



Focusing
Philanthropy

Jewish Vocational Services MetroWest Diligence Trip Report Newark, NJ November 15, 2022

Program Visited

- Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) MetroWest in Newark

Focusing Philanthropy Staff

- Teresa Burton

JVS MetroWest Staff

- Michael Andreas, CEO
- Hetal Narciso, Chief Operating Officer
- Jane Eliasof, Chief Development Officer
- Vann Holland, Executive Director Workforce Development
- Ken Peskin, Board President
- Mort Bunis, former Board Member
- Genevieve Marie Louis, Instructor

Executive Summary

Teresa Burton visited JVS MetroWest in Newark, New Jersey on November 15, 2022. The purpose of the visit was to tour the site for first time, meet staff and students, and observe a class.

Background

Founded in 1939, JVS MetroWest in Newark is a comprehensive health and human service organization serving the diverse population of Newark, New Jersey and the adjacent areas of East Orange, Irvington and Montclair. People served include adults with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (31.43%); immigrants and refugees from around the world (30%); low-income adults who need remedial education (12.86%); and unemployed/under-employed jobseekers from all walks of life (25.71%). Until recently, they did not offer job training courses aimed at certifying individuals to go directly into healthcare jobs. Last year, in partnership with CVS and Focusing Philanthropy, JVS adapted the curriculum used in Boston to create a 10-week pharmacy technician course.

Program Updates & Challenges

The first cohort of students graduated from the 10-week course in July. The second cohort, which is currently in class, graduates in a week. The cost per student ranges from \$5,000 to \$6,000 and totals approximately \$50,000 per cohort. The hourly wage of recent graduates has averaged \$18 per hour.

JVS students have a tough set of challenges, especially transportation. To help students, JVS offers bus cards, a Chromebook, and a \$750 stipend. In the current class, one student is living in a homeless shelter and JVS is working with her to help her find long-term housing. JVS is also considering offering an evening class to help moms deal with the lack of access to childcare.

Classroom Observation

I observed the current class of 6 students, all women. One student, Ms. Eubanks, lost her job during Covid and learned about the class on Facebook. Another student was a retiree who needs to keep working to support herself. Monica is a 50-year-old immigrant from Ecuador. She came to the US at 18 having worked as a nutritionist. Unfortunately, obtaining the same certification in the US was too expensive and she was worked dead-end jobs for many years. Last year, she joined the pharmacy tech class, studied English, and was the class valedictorian. She now works in a CVS store in West Caldwell.



CVS Pharmacy Technician Training

The instructor of the class is also a source of inspiration to her students. Genevieve Marie Louis, put herself through school by working in pharmacies and has taught pharmacy education for 12 years. She is studying for a master's degree in clinical pharmacology.

Expansion Plan

Currently, CVS does not pay for the program as it does in Boston. In order to grow and center the program in the local community, CVS is partnering with Aetna Insurance to invest \$2 million to convert a nearby Baptist church building into a Workforce Innovation Training Center (WITC). The new location is set to open in July and will have classrooms, a mock CVS store, and pharmacy. In the facility, JVS project I can serve 200 people per year. The facility will also offer childcare, ESL classes, literacy, career counseling, and services for youth.

Staff stressed the importance of locating the classrooms at the local church as a way to foster trust with the community. As a group, church leaders, JVS staff, and local leaders will provide outreach to attract students and provide an array of services including a food pantry and clothing.

The JVS Board is optimistic that the program will continue to grow to serve other types of healthcare employers. Several board members are part of, or have contacts at, local hospitals who have expressed an interest in hiring graduates as well.

There is also strong employer demand for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA). JVS plans to start by offering a home health aid course and then add a CNA course the following year.

Key Observations

Although the healthcare training courses are new, it was clear that the JVS staff and board are more than qualified to expand their job training offerings into the sector. The staff and board were a collegial group who were all excited about the new program and the potential for expansion. The students I met were engaged in their class, comfortable asking questions, and proud of their decision to invest in themselves. Although the curriculum is generally the same as the Boston program, it has been adapted by staff and Newark employers to reflect local differences. Without that, local leadership might not trust that the course met their needs. According to staff, the hiring pharmacies have provided positive feedback about the program graduates. Most importantly, they are converting them from part-time employees to full-time employees after successful try-out periods.



*Teresa Burton & CEO Michael Andreas
next to FP plaque*