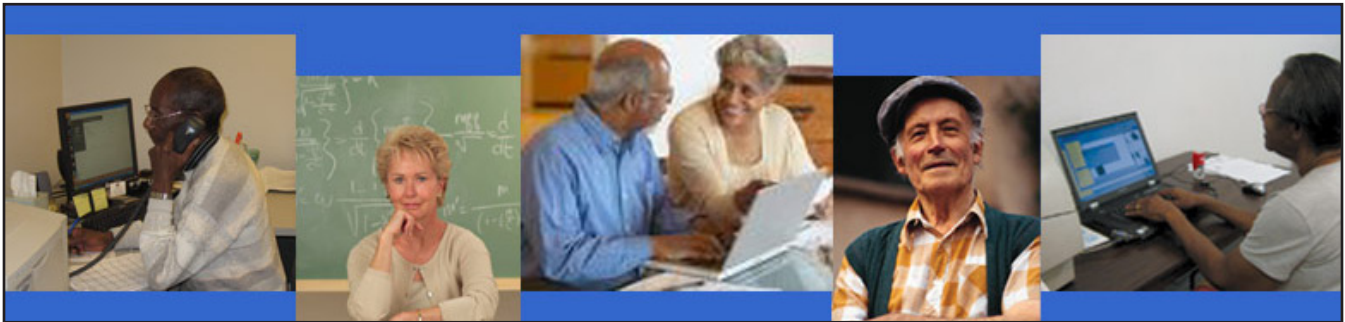


# Profiles in Success

## Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

*Experience Works in Bryan*



The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a federal training program for workers 55 years of age and older. It is a community service and work-based training program authorized by the Older Americans Act (OAA), the nation's primary federal legislation designed to address the social service needs of older people.

The goal of SCSEP is to provide work-based training to low-income seniors who are unemployed and who have limited employment prospects. During their training, participants provide valuable services to their communities. Eligibility is determined by age and whether income is at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$13,613 for one person in 2011.

Community service assignments are part-time and average 20 hours a week, with SCSEP participants working in public and nonprofit facilities such as schools, food pantries, senior centers, museums and sheriffs' departments. SCSEP training aims to provide seniors a bridge to self-sufficiency through stable and unsubsidized employment

opportunities. The program's aggregated nationwide goal in program year 2010 was for 44 percent of participants exiting the program to achieve unsubsidized employment.

While most of the OAA programs are administered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging, SCSEP is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. Services available through the SCSEP fall into two categories:

- Community services, which are subsidized community service assignments that provide 40 million service hours annually to public and nonprofit agencies allowing them to maintain and provide needed services. These assignments also offer valuable experience and opportunities for older workers to acquire job skills.
- Participant services, which include orientation, assessment and Individual Employment Plan development for older workers, community service assignments, support services, annual physicals, help in obtaining unsubsidized employment, and access to one-stop centers.

In program year 2009, SCSEP provided training and employment services to more than 100,000 people in the regular program and to over 24,300 people in a separate program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. For program year 2010, the federal funding appropriation was nearly \$597 million. Funds are allocated according to formula, with 22 percent allocated among states and territories and 78 percent allocated to national nonprofit organizations structured to recruit and enroll participants for community service assignments. Grants to provide these services are awarded on a competitive basis to 56 state and territorial governments and 18 nonprofit organizations across the country.

In Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has been designated by the Governor to administer the state’s portion of SCSEP. TWC emphasizes that one of the most important features of SCSEP is that it enables participants to “earn while they learn” through job assignments with governmental entities and other nonprofit organizations. On-the-job training allows SCSEP participants to acquire competitive job skills and the personal confidence that leads to financial independence. Employers benefit from such

training as well, because it prepares workers who are motivated to work in jobs for which they have demand.

Examples of the types of nonprofits participating in this program in Texas include: schools and libraries; recycling centers; senior centers; parks and recreation centers; historic sites and museums; hospitals and health centers; food pantries and clothes closets; and Workforce Solutions offices, the state’s network of workforce centers.

Below are examples of specific services offered to SCSEP participants in Texas:

- Orientation to the program
- Assessment and development of Individual Employment Plans
- Supportive services to enable participants to overcome barriers to employment
- Health screening
- On-the-job training assignments to help participants develop new skills, upgrade existing skills, and practice and reinforce skills learned
- Training on job search and job retention skills
- Additional basic skills training, including English as a second language and adult education leading to a General Educational Development certificate
- Targeted occupational skills training such as keyboarding, computer skills, and home health aide skills



### SCSEP in Texas

- **59 percent** of Texas' SCSEP participants exiting the program in program year 2009 gained unsubsidized employment
- **69 percent** of Texas' SCSEP participants responded that they have a more positive outlook on life after enrolling in the program
- **82** was the average score given by Texas' SCSEP participants to the program in response to the American Community Survey Index
- **89 percent** of Texas' SCSEP participants in program year 2009 had income that was at or below the poverty level
- **91 percent** of Texas' SCSEP participants responded that they would recommend the services of SCSEP to other older workers
- **1,818** senior Texans received SCSEP training and employment services under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- **6,658** senior Texans received SCSEP training and employment services under the program year 2009 grant and additional funds for SCSEP in fiscal year 2010 Appropriations Act
- **3,566,025** hours of community service were provided by Texas' SCSEP participants in program year 2009

TWC contracts directly with Experience Works, a national nonprofit organization to provide training and employment services to older workers in 88 rural Texas counties. The remaining Texas counties receive these services through these five national nonprofits: AARP Foundation, Experience Works, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, SER-Jobs for Progress, and Senior Service America. Statewide funding for SCSEP in program year 2010 is over \$32 million. An online directory of SCSEP contacts by county is available at: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/scsep/scsepcontact.html>.

Experience Works is both charitable and community-based. It was originally chartered as a rural demonstration program in 1965 and called Green Thumb. Over the years, Experience Works has expanded and is now the nation's largest provider of training, community, and employment services for older, low-income people. Funded by grants, foundations, and contributions from individuals and organizations, Experience Works has more than 400 employees, operates in 30 states and in Puerto Rico, and assisted over 26,000 people each year.



—At age 101, Sally Gordon was selected by Experience Works as the “Outstanding Oldest Worker” of 2010. She is a sergeant-at-arms when the Nebraska legislature is in session.



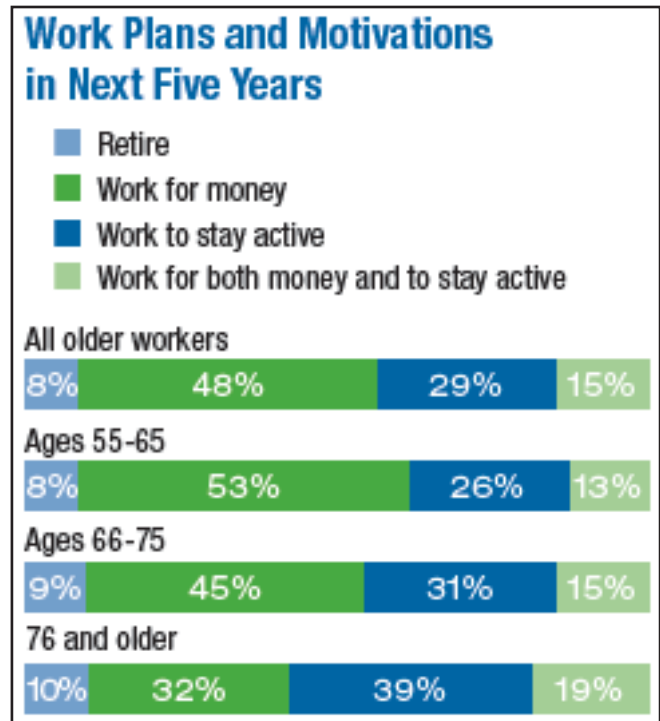
In Texas, Experience Works provided training and employment services in program year 2009 to almost 3,000 seniors in the regular program and over 500 seniors in the program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Two years ago, Experience Works conducted a survey of older Americans and collected data revealing that many older Americans do not have immediate plans to retire. Among those surveyed, 92 percent of 60-, 70-, and 80-year-olds plan to work for the next five years, either because they require the income and/or they wish to stay active. SCSEP, therefore, is an essential workforce training program for a great many seniors facing substantial challenges in the current economy.

Experience Works' research also indicated that for employers the greatest disadvantage to hiring older workers is that many lack the training and skills sets, particularly computer skills, needed in today's economy. Through training programs and various support services, seniors are able to acquire current, in-demand skills in order to successfully bridge this gap.

This table was excerpted from the September

2009 article, *Experience Works: Overlooked and Underserved, the Crisis Facing America's Older Workers*:



The significant contribution of Experience Works and SCSEP in Texas is illustrated by two success stories below.

**Senior Community Service Employment Program: Profiles in Success**



**B**renson Brown's current job is a considerable departure from the manufacturing career that sustained him most of his working life. Forty years ago, Brenson completed a four-year apprenticeship and is a Journeyman Tool and Die Maker by trade. He also is a Manufacturing

Engineer Technician, which required three years of postsecondary education. He worked in the Midwest for many years, and held positions with companies such as International Harvester. Brenson also worked for the Department of Defense and eventually, he was transferred to Louisiana, where he worked on U.S. Navy battleships in weapons construction and assembly. Then, Hurricane Katrina hit and like so many other people, his life was changed forever.

Brenson lost much of what he had worked throughout his lifetime to build in the devastation of Katrina. During the long aftermath of the disaster, Brenson experienced a great deal of difficulty as he attempted to find work in his trade. He was living in Bryan, when he heard about a Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Job Fair in July of 2010. He went immediately to the fair and that was his first contact with SCSEP and Experience Works.

Now, Brenson mans the first point of entry at the reception desk for Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley in the Center for Regional Services in Bryan, Texas. His job requires the ability to multi-task because he is simultaneously responsible for customer service, visitor reception, and providing telephone transfer and information services for several agencies within the Center. He is also responsible for some document production, and coordinating package receipt and delivery. Being well-organized and possessing good interpersonal skills are essential to Brenson's job. On any given day he may receive as many as five hundred telephone calls and greet scores of individuals entering the Center.

According to Brenson's supervisors, he was an exemplary participant from the start. After his eligibility was determined, Brenson was placed in a position where he could work to support himself and take classes at the local community college to update his skills. Now several decades past his initial training in computers, Brenson realized the key to success in the new world opening up before him was adaptability and an open mind. At Blinn College, he took classes ranging from computer and office equipment use, to customer service techniques, to screening and security, and finally, general office management.

Brenson embraced the new opportunities before him whole-heartedly, and did his on-the-job training for eight months as an Administrative Assistant for the Brazos Valley Council of Governments, also housed in the Bryan Center for Regional Services. When possible, he applied knowledge from his prior trade to his new work at the Center. For example, as he learned mail room procedures and operations from staff, word spread among his colleagues that he possessed an uncanny ability to troubleshoot temperamental office machines. His willingness to help whenever and wherever he could, and his ability to utilize what he learned in his classes enabled Brenson's supervisor to describe him as an indispensable "go to" person at the Center.

Prompt and timely by nature, Brenson did not hesitate to apply for his current job when it became available, and he was soon hired permanently by Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley.

Several entities, including SCSEP and Experience Works, along with Blinn College and Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley, came together to assist Brenson as he prepared for his new future. Blinn College was the training provider that provided his occupational training and Experience Works assisted him with his community service assignment. Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley provided job matching services, resume assistance, and paid for his tuition and support services, which included transportation, work attire, and additional paid work experience.

The kind of balance described above, where everyone is working together, is something that Brenson has come to appreciate as essential to his daily work. In fact, he describes the environment at the Center for Regional Services in Bryan as a perfectly balanced scale: everyone is important and needed, and each person recognizing his or her contribution to the balance is equally important. When asked about his future plans, Brenson Brown answers, "I plan to stay in this profession. I see that this can open into unlimited progressive opportunities in business and service industries."



Gracie Wells already had some medical office work experience under her belt when she heard about related training and employment services with SCSEP and Experience Works. Once her eligibility for the program had been determined, Experience Works was able to place her in a community service training assignment with the Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging.

As a Special Assistant she trained on site with the agency 20 hours a week, performing client intake interviews and conducting home assessments.

Miss Gracie, as she is called by her friends and colleagues, completed most of her coursework many years ago for an undergraduate degree in social work from Prairie View A&M University, but her computer skills were outdated. With the help of Experience Works and Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, she was able to take courses at Blinn College in computer training, and develop skills necessary to work with medical files in today's computerized world.

Eventually, through Experience Works, Miss Gracie learned of an opening with Health For All, a nonprofit and volunteer organization that has been supported by the Bryan community since 1987. Physicians' visits, pharmaceuticals, eye exams, lab tests and x-rays, and counseling services are a few of the many free services Health For All provides for low-income adults. This clinic treats about 5,000 people each year in the Brazos Valley region who either do not have health insurance or do not qualify for government programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, or County Indigent Funds.

Miss Gracie was hired by Health for All, where she is currently the Scheduling and Intake Administrator and has been a full-time employee for over a year. Extremely detail oriented, Gracie takes careful notes for each new client when she is collecting data for personal and medical histories. This information is critical in Health For All's determination of eligibility, since its mission is to

specifically assist individuals between the ages of 18 and 64 who are truly low-income and medically uninsured.

Gracie has updated and thoroughly reorganized the clinic's several thousand files. She keeps track of clients entering and exiting the Health For All system so that it always functions at capacity. Many of the patients who seek medical care at Health For All have chronic conditions that need to be managed on a regular basis. Gracie has refined the system so that at a glance, she can remind a patient what he or she will need to do in approximately six weeks, or depending on the case, in three months.

Miss Gracie grew up in and around Bryan and knows many of the families who patronize the Health For All clinic. The combination of her winning personality and her background in social work helps Gracie to make clients feel welcome and at home, but still maintain an atmosphere of professionalism. On more than one occasion and after their doctor's appointments, Miss Gracie has good naturedly but firmly admonished patients not to come a second time in their pajamas. And, they don't!

Friendly and outgoing, with a keen sense of humor, Gracie is in a position that she intends to keep. "When you know your niche, it isn't work!" she says with enthusiasm. Miss Gracie is a natural. She is an excellent match for the clinic's goal of improving community health and providing a healthcare alternative to the emergency room for the working poor and medically uninsured.



**The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.**

**For more information, visit:**  
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