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Training Program Makes Running A Day Care Kids' Play

By Bill Egbert



She makes it look like child's play

Donna Clark, a former executive assistant started her University Heights home-based day care center in 2004 with help from the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. after she was laid off. WHEDCo has helped train more than 400 women as day care providers.

Photo by David Handschuh

WITH BUDGETS tightening and jobs scarce, a Bronx nonprofit is helping women learn how to start their own businesses as home-based day care providers.

“A lot of people don’t realize that this is a career choice” said Diana Perez, director of home-based child care services for the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corp. which trains about 400 women a year as day care providers.

Some 180 of those are now in WHEDCo’s direct network, caring for more than 1,000 children each day and generating revenues of more than \$6 million a year.

“I learned so much from WHEDCo” said Donna Clark who worked as an executive assistant for 25 years until she was laid off. She went to WHEDCo for training and started her own child-care business in 2004.

The state requires 30 hours of training to become a registered day care provider including knowledge of extensive health and safety rules.

“There are 16 steps to change a diaper,” said Clark. “Whenever you work with food, you always have to wear gloves. Every time you wipe a child’s nose, you have to wash your hands.” Clark returns to WHEDCo every two years for another 30 hours of state-required training.



Donna Clark opened her home-based day care center on Grand Ave. in University Heights in 2004 after receiving training from the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. Photo by David Handschuh

Nadine Barbosa, 37, who recently joined WHEDCo's program, was surprised at the extent of the training she received. "I didn't know it would be so difficult and involved," she said. After she registers as a Family Day Care provider—who is allowed to care for up to six children by herself—Barbosa hopes to become licensed as a Group Day Care provider caring for up to 14 children with an assistant. "I plan on doing this out of my home for a year," Barbosa said. "Then I hope to open a location with an assistant."

The training WHEDCo offers also will help her expand her business with classes in tax filing, reading contracts, recordkeeping and other business skills. WHEDCo also provides a network for top graduates that maintains standards through site visits, helps facilitate payment for city-subsidized care, and refers women who need child care.

Though there are fees for the training, WHEDCo charges on a sliding scale, and provides financial aid. The state also reimburses about half of the fees after the course is completed.

For more information contact WHEDCo at (718) 839-1100.

wegbert@nydailynews.com