

AN EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT  
STUDENTS AT THE NTC WAUSAU, WISCONSIN SALVATION ARMY  
LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

By

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ABSTRACT

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<u>An Evaluation of the Training and Development of Adult Students at the NTC</u>			
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This study evaluates the NorthCentral Technical College Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) adult training and development program and its usage of technology. This center is one of the many adult basic education training and development learning resource center sites of the NorthCentral Technical College (NTC). NorthCentral Technical College utilizes a room, rent-free, at the Salvation Army to provide training and development for those adults who require basic education skills, high school diplomas or job skills. The college provides the trainers, technology and materials. The program is funded by NorthCentral Technical College and grants from community foundations. Adults are referred to this program from an array of community groups including the Salvation Army, Transitional Living Center, the Marathon County

Jail, North Central Health Care Facility and employers who are aware of the NTC SA LRC. Training is conducted in a positive environment focused on student success.

Individual training and development plans are designed by the center director to meet the training and development needs for each student. First, the director arranges assessment testing, followed by a discussion with the student on their goals and then a tailored training and development plan for that student is created. The resulting plan guides the student to meet their educational goals by helping the student understand the relationship between their training goals and their future work opportunities. Two methods of training delivery are used: one-on-one and computer-based training.

Technology plays an important role in the training at the NTC SA LRC. The students are encouraged to complete additional job training such as Word or Excel, apprenticeships, two or four-year colleges or other courses such as commercial driver's licensing. Successful students take responsibility to follow their tailored training and development program plan. Training Center staff and tutors establish a one-to-one relationship with their students to keep that interest. Recognition ceremonies are held twice a year to celebrate student successes. The students take great pride in their accomplishments.

Occasionally there are students who drop out of the program, but they are not forgotten. These students are contacted by the support staff and encouraged to return. Many respond to the calls, return and complete their program. Students know that the non-judgmental staff cares enough to be concerned about their education and success.

This research paper presents the evaluation of the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource program and its impact on the students, the staff and the community.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center Overview

Adult students face numerous training and development challenges in this ever-changing fast paced world. Adults who have not completed high school or have experienced social or physical problems face a unique set of barriers that may impede their opportunities to learn. For these individuals, a learning resource center exists that does not judge a person's past, but encourages their future. This paper evaluates the training and development of adult students at the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center.

Located in Wausau, Wisconsin, the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center is part of the NorthCentral Technical College learning resource system consisting of eleven outreach centers, six jail learning centers and one centrally located center at NorthCentral Technical College. This paper focuses on the Salvation Army site.

The NTC Wausau Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) has a unique presence in the Wausau, Wisconsin community. The Salvation Army's mission is to aid those who are in trouble. NorthCentral Technical College's mission is to facilitate training of the workforce. Working together, the Salvation Army and NorthCentral Technical College established a training and development program in a Salvation Army building. These program sites are called learning resource centers. Adults are drawn to the SA LRC program in part, because of the non-judgmental staff and volunteers who create a positive learning environment for the students. Here the adult students are helped to identify their goals and reach them. The NTC Salvation

Army Learning Resource Center focuses on: adult basic education, high school equivalency diplomas and general workplace skills including word processing and spreadsheets.

Various community groups and employers, who work with individuals with special needs, refer adults to the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) program. Those referring students to the center are:

1. Salvation Army personnel
2. Transitional Living Center director
3. Marathon County Health Care Center AODA Counselors

All students are welcomed to the center by the director. Using assessment tools the director evaluates the student's educational level. Based on this assessment and discussions with the student on their educational history, their learning style and goals, a tailored training program is designed for each student's development. Program delivery methods are either one-on-one or computer-based training.

Many students attending the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) have one or more barriers to learning. These barriers may be in socialization skills, learning disabilities and health problems.

#### Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the training and development of the students at the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center.

#### Research Objectives

This study will focus on two primary objectives:

1. Evaluate the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center training and development program and its effectiveness in relationship to student success.
2. Determine the role technology plays in the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program.

These objectives are important because successful students become employable and self-sufficient. Community resources are then available for the next person who may require them. Student training is primarily one-on-one training or computer-based training.

Technology at the Center plays a major part in the training program. Improving PC performance utilization at the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center offers an opportunity for more students to complete their computer-based training in a timely manner. Technology at the center had consisted of eleven individual PCs. Each PC was installed with a specific set of training applications. Each PC couldn't store the same software because of PC hard-drive space utilization and software licensing issues. Each PC requires a license for every application stored on it. Purchasing a large number of the same software titles is cost prohibitive for a small center. As a result, students waited their turns for the PC with the training application that they needed to take next. This resulted in a time-consuming coordination effort by the staff. Now, the center has moved to the next technology phase with Internet access and PCs networking to a file server. PC users will soon be able to retrieve software training programs from the network server, eliminating the need to store most applications on individual PCs. Students can then access server-stored applications from any PC at the NTC SA LRC.

Learning resource centers in the NTC college district welcome anyone who needs to update their skills to obtain jobs or enter apprenticeship programs, technical colleges or four-year colleges or universities. They are not limited to those who do not have high school diplomas.

The students who succeed are able to obtain jobs and be productive members of the community. Community groups help fund Wausau area programs. The researcher seeks to validate the student success rate in the findings and results portion of this paper.

### Significance of the Study

There are three significant points to this study. The first point seeks to validate the student training and development program to determine if they meet or exceed the goals that are set by NorthCentral Technical College and the State of Wisconsin Technical College System. Students meeting their goals have more self-esteem and pride in their accomplishments. They have more opportunities for better jobs and ultimately an improved life style. Those with families are better able to support and lead their families by example.

Secondly, the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) is dependent on funding from NorthCentral Technical College and from the community. The NTC SA LRC director generates reports to NorthCentral Technical College and to the community groups funding the center. Funding for literacy programs are dependent on state allocations and the generosity of community foundations. The NTC SA LRC seeks additional funding if state funding is reduced. Foundations providing this funding will be afforded access to this research paper and the conclusions it derives.

Thirdly, the researcher had a personal interest in understanding the process of adult training and development at the basic education level many students are at when entering this program. The researcher sought understanding of methodology used in basic training, receptiveness of the student for their training and to what degree barriers played in their successes. This research, along with other training experiences, provides the researcher with an expanded knowledge base on adult students and their receptiveness to learning, especially when they must overcome barriers to that learning.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study are:

1. Student population changes week to week resulting in highly tailored individual programs that cannot be applied across groups of students.
2. Employer's surveyed may or may not know if they employ students from the NTC SA LRC. Survey results may be inconclusive.
3. Study only evaluates the training and development of student at the NTC SA LRC and does not seek to explain their social or physical situations that caused them to seek these services.
4. Year 2000 United States Census data has not been fully compiled as of this writing. Year 2000 United States census data, when available is used in this research report.

### Definition of Terms

ABE – Adult basic education is teaching adults to read, write, compute, problem-solve and communicate.

Adult Literacy Act – Wisconsin state law that directs efforts to correct adult literacy problems and reduce the number of adults who are not functioning at least at the eight-grade level.

Assessment – Review of adult educational attainment, usually based on grade level standard.

CDL – Commercial driver’s license required for those seeking employment as a commercial truck driver.

Computer software – Computer instructions run on a PC that allows the user of the PC to interact with the monitor display and keyboard. These instructions may include games, word processor, spreadsheet or training programs.

Director – Instructor in charge of the program, conducts student assessments and training.

GED – General Equivalency Development Certificate received if the test taker meets skill levels the top 66 percent of graduating high school seniors met. Subject areas tested are: social studies, math, science, writing and literature and the arts.

Graphics – Screen images on a PC monitor used to convey thoughts, ideas through PC images.

HSED – High School Equivalency Diploma earned by those at least 18 and one-half years old that have completed the GED and one of five options. Those options are:

1. Courses in health, citizenship, employability skills and a career-awareness
2. Credits not completed in high school

3. 24 semester or 32 quarter credits not covered in high school completed at a technical college or university
4. Foreign degree or diploma program
5. High school completion program conducted at a technical college.

Instructor – Individual trained and paid by the college to facilitate student learning.

Literacy – the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community.

LRC – Learning Resource Center, part of the NorthCentral Technical College district, charged with instructing students in basic skills, general job skills or obtaining a high school diploma.

Modem – Device that connects a PC to a computer network, using phone lines to transmit data.

Network – Term applied to computer grouping of hardware server and personal computers, allowing the personal computers to connect to each other and the server.

NTC – NorthCentral Technical College located in Wausau, Wisconsin, part of the Wisconsin Technical College system.

PC – Personal Computer consisting of a monitor, hard-drive, keyboard and usually a mouse used to work with computer software.

Success – completion of a goal.

Technology – computer hardware and software, instructional television, the Internet, audiotape programs, videotapes and their players.

Testing – State standard based testing designed to validate educational attainment.

Trainer – Paid instructor at a learning resource center.

SA - Salvation Army, a nationally known organization to aid those in need.

UW Stout - University of Wisconsin – Stout is a university within the State of Wisconsin university system located in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Volunteer – Individual helping others for no monetary gain.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Research began with a review of the Adult Basic Education program in the state of Wisconsin using magazines, books and Internet sites. Expertise and knowledge from these sources shaped and guided the research project. Topics researched include: adult basic education (ABE), ABE technology, trainer and volunteer development, literacy in the workplace, and barriers to learning.

#### Adult Basic Education

United States Census statistics Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 lists the total population of the Wausau, Wisconsin MSA area as 125,834. United States Census Table DP-2, Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000 for geographic area Wausau, Wisconsin MSA educational attainment, population 25 years and over is 81,925 people. Table DP-2 additionally identifies within this grouping 6,712 individuals with less than a ninth grade education (8.2% of the population) and 6,570 with a ninth through twelfth grade education with no diploma (8.0% of the population). These individuals are the target group for learning resource center training at NorthCentral Technical College. (U.S. Census Bureau Web Site, Retrieved July 7, 2002)

The 16.2% total residents of the Wausau, Wisconsin area eligible for adult basic education suggest an improvement over the 1990 statistics used by lawmakers when implementing the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1999. Then, 20% of state residents did not have a high school degree. The 1999 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act targets adults who need to acquire skills and knowledge to succeed at work

or other training programs including apprenticeships, diploma or post-secondary education. It was hoped that successful students would become role models for their families and ultimately should help elevate many of them out of poverty and into a self-sustaining life style. (Wisconsin Technical College Board Web Site, Retrieved March 15, 2002, p.1.).

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1999 identified eight core abilities for adult students. Successful students would 1) take responsibility for their learning, 2) develop their self value and potential, 3) use critical thinking skills, 4) learn to communicate using basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, 5) use academic skills in every day settings, 6) become role models for others, 7) work well with others using the skill sets learned in their education and 8) become familiar with and use technology. . (Wisconsin Technical College Board Web Site, Retrieved March 15, 2002, p.6-7.).

#### Adult Basic Education Technology

Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) districts are utilizing technology instruction in their Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. NorthCentral Technical College (NTC) is part of the WTCS system. The WTCS group conducted a study nationwide and within the state of Wisconsin in 1996 with the goal of bringing adult basic education professionals into an open forum on adult basic education, sharing ideas and experiences. They also reviewed student topics on: learning styles, learning speed projected attendance demand on Wisconsin centers, instruction, management, and staff development. The 1996 WTCS study concluded that technology benefits for the learning resource centers would allow larger numbers of students to attend

their programs and help retain those students in the program. A secondary benefit would be in the form of students transferring their technology skills to the work place. (Wisconsin Technical College System Report Use of Technology in Adult Basic Education Program & Services, 1996).

The 1996 WTCS study identified the five major trends as “1) the environment of technology use is fast-moving, expanding, and rapidly changing. 2) There is a growing commitment to the use of computers, especially in ABE and ESL instructions. 3) There is an increasing need for staff development and training. 4) The need for planning is becoming crucial. 5) There is support for state leadership and assistance.” (Wisconsin Technical College System Report Use of Technology in Adult Basic Education Program & Services, 1996, p.5).

Adult basic education centers use technology in the following ways:

1. Computer based training
2. Computer based tracking software of student progress, staff training, budgets, inventory and district adult basic education reporting
3. Computer scheduling of staff
4. Connecting learning resource center sites within districts by modems, eliminating the need to mail reports to require someone to travel to the main office with paper documentation. (Wisconsin Technical College System Report Use of Technology in Adult Basic Education Program & Services, 1996, p.14).

Incorporating technology within existing adult basic education programs must be carefully planned and implemented. Adult basic education training development plans are tailored for individual students based on assessment testing and the student goals.

Purchased technology programs must work with technologies available. Learning resource centers may not have the funding available to customize computer software. Additionally, many learning environments do not have the technical expertise to plan, develop and implement the technology. Adult learning center directors must weigh the opportunity cost of training students with existing materials against that of developing technology based materials. Factors to consider when developing technology-based materials are time to develop or purchase the technology program, training the instructors to use the program and introducing the technology to the students. Lastly, costs of supporting and improving technology within the adult program need to be taken into consideration. Technology as stated earlier is ever changing. As a result, updates to technology may be costly, requiring new hardware and software, ultimately diverting funds into technology maintenance and away from adult basic education programs.

Successful adult education programs have made decisions on who will support the technology, how many students can participate in the training, how many support staff are required for the training and what training is required for the instructors, support and students to use and maintain the technology.

Learning centers budgets often don't include monies for state of the art hardware and software. Unfortunately this may affect the students learning if they do not have access to current products used by future employers. Older hardware is difficult to upgrade primarily because the PC may have physical limitations. Older PCs may not accept new software because of memory requirements. Care must be taken when upgrading software to insure compatibility between software and hardware. Additional time should be allowed to study changes to a networked PC environment.

Students accessing PCs for computer based training or the Internet must receive PC training. Numerous PC problems including computer viruses or improper PC shutdown can affect the availability of a PC for student use. Technology support personnel or a trainer's time will be used to correct the problem, taking time away from students.

Instructors are student role models. Their acceptance of technology inspires the student to accept computer-based training. It is imperative that instructors not resist technology change as it can affect the quality of the adult basic education program. Successful programs need to establish communication between instructor and student on correct technology usage. This training will aid the student's usage of technology when applying for work requiring technology understanding.

#### Literacy in the Workplace

Economic growth is tied to a skilled labor pool. Literacy in the workplace has become a requirement in today's market to obtain and retain skilled jobs. Jobs requiring low skill levels have declined significantly over the years. Competition for jobs now pit person against machine, as technology changes eliminate the need for lower skilled employees. Employees who do not receive training from their employers need to take the initiative to seek out their own training to remain competitive in the labor pool. Companies, who view their knowledge-based employees as assets, will succeed in competitive markets.

Those individuals that do not have the basic educational attainment skills for the workplace must first obtain those skills. Technical college districts have been charged with the responsibility to provide adult basic education to those who have not attained a

high school diploma and wish to complete their high school diploma. Federal funding is available to help fund adult basic education.

Adult education should be a life-long pursuit for all. Successful students will continue their education to improve their skill sets and their lives. Students who incorporate personal interests into their careers usually find more success in their work life and are ultimately happier individuals who are productive employees. Exploring the possibility of incorporating these life interests into a work career should be studied when setting a course of study for all students.

#### Adult Basic Education Trainers and Volunteers

The ultimate goal of all adult basic education trainers and volunteers is to increase the knowledge, skill and abilities of those they help. Adults who seek basic education from NorthCentral Technical College come to learning resource centers where trainers and volunteers focus on the educational goals of the student. Those goals are identified during assessment between the director of the program and the student.

Adult basic education trainers and volunteers receive an orientation from NorthCentral Technical College after they are hired. They are responsible for: training students using individualized instruction, technology support, documentation of student successes for the center and NorthCentral Technical College, preparing student materials and answering any questions from center staff or students.

Technology training for adult basic education staff varies by technical college district. Staff not trained in technology support will need to contact technical support, resulting in reduced student learning time. Adult basic education staff and support need to be aware of the importance of technology availability and how to take

corrective action to clear any technology related problems. (Wisconsin Technical College System Report Use of Technology in Adult Basic Education Program & Services, 1996).

Communication skills are critical for an effective adult basic education trainer or volunteer. These skills include listening, speaking and providing feedback. Trainers and volunteers must listen to the student by paying full attention to what the student speaks as well as the feeling that is emoted. Actively listening to the student establishes a rapport that can build into a trust relationship. The trainer or volunteer continues to build on this trust relationship by giving the student their full attention in their response. Each communication process between the student and trainer also teaches the student by example of what effective communication processes can accomplish. Poor listeners may retain only 25% of the spoken word. Spoken words convey understanding, tone, body language and grammar. Understanding the spoken word is a critical component of oral communication.

Feedback techniques used by trainers encourage repetition of correctly completed work and discourages poorly performed work, with the added benefit of enforcing good communication skills. Reinforcement using feedback should be completed soon after the work has been completed. (Peterson & Hicks, 1996).

Coaching the staff of the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program is a role performed by the program director. Groups successfully coached understand the group purpose and are committed to work as a team, sharing information and knowledge within the group and with others to improve the organization. (Crane, 1999).

### Barriers to Learning

The 1994 Bureau of Census reported that there were more than 49 million Americans with disabilities. A large majority of these disabled people under the age of 65 have the ability to learn at the postsecondary level and want meaningful work. United States Census Table DP-2, Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000 for geographic area Wausau, Wisconsin MSA Disability Status of the Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population ages 21 to 64 years listed the total population in this area as 70,486. The population in that age group with disabilities was 9,496, with 67.6% as employed. (U.S. Census Bureau Web Site, Retrieved July 7, 2002)

People with disabilities often are not understood by society and experience discrimination. Assumptions are made by society that costs of employing and training them will be high. But, in reality those costs will be higher to society if they are not employed and trained. (Gadbow & Du Bois, 1998).

Some parents of children with disabilities have become aware of disability symptoms as a result of public education programs within the schools. The parents may have had the same problem, but never had it diagnosed. As a result, they can seek treatment for themselves as well. The rate of young adults with disabilities earning high school diplomas should increase significantly. These students are now being admitted to colleges to further their education. It is believed that high school graduates who have completed programs to deal with their disabilities will have success in post-secondary education. These same students in the past would have been discouraged from continuing their education.

Compensatory strategies are also referred to as learning strategies. Adult basic education staff should be trained to use learning strategy techniques. Learning strategies are of two types: study and cognitive. Study strategies involve the student in utilizing study materials and taking tests. Cognitive strategies aid the student in thinking, remembering and building new material upon that which they already know. (Crux, 1991).

### Summary

The State Technical College System has become instrumental in the education of those who have not attained basic educational levels. Studies have been conducted on the barriers to adult training and development and programs created to break down those barriers. Learning resource programs have been established within Wisconsin Technical College Districts. These centers have tailored their literacy programs to the typical student they serve. Each center is fiscally responsible, reporting their progress to the state technical district college and community foundations funding their programs.

As the economy changes, work and the design of work will change. Skilled workers will be needed to handle these jobs. Workers with reasoning skills are expected to exceed the need for workers with physical strengths. Business and industry, working with the educational system can help shape worker skills to benefit business, the employee and the community in which they live.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research paper was to evaluate the adult basic education program at the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource. The two research objectives of this field problem were to:

1. Evaluate the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center training and development program and its effectiveness in relationship to student success.
2. Determine the role technology plays in the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program.

This chapter discusses the research methodology the researcher utilized to answer each of the research objectives.

#### Research Design

The researcher felt that the research paper objectives would be best researched using interviews, survey and the focus group methodologies. Data gathered from the initial interview aided the researcher in determining when to use each methodology. It was determined that there were approximately nineteen employers of NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center students. The survey was the best approach to gather data from that group. There were over 100 students in the NTC SA LRC program in 2001. A survey of year 2001 students was ruled out when it was learned that obtaining names and addresses of students could not be retrieved for a student survey because of software changes in the past year. The NTC SA LRC averages 45 students

during the week. This is a fluid group and changes from week to week, depending on student schedules. The focus group was felt to be the best method to gather data from the students. Twelve students were invited to participate in the focus group. A specific date and time were assigned for the focus group and those students who could attend were included in the focus group. This afforded the researcher a time to speak to the students while not taking them away from their families, work and studies for any great length of time. It also provided them with a safe environment to share their thoughts on their training and development program.

### Interviews

Interviews were conducted with those who dealt with the students and could influence their training and development program. The evaluation of this program centers on how the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) is structured, who influences it and how their actions affect the learning outcomes of the students.

The first person interviewed was the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army program director. This interview generated a list of names of possible interview candidates. Arrangements to conduct a student focus group and employer survey were reviewed and approval granted. Confidentiality for the students in this program required great care in the execution of each step. Information gathered in the director interview provided the framework for the entire research project.

The program is comprised of one director; two trainers and 17 volunteer tutors. Interviews of the director, two trainers and two volunteers were conducted. Each trainer was asked a set of questions specific to a trainer position and each of the two volunteers

were asked a set of questions specific to their volunteer role. This method was used to bring comparisons into the research paper and/or differences that would require follow-up.

The interviews identified others who were connected to the program. They were then added to the interview list. These additional interviewees included the current student services team leader at NorthCentral Technical College, who has jurisdiction over the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center. The researcher was introduced to the individual who established the first learning resource center at NorthCentral Technical College. That interview brought additional insight into the program.

The meeting with the NTC Student Services Team Leader led to an invitation to be part of the NorthCentral Technical College's Five Year Evaluation of the Adult Basic Education Program for the district. An intensive two-day process of the district's programs was conducted with the researcher on the panel as a community member. This evaluation was an outstanding opportunity to compare the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin SA LRC program with those in Antigo, Marathon and Shawano County Jails and the NorthCentral Technical College learning resource campus centers in Wausau and Antigo.

Participants who were in charge of the two-day evaluation also consult and direct the programs for the State of Wisconsin's Literacy Program. The researcher had an opportunity to work with this staff and gain insight into the literacy program for the state of Wisconsin.

See Appendices A through H for interview questions.

### Survey

Next a list of known employers of NorthCentral Technical College Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army (NTC SA LRC) students was compiled based on interview notes from the NTC SA LRC director. The director did authorize the survey of the employer group, but noted that they might not know they employ students from the center. The survey of the NTC SA LRC employers was created by the researcher and then reviewed by the NTC Student Services Team Leader who had an interest from NTC in the findings. The survey was sent out nineteen human resource directors of the companies that employ students of the NTC SA LRC. The survey, along with a letter of introduction from the researcher, a survey consent form and a return envelope addressed to the researcher for the completed survey were sent in a large manila envelope. See Appendix I for Employer Survey.

### Focus Group

The final methodology used was the focus group. Students were asked to volunteer for the focus group. The researcher was concerned about confidentiality for the students and carefully explained the focus group process to the participants before the focus group session. Each student was given a focus group consent form to review and sign. The researcher verbally reviewed the contents of the consent form with the focus group participants to insure that all understood the wording on the form. One of the trainers at the NTC SA LRC introduced the researcher and reinforced that this focus group was a voluntary effort on their part. The students understood and signed the consent forms. They were also told that the focus group would be taped and a mosaic image would block their identity from anyone who would view the tape. Again, the tape

would be confidential, only for viewing by those involved in the field project. The students were offered the opportunity to not be video taped, but only have audiotapes of the focus group. They agreed to the taping. See Appendix J for Focus Group Questions.

### Summary

Focus Group, interview and survey were chosen as methodology instruments. These three methods were chosen by the researcher to get an in depth view of the students, staff and employers. The researcher wanted knowledge from the students on their viewpoint of what success was and how technology played a role in that success. The instructors and volunteers play a key role in the training and development of adults in a basic education program. Information gathered from them played a key role in understanding who the students were in this program, what educational attainment levels they had, how their education development plan was created, implemented and what success did they see in the student. Knowledge was requested of the employer to learn if training received in the adult basic education program transferred to the job. The survey was unpredictable, as many employers may not be aware where the students obtained their training. Jobs that many students apply for initially do not require significant educational attainment background checks.

The information from the instructors and volunteers is felt to be very reliable. All shared their thoughts on all topics without reservation. The student information was found to be very sincere. The students overwhelmingly indicated appreciation for this program. All in the focus group, regardless of their educational attainment, felt that the instructors and volunteers did an outstanding job. All appeared to understand the focus group questions and shared their responses with no reservation. The survey results were

disappointing. Many employers either didn't know they had students from this center or decided not to acknowledge this in the survey.

The researcher was fortunate to be invited to attend the Wisconsin Technical College Systems five-year review of the adult basic education program at NorthCentral Technical College. This review included all adult basic education centers within the NorthCentral Technical College district. The research findings from this review will be used as a comparison in the Results and Analysis of Findings section.

## Chapter IV

### Findings and Analysis of Results

#### Introduction

The purpose of this paper was to evaluate the success of the NorthCentral Technical College Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) adult training and development program and its use of technology. The center director welcomes the evaluation and recommendations. This paper will be made available to local foundations funding the NTC SA LRC as an independent evaluation of the student program.

Research using interview, focus group and survey methodologies was completed and the results are organized by research objective.

#### The Findings

Objective 1 - Evaluate the NTC Wausau, Wisconsin Salvation Army Learning Resource Center (NTC SA LRC) training and development program and its effectiveness in relationship to student success.

Research obtained from each instructor and volunteer interview, student focus group session and employer survey response was used to isolate the factors affecting student success. Literature review provided background on: Wisconsin literacy programs and their goals, developing and coaching, learning and teaching strategies, learning disabilities and technology in adult basic education programs.

Student success measurements might include understanding a basic math concept, passing the written driving test or completing a GED/HSED program. Characteristics of

NTC SA LRC students found in Table 1 provide an overview of who the students are, their goals and their thoughts on success.

Table 1

NTC Salvation Army Learning Center Student Profile

Characteristic	Research Data
Age Range	No statistics available; range 18 – 63
Race	No statistics available; research observation noted predominantly white, with few Hmong and Black
Student Success Values	Enthusiastic, accept change, manage time, devoted to training, respectful and considerate.
Learning Center Courses	Employability skills, literacy skills, computer skills, high school diploma courses, complete pre-requisites post-secondary schools, commercial and regular driver's license
Attendance	Attend morning or afternoon session, requirement to live at transitional living center, learn basic skills, job skills, complete pre-requisites post-secondary schools, family role model, build self-esteem
Development Plan	Tailored student goal setting student-training plan, GED/HSED, technical college or four-year college, apprenticeships
Barriers	Cognitive, Concentration, Dyslexia, Short or Long Term Memory Loss, Alcohol or Drug related problems, Spatial

Note: Table compiled using interview and focus group research data.

The researcher concluded many of the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center students measured success not in terms of the numbers of tests that they passed, but in

terms of goals that were set with them in their development plans. These attainable goals help the student build their self-esteem.

Students and staff were asked to discuss the role of instructor and volunteer. These findings are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

NTC Salvation Army Learning Center Staff Profile

Characteristic	Research Data
Instructor Success Values	Encourage, fair, helpful, goal setters, articulate, flexible
Training Methodology	One-on-one teaching using workbooks, study materials; assist students computer based training
Reporting Structure	Instructors report to NTC Team Lead – Student Services; Volunteers coordinate their time with NTC SA LRC director
Development Plan	NTC SA LRC director develops plan with student; initiates assessment testing, sets long term goals with students, monitors student success
Barriers	Instructors use many techniques to train students with disabilities; make numerous attempts to help.

Note: Table compiled using interview and focus group research data.

The research bore out student success was dependent on positive attitudes by both the student and staff. The program was initially begun in 1993 with one PC and four students. At the end of 2001, 169 students were served with 153 completing courses. Student to teacher ratio is 9:1.

Yes, the researcher found that students were successful in passing courses and in achieving development goals, whether those goals were GED/HSED completion, entering a post-secondary school, apprenticeship or completing a computer class.

Objective 2 – Determine the role technology plays in the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program.

The researcher used focus group and instructor and volunteer interviews, along with literature review to report on technology findings. Table 3 reports on technology at the center.

Table 3

Role of Technology at NTC Salvation Army Learning Center

Technology Element	Research Data
Technology Training Method	Computer based training
Technology Hardware	PCs connected via network to file server. Student workstations not ergonomically correct. Monitors sit on tables, standard desk chair.
Technology Software	Plato educational series, recommended by adult educators. Microsoft products, Word, Excel. Many old software titles preferred by students, retained for those with learning disabilities.
Computer Based Problems	Eye strain, impersonal, some courses difficult to understand
Technology Support	Part-time volunteer support

Note: Table compiled using interview and focus group research data.

Student focus group findings indicate one-on-one training is preferable, but realize that computer based training reinforced learning. There is a usually a nine to one

student to instructor ratio at the morning or afternoon sessions. Computer based training was impersonal, created eyestrain and often course content was difficult to understand, but they were happy to have the training.

### Analysis of Results

Technology usage at NTC SA LRC was compared to the Wisconsin Technology College district suggested use of technology. At this time NTC SA LRC does use computer-based training; but does not track student progress, staff training, budgets, inventory or adult basic education reporting. They do not have enough staff to warrant scheduling staff using a computer program. Modems were recently installed to access the Internet, but not the main campus.

The researcher next compared the technology findings with the NTC GOAL report generated in April 2002. Every five years technical college district adult basic education programs are critiqued. The researcher was asked to participate on this committee as a community representative. The NTC GOAL report praised the NorthCentral Technical College adult basic education program and remarked on the Salvation Army site. The committee felt that the program director administered the program using resources in an outstanding manner. Additionally, the program was recognized for the successful student GED/HSED completions for year 2001. The committee did feel that the program facility was small for the student numbers served, but they appreciated the fact that the site was offered rent-free. The director of all NTC Learning Resource Center sites was also given accolades for her over all direction of the district wide adult basic education program. Yes, the NTC GOAL report confirmed both student success and usage of technology.

## Summary

The 1999 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act identified eight core adult student abilities for successful students. They met the eight core abilities for students which were listed as: 1) take responsibility for their learning, 2) develop their self value and potential, 3) use critical thinking skills, 4) learn to communicate using basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, 5) use academic skills in every day settings, 6) become role models for others, 7) work well with others using the skill sets learned in their education and 8) become familiar with and use technology.

The researcher found after completing all research methodologies, the NorthCentral Technical College students were successful and technology did play a major role in their educational attainment.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### Introduction

Training and development for all adults in today's global market may make the difference between a good life style and just getting by. Individuals who have not attained a literacy level equivalent to at least a high school diploma cannot compete with others for employment. Jobs will require more reasoning skills in the future. The NorthCentral Technical College district Learning Resource Center at the Salvation Army has an initiative to educate adults to attain their GED/HSED. This center is unique in that it has an unofficial relationship with the Salvation Army, North Central Health Facility, the Marathon County Jail, the Job Center and some employers in the area. Employees of these organizations realize the importance of education and refer students to the learning resource center in an effort to improve their opportunities in life.

Research was conducted to determine if the students were successful in meeting their training and development goals, was technology helpful in this effort and what changes could be made to improve it.

#### Statement of the Problem

The study is to evaluate the training and development of the students at the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center.

#### Summary of Study Procedures

The sample population consisted of the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center Director, two instructors, two tutors, the NorthCentral Technical College administrator of all district learning centers, the individual who initially began the program for NorthCentral Technical College, the Captain of the Jail, nine students, a Salvation Army

Captain, the Transitional Living Center Director and nineteen employers of SA LRC students.

The methodology to choose the study participants was the result of an initial interview with the center director. The center director provided the overview of the program, the staff, the students, those who referred students to the program, employers and the relationship between the Salvation Army and NorthCentral Technical College.

The three instruments to gather information were the interview, a focus group and a survey. The researcher decided to use the interview methodology for all training and support staff to understand the entire program. The focus group methodology was chosen for student discussions. The students had an opportunity to share and expand on what others had said in the group. They may have been more comfortable speaking as a group to the researcher. One of the instructors introduced the researcher to the students, which created a safety factor verifying to the students that it was ok to speak to the researcher. After the focus group session the researcher learned from a volunteer that the students were appreciative that someone cared to ask them what they thought and that their thoughts would be in a paper presented for a master's degree. Finally, a survey instrument was used to gather information from employers in the area. Initially the list of employers was very difficult to gather. During the interviews and discussions the researcher learned that employers might not know where their employees studied. The survey was carefully worded to avoid any difficulties for employees. The questions sought data from the employers on skill levels. The researcher felt that the survey would best accomplish the goal of gathering data from a large number of employers.

Data was captured by tape recorders for the interviews, video camera for the focus group using a mosaic image to protect student images and paper was used for the survey.

The responses to the survey came in quickly. The survey was sent out in a large manila envelope to nineteen employers. Enclosed were the introduction to the research project, consent form, the survey and a return pre-stamped, pre-addressed stamped envelope. The survey itself was short and in a larger font. The questions were not intrusive to the operation of the business and only sought information on employee skill levels. Within one week 75% of the surveys had been returned. Only four employers indicated on the survey form that they employed NTC SA LRC students. The rest said they did not.

#### Conclusions and implications

Students at the NTC Salvation Army Learning Resource Center feel comfortable in a relaxed yet focused environment. They attend the center because they know the trainers and volunteers care. Students respect each other's rights for training time. Development plans are created for each student and monitored. Each student is responsible for working on the session goal and getting their folder updated.

Students studying for a high school diploma have begun new studies since January 1, 2002 when the GED/HSED tests changed. Anyone who had not completed his or her GED/HSED will now need to begin all testing again. The NTC SA LRC director made every effort to have all students attempt to complete their GED/HSED before the end of the year. The LRC set a record in 2002 for the number of successful GED completions.

Ceremonies conducted twice a year reinforce the successful accomplishments of the students. Students look forward to this recognition.

The NorthCentral Technical College Salvation Army Learning Resource Center does an outstanding job training and developing each student attending this site. Student success is measured in many ways. Students may be successful in retaining and applying a concept, concentrating on a topic, passing an exam, finding employment or telling another about their success and being very confident in their abilities.

The NTC SA LRC provides so much with relatively little. The classroom used for training is small for the number of people attending morning and afternoon sessions. (The room is roughly 35' x 50') The director coordinates two trainers and 17 volunteers who track all student information in file folders with individual papers listing the development plan, course status and current work assignments.

The staff and volunteers should be commended for a job well done. The students should be commended for perseverance in meeting their goals.

Overall, the mood of the center is purposeful. The staff and students realize the importance of updating skills and knowledge. In today's global market economy everyone needs to upgrade their skills to meet future job demands. Those with skills in demand will find work and lead a self-sustaining life style. Those who cannot meet the minimum requirements for jobs will be left behind. For those who are of retirement age, it's important to keep skills current for their self-esteem and to act as a role model for others in their families.

## Recommendations

Adult basic education programs have been identified by state governments as critical to elevating adults from lower paid jobs or off of state assistance. The federal government has been instrumental in funding programs to update adult basic skills. Each technical college district in Wisconsin is charged with developing a program for the adults in their district requiring help. It is recommended that standardizations be investigated to avoid duplication of effort. Streamlined programs would allow adults moving from city to city to pick up their program. Additionally, it is recommended that training programs be designed to utilize technology. Incorporating a state wide plan of computer literacy programs with standardized student ID numbers would help keep development plans on course and students would know what their next goal was.

Manila folders with individual sheets of paper document the student's development plan, program progress, work progress and notes. Documentation in this folder is updated into the student's permanent record at NorthCentral Technical College. It is recommended that a computer connection be established between NTC and the NTC SA LRC eliminating driving time thereby reducing time spent away from students.

The NTC SA LRC site is cramped, containing eleven PCs on tables on two walls, eight worktables, and a small office space for the director and a small workspace for the trainers to discuss results with students. The space is roughly 35' by 50'. It is recommended that a larger site be located to accommodate the students.

The NTC SA LRC staff works tirelessly to train and develop those students attending their center. It is recommended that programs be developed for adult basic

education staff who work exclusively with adults at the learning resource centers as a means to avoid job burnout

Instructors and tutors have initial training, but should have a development plan created for them to aid in updating their skills and knowledge. It is recommended that tutors and instructors have a development plan to update their skills and knowledge on a regular basis.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Staff and students may benefit from new program delivery methods. Investigate new methods of program delivery at other basic adult education centers.

The researcher did not have access to NTC adult basic education historical student records due to a computer system change. Documentation was on paper files not accessible to the researcher. Future research may study the historical changes in adult basic education at NorthCentral Technical Colleges Salvation Army Learning Resource Center.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Center Director Interview Questions

1. What is your job title?
2. What is the purpose of the LRC and how is it tied to the Salvation Army?
3. Who would you say primarily uses these services?
4. How long has the Salvation Army Learning Resource (SA LRC) center been in existence?
5. What can you tell me about your volunteers, their role and their backgrounds?
6. How many hours do your volunteers spend at the learning resource center?
7. Would you have any supplemental information that you can also provide to me?
8. Now, is the LRC technically linked with any other learning resource centers?
9. If this center were at student capacity, would you be able to send students to another center?
10. What are the top five courses that students seek?
11. You have acquired a gamut of learning resources. I understand students meet with you as they come in, and they have a course of study devised for them. How is the student development plan designed?
12. Do you set any type of time limits for the students?
13. Would you help get an introduction to the staff at the Transitional Living Center for me?
14. Do you encourage the students to attend the technical college or a four-year college?

15. Do the high schools have someone come in and talk to students in trouble, advising them what their life will be like if they don't finish their high school degree?
16. What is the range of ages at the learning resource center?
17. Are there more males or females in this program?
18. What races attend the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center in Wausau?
19. Do you serve primarily Wausau or Wausau and the surrounding area?
20. Could anyone attend the center, regardless of where they live?
21. How did most of your students learn of this LRC?
22. Do employers refer students to you?
23. How do you test your students? Are their individual tests for each course?
24. Do students ask you for references?
25. When you do a reference, you have the employer contact you and you don't put anything in writing?
26. Do you maintain any type of skills database for the individuals right now?
27. We briefly talked about the list of employers, would you help me get a list of employers that employ the students?
28. Do you refer attention deficient people on to someone else?
29. Well, I really appreciate all of the time you gave to this interview. I really appreciate it. Is there something else you would like to share?

## Appendix B

### Center Instructors Interview Questions

1. What are the requirements to become a trainer at the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center?
2. How did you learn about this job? Would you describe the job application process? How long have you been an instructor at the center?
3. What is the schedule at the center?
4. What are your job duties?
5. What training do you conduct?
6. Do you track the progress of each student?
7. Do you work with all students or specialize in certain areas?
8. Who directs your work?
9. What are your work assignments?
10. Do you have a job description?
11. What type of documentation do you send to NTC? How is the information updated at NTC?
  - a. Paper forms
  - b. Procedure manuals
  - c. Other documents
12. What are some of your memorable success stories?
13. What goals do you have for yourself with the students? What training would you like to improve your training at the center?
14. What goals do you have for the students?

15. What problems do you see at the LRC?
  - a. For students?
  - b. For trainers
  - c. For director?
  - d. For Salvation Army?
16. What are the difficulties in the learning resource center?
  - a. Room to study for each student
  - b. Arrangement
    - Desk
    - PC setup
  - c. Training schedule for students
17. How is progress charted for each student?
18. As a trainer you see students regularly. What types of difficulties do you encounter and how do you address each of them?
19. What do you do to accommodate students with disabilities?
20. Are any students referred anywhere else?
21. Do students leave the program and return?
22. What improvements would you make in the program? Room setup? Classes taught?
23. What improvements have you suggested? Have they been implemented?
24. Do you have any final thoughts to share on the LRC?

## Appendix C

### Center Volunteers Interview Questions

1. How long have you been an instructor at the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center?
2. Have you done other volunteer work? Where?
3. What skills do you bring to the center? Do you specialize in any areas at the center? One-on-one training, PC, group training, other?
4. How do you help those with learning disabilities?
5. What characteristics do the students have? I have a short list that I'd like your thoughts on. Please offer any others that you may think of.
  - a. Drive to learn
  - b. Goals
  - c. Better themselves
  - d. Stay with the program
6. What do you feel is good about the program?
7. What would you change?
8. Describe one or two of your personal successes in the learning resource center program.
9. Describe one or two disappointments. I'd like info on:
  - a. What made them a disappointment?
  - b. Did the student try again and were they successful?
  - c. What changes in the program would have made this a success?

10. PC training is a big component of the program at the LRC. What are the drawbacks in the current PC training program?
11. How could the training be improved?
12. What do you perceive to be the current satisfaction level with the LRC PC students?
13. Please share any additional comments you feel comfortable with regarding the LRC, the students, the faculty or volunteers.

## Appendix D

### Team Leader – Student Services Interview Questions

1. What is the mission statement of the NorthCentral Technical College? How is the mission or vision statement communicated to the staff?
2. Would you provide an overview of NorthCentral Technical College's connection with the learning resource centers? Do you have a flowchart of the Learning Resource Centers and their relationship to NTC? How many centers are there? How are they structured?
3. Would you describe the learning resource center? How long has it existed?
4. How would you define the college culture? The LRC culture?
5. Does each director need to request his own funding or is this done at the college level?
6. Is there a format for the student development plan?
7. How would you describe the college culture?
8. Who was instrumental in developing the first learning resource center at NTC?
9. Do companies refer students to the LRC? If yes, do you have communications with the company to determine if training the employee was successful?
10. What types of courses are offered?
11. In what format are the classes taught?
12. What are the student age ranges?
13. How are students tested? Are they tested? Do they receive certificates when they complete their training?

14. Are there any statistics on the students and value returned to the community on what they have learned? I'm looking for ROI (return on investment) calculations.
15. What characteristics are most notable of adult learners?
  - a. Age
  - b. Gender
  - c. Educational level
16. What do you feel is the most positive aspect of the LRC?
17. What do you feel is the most negative aspect of the LRC?
18. What would you change?
19. What would you like the community to know about the LRC program?
20. What effect has company downsizing in the community had on LRC usage?
21. What skills need to be taught and aren't?
22. Does the college help with placement?
23. What is one of your success stories?
24. What situations didn't meet the needs of the student where they couldn't be helped?
25. Do you work with disabled or handicapped people and how do you accommodate them?
26. Is there enough space for each person to learn?
27. How current are the software titles?
28. Is PLATO used at all sites?
29. Do all LRCs offer the same courses?

## Appendix E

### First NTC LRC Program Director Interview Questions

1. Who introduced the program and why?
2. Who backed it?
  - Business
  - NTC
  - Students
3. Who were the instructors?
4. What were the qualifications for instructors?
5. Where was the program located?
6. Who were the students that finished it?
7. How was the program held accountable?
8. What standards or goals were established?
9. How were these goals measured?
10. What were the reactions of the students?
11. Who were the students?
12. How were they referred to the learning resource center?
13. What educational attainment levels were the students at?
14. How was this measured?
15. How were the students evaluated?
  - Start of the training
  - End of the training
16. What kind of career counseling was available to the students?

17. Were the students apt to continue on to technical college training?
18. Did they obtain jobs? Was any of this data tracked?
19. How did the learning resource center evolve?
20. When did it begin to branch out to the sixteen sites they are located at now?
21. What types of training was available? How was it chosen? What methodologies were used in training?
22. What impediments to learning did the students have and how were they overcome? What impediments to teaching did the teacher and volunteers have and how were they overcome?

## Appendix F

### Transitional Living Center Interview Questions

1. What are your roles with the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center students?
2. What do you see as the greatest value in the SA LRC program for students?
3. What drawbacks are there for the students?
4. Are the students successful? Are they able to succeed after training or do they require assistance from other community programs?
5. How long are students connected to the Salvation Army program?
6. What comments would you like to offer that we haven't discussed regarding the center?

Note: This interview was conducted with the Transitional Living Center Director and Salvation Army Major in charge of the Transitional Living Center.

## Appendix G

### AODA Counselor Interview Questions

1. Would you provide an overview of your job?
2. What is your involvement with the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program?
3. What successes have you seen from the program?
4. What difficulties do you see as impeding the learning process?
5. What improvements would you suggest for the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program?
6. Do your students have a good success ratio? How much of this success is attributed to the SA LRC program?
7. What are the barriers to learning?
8. Do the students have a support network?
9. Are the students from North Central Health Care Center? Do they receive additional training there? If they do, what kind of training?
10. How does job stress impact you and your dealings with the students?
11. How does student stress affect other students?
12. How do you influence or refer students to the LRC?

## Appendix H

### Jail Administrator Interview Questions

1. Are students referred to the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center from the jail?
2. Do any Huber prisoners attend the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program?
3. What benefits do you see in the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program?
4. What disadvantages do you see?
5. Has the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program in your opinion helped people shape their lives in a positive manner?
6. What comments would you like to offer on the Salvation Army Learning Resource Center program?

## Appendix I

## Employer Survey

Your input and opinions are important to this survey. The information will be kept confidential and will be used to evaluate the training and development of the Wausau Salvation Army Learning Resource Center students.

Instructions: The questions below pertain to the students you have employed that have taken classes at the Wausau Salvation Army Learning Resource Center. Please check the entry that best answers the question. Please contact me at 715 847 8264 if you have any questions regarding the completion of this survey.

1. Have you employed one or more students from the Wausau Salvation Army Learning Resource Center?

Yes       No

- If you checked no, thank you for reviewing this survey. Please return the survey in the attached envelope.

2. If you responded yes to question 1, please check the approximate number of students you have employed over the years.

1       2-3       4-6       7-9       10 or more

3. What job types do you typically hire the Learning Resource Center students for?

factory     clerical     other (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is or are the employee(s) still employed with your company?

Yes       No

5. Did their training meet your job requirements?

Yes       No

6. If their training didn't meet your job requirements, what additional skills were needed?

Reading     Math     Writing     Other(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you rank their job performance?

Excellent     Good     Fair     Poor

8. Would you hire another student from the Wausau Salvation Army Learning Resource Center?

Yes       No

9. If you answered question 8 with a No, please specify why you wouldn't hire them.

---

10. How would you rate their attendance  
\_\_\_\_ Excellent \_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_ Poor

Thank you for completing this survey.

Please return in the following enclosed envelope to: Marilyn Gosz,  
3205 Jelinek Ave  
Schofield, WI 54476

## Appendix J

## Focus Group Questions

1. Why did you choose to study at the LRC?
2. What are the characteristics of a good student?
3. Do you have a support network to help you in your studies? Family, friends, others?
4. What learning format do you prefer? One-on-one training, Computer based CBT, Internet, study guides?
5. What don't you like about CBT courses?
6. Do you like study guides?
7. How have the director, trainers or volunteers helped you?
8. What did you like/dislike about the assessment you went through at your first session at the LRC?
9. How did the instructors help you follow your development plan?
10. How has the LRC helped you find a job?
11. How has the LRC helped you attain your GED or high school diploma?
12. How has the LRC helped you learn or build upon PC skills?
13. What do you like best about the program?
14. What would you change about the program?
15. Does anyone have any additional comments or thoughts they would like to share?