Davies migrated from war-torn, recession-bound Sierra Leone with one dream — to achieve the highest education possible.

Now, thanks to District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund and the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199C, she has a Bachelor's degree from Holy Family University, enroute to a Master's. The union and the Fund helped her gain her GED, her Certified Nurse Aide training, a union job and a college scholarship, plus her citizenship. "It was a dream come true," she said.

When District 1199C celebrates the Triumph of Education at its 45th Annual Graduation and Recognition Ceremony June 5, it celebrates triumphs like Davies'. The stories of each of the 289 graduates — honored because they've reached significant milestones in their education — resonate and inspire.

The celebration begins on Broad Street as joyful graduates, in caps, gowns and stoles, march proudly to the Kimmel Center waving the union's yellow Solidarity flag.

There, all will join to sing "Lift Every Voice," led by Program Manager Dawn Johnson. Mayor Jim Ken-

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*Union President Henry Nicholas, (from left), Executive Vice President Chris Woods and Union Delegate Jerome Richardson lead an earlier procession of jubilant graduates.*



# DEAR TRAINING FUND COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS,

Lift every voice and sing – that’s how the anthem begins, and that’s how we begin this letter to you.

This year, the District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund celebrates its 45th birthday. How better to celebrate than our annual Triumph of Education ceremony?

On June 5, we will truly lift every voice, and sing of the accomplishments of our union, our students, our members and our friends.

Yes, many have known the stony road, the weary years, the silent fears – maybe even the days when hope, unborn, had died. Yet, on this day, we show that we can march on – and we will march on – till victory is won. We have proven that we can tread a path, despite weary feet, from a gloomy past. We know that we can sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.

We believe in the Triumph of Education. We’ll never forget the sacrifices we’ve made, and those made by our ancestors, friends and family, so we could march in triumph to celebrate our achievements.

And so, with congratulations and thanks, we will, as Co-Chairs and Executive Director of the Training Fund, join you, our honorees, in letting our rejoicing rise. Together, in solidarity, we’ll stand to face the sun of our new day, now begun.



**CHERYL FELDMAN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
TRAINING &  
UPGRADING FUND



**HENRY NICHOLAS**  
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNION OF  
HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE  
EMPLOYEES, DISTRICT 1199C;  
CO-CHAIR, TRAINING &  
UPGRADING FUND



**CHERYL WHITFIELD**  
VICE PRESIDENT,  
HUMAN RESOURCES, INGLIS;  
CO-CHAIR TRAINING &  
UPGRADING FUND

## EVENTS

### Enrollment open

Free high school equivalency, high school refresher and pre-college classes begin July 15. To enroll, individuals must be assessed by June 14. Reserve about three hours to complete the assessment, offered on a first-come, first-served basis four days a week. Admission for LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) training is open now with free pre-nursing classes. Free ESL (English as a Second Language) Civics and Workforce Classes begin Sept. 9, with assessments required by Aug. 19. Call 215-568-2220 for more information, including assessment dates and times.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD APPRENTICESHIPS EXPAND STATEWIDE

Building on its pioneering work establishing apprenticeships for early childhood educators in Philadelphia, District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund will develop and administer similar programs statewide.

“The children are our future and we have to prepare them to be successful in life,” Training Fund Executive Director Cheryl Feldman said.

In March, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf awarded \$300,000 to the Training Fund to seed the development of regional hubs, all part of the new Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Ambassador Network. The grant is part of the governor’s \$30 million PAsmart policy initiative, secured to invest in education and workforce

development in Pennsylvania’s workers.

At the same time, the William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia renewed its commitment to early childhood education in the region with an \$800,000 grant to enroll new students in the Training Fund’s apprenticeship program in partnership with the Community College of Philadelphia.

Apprenticeship is a new workforce strategy for early childhood educators, and one that has been enthusiastically embraced statewide and nationally. Hailed as a “game changer,” apprenticeships allow early childhood teachers to advance their education without taking on unsustainable student debt. Apprenticeships reward classroom learning, on-the-job experience and mentoring with college credits.

The Ambassador hubs, to be located across the state, will establish ECE Apprenticeship programs for the entry-level Child Development Associate (CDA) credential as well as for Associate and Bachelor’s degrees, including teaching certification.

“It’s taking the work we’ve done here and replicating it statewide,” Feldman said. “We’re really attempting to impact the workforce through competency-based education, coaching and mentoring in an accelerated degree program to provide higher wages throughout the apprenticeship.”

Statewide partners include community colleges, among them Delaware County Community College. Area workforce boards, including Philadelphia Works Inc., are also partners.

# AT EPISCOPAL, 1199C MEMBERS BATTLE DRUG ADDICTION AT ITS EPICENTER

Sometimes work is personal.

It is for Yolanda Bennett, 42, whose marriage dissolved, in part, over her former husband's addiction issues.

It is for Mosley, 48, who watched his grandmother settle into a debilitating depression after her son – Mosley's uncle -- died from an overdose of crack cocaine.

"Addictions don't just hurt the person that's addicted. It's the whole family," Bennett said.

Bennett and Mosley have long worked as mental health technicians at Temple University Hospital's Episcopal campus, Temple's inpatient psychiatric hospital and main behavioral health location.

What's new for them is advanced training to become certified associate addiction counselors, a program also new to the District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund. The program matters at Episcopal, which has seen its patient census shifting from those with traditional psychiatric diagnoses, such as schizophrenia, to those in crisis brought on by drug and alcohol addiction.

"We're in the epicenter of the epidemic," said Danny Rivera, drug and alcohol clinical supervisor at Episcopal. One infamous tent city created by people struggling with addictions grew up around the corner from Episcopal near Kensington and Lehigh Avenues.

Organized by the Training Fund, the program involves coursework provided by Penn State Abington and 200 to 300 hours of on-the-job supervision on professional responsibilities, assessment, treatment planning and counseling conducted by Episcopal substance abuse and social work specialists. After that, trainees can sit for Pennsylvania's certification examination. Bennett and Mosley will be tested next spring.

A similar District 1199C program, the Addiction Counselor Apprenticeship, was also launched this spring in partnership with Penn State Abington. That program links classwork and on-the-job training, while providing pay raises throughout the apprenticeship as competencies increase.

At Episcopal, Bennett and Mosley's work has already had an impact on the hospital, deepening its expertise and commitment to care for patients suffering from addiction.

From a human resource perspective, Clara Galati, associate hospital direc-



Advanced addiction training is helping Episcopal Hospital help the community, agree Danny Rivera, drug and alcohol clinical supervisor, left; Clara Galati, associate hospital director for human resources, and Darryl Mosley, a mental health technician in training as a certified associate addiction counselor.



District Council 1199C union member Yolanda Bennett, a mental health technician, is training to become a certified associate addiction counselor.

tor for human resources at Temple University Hospital's Episcopal campus, sees the upside. "We want our employees to be the best trained and educated. People want to be excellent at what they do. Then they feel engaged and see the importance of their work."

Galati finds it rewarding to watch Mosley and Bennett advance. "They already were stellar employees. Now we're adding to their skill set," she said. "District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund has had a real impact on people's lives."

Mosley and Bennett are members of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199C, which operates the Training Fund with employers like Temple. The union's recent Temple/Episcopal contract includes a \$1,000 bonus for completing the certification.

"We have a great labor relationship with Temple and Episcopal," said John Hundzynski, executive vice president of the union. "We call them partners."

Bennett said the training taught her not to take addiction personally, an important lesson given her life situation. She now has the requisite distance to care for patients with knowledge and compassion.

"I think it's one of the best things we have," Mosley said. "It's not just for my benefit. It's for the benefit of my family, my community and my employer. I'm winning all the way around."

## TRIUMPH OF EDUCATION

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ney, 1199C Executive Vice President Chris Woods, and Training Fund Co-Chair Cheryl Whitfield will welcome the group.

State Representative Joanna E. McClinton (191st), a longtime friend of the Fund, will deliver the keynote address.

National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees 1199C President Henry Nicholas and Nancy York, Director of the Nursing Department and Chief Administrative Office of the Health & Technology Training Institute (HTTI), will present State Senator Vincent Hughes (7th) with the Paul Leroy Robeson Award. It honors Hughes' advocacy and focus on education, health care, mental health in the African American community, poverty and reentry. Training Fund Executive Director Cheryl Feldman will commend the Fund's employer partners as well as faculty and staff; Program Manager Sarah Robbins will present awards to students, and 1199C Consultant Harriet Smith will bestow the esteemed Patricia Copeland Award on a student who exemplifies the best qualities of nursing. A tribute and an award to beloved union organizer and leader Darlene Lawrence will follow.

Finally, it's time for each graduate to receive the honor so richly deserved. Presenting diplomas and certificates will be Program Directors Jim Keller and Georgia Kioukis as well as District 1199C Executive Vice President John Hundzyski, with names read by Employer Engagement and Retention Specialist Sherette Campbell.

## PRAYER PLUS ALGEBRA EQUALS HOPE

By the time Geraldine "Gerrie" Sicinski, 82, rises to give the invocation at graduation, she'll know whether her own prayer has been answered.

Did she or didn't she pass the mathematics part of the high school equivalency test? For Sicinski, who has already conquered the reading, language arts, social studies and science tests, that

vexing mathematics exam remains last obstacle between her and the high school diploma she's been missing since she dropped out of St. Hubert High School for Girls in the 11th grade.

Sicinski didn't quit high school out of economic necessity — her reasons amounted to immaturity and societal expectations for women. Women, Sicinski said, were expected to work a while, marry

and have a family. Education wasn't paramount. Someone offered her a job, so she left school to draw a pay check. "I wanted the nice clothes," she said.

As expected, Sicinski married, had a family and kept working, earning promotions. Then she retired. "It was a dull existence, to tell you the truth," she said. "I was bored." To pass the time, she searched online for places to pursue her high school diploma. "It was the hand of God that brought me to 1199C."

The Fund opened a new world of diversity to Sicinski, who lived her entire life in Northeast Philadelphia. She found herself inspired by the stories of her classmates, many of them immigrants struggling to adjust to life in a new land. Sicinski's mind opened. She became more confident and independent. At the Fund, staff and teachers offered support and extra coaching — a must for Algebra.

"Pursue your dream," Sicinski advises older adults. "Use your brain. You have a lot of life experience. You still have a lot to offer."



*Geraldine "Gerrie" Sicinski, right, gets last-minute mathematics coaching from District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund instructor Margaret Bush.*

## FIGHTING FOR AN EDUCATION

When unions work well, they work because union members care enough about the union to fight for it and with it.

That's a lesson Kelly Vample learned early, and it's because she fought that she recently earned her Bachelor's degree from Temple University and the honorary position as ceremony leader for District 1199C's 45th annual Graduation and Recognition Ceremony on June 5.

Growing up, Vample dreamed of being a lawyer — she had a strong sense of believing "what was fair was fair."



*Kelly Vample*

A high school pregnancy put that dream on hold, but it didn't stop Vample's relentless passion for advocating.

With college out of the question, Vample went to work. Eventually, Temple University Hospital hired her as a clerk, with her unit represented by the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199C.

It was a good union, particularly because the union and its employer partners, including Temple, had funded the District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund. To Vample, it seemed like a promising path to her future — the union offered scholarships to members heading to college.

But there was a problem. The union contract did not include the Training & Upgrading Fund for clerical employees. So, Vample strapped on her advocate gloves and started pushing.

Active in the union, she pushed its leadership to include her fellow clerical workers in Training Fund funding at bargaining. At work, she pushed her employer to go along.

"We fought, and we pushed, and we pushed, and we got it included in the 2012 contract," Vample said, "That was the highlight of my career as a union delegate."

Meanwhile, another push, this time personal. Vample persevered in her studies, which she began in 2010, even before her union campaign.

As she advanced, Training Fund staffers offered support and counseling. Vample landed a \$20,000 James Ryan union scholarship so she could take an unpaid leave from her job to complete her health-care information management degree.

When Vample graduated from Temple on May 10, her daughter from that long-ago pregnancy was there to cheer her mother on.

At the 1199C Triumph of Education ceremony, Vample will share the stage with District 1199C President Henry Nicholas.

"His vision was that the average working person should be able to have a way to educate and upgrade themselves, whether it's for certificates, diplomas or GEDs," Vample said, lauding Nicholas' ability "to foresee what the working person needs to advance in the working world."

District 1199C, she said, "is a gem of union."

And Vample, well, she's a gem of a union member.