

# OUTLOOK

## About Odyssey III

*The journey toward a better life!*

*Odyssey III is one of the programs of Community Concerns, Inc. The organization's name is derived from the name of the Greek character Odysseus. Odysseus and his crew, according to Greek mythology, struggled and traveled for 10 years after the Trojan War before returning to the comfort and security of their homes. Their trials and adventures are recalled in the epic poem, "The Odyssey."*

*For homeless individuals, unfortunately, the struggle is hardly a myth – it is a reality in which everyday occurrences that most people take for granted are the real-life adventures. Eating a hot meal, sleeping in a safe, clean bed or finding understanding counselors, job training and employment are just a few of the trials facing homeless people daily. But, there is hope at Odyssey III with its holistic approach to homelessness.*

## MAYOR SHIRLEY FRANKLIN AMONG 2007 TEDIOUS JOURNEY HONOREES



Mayor Shirley Franklin

The Second Annual Tedious Journey Awards Luncheon paid tribute to persons whose contributions to the quality of life and the ongoing progress of Atlanta and the southeast, inclusive of support of Community Concerns, Inc. and its outreach ministries, are immense and worthy of recognition. In the midst of myriad responsibilities dictated by positions of influence, the selected honorees clearly exemplify a commitment to community service by consistently partnering with Community Concerns, Inc. and Odyssey III to sustain the agency and its mission to address homelessness.

On December 1, 2007, Atlantans gathered at The Loudermilk Center to celebrate seven honorees: The Honorable Mayor of Atlanta, Shirley Franklin (Government); Mr. Arthur McClung Jr., Director of the City of Atlanta Operations for Georgia Power Company (Philanthropy); Mr. Joe Beasley, Southern Regional Director of Operation PUSH and Human Resource Coordinator and Director of Antioch Baptist Church North Urban Ministries (Community Service); the Outreach Ministries of Zion Hill Baptist Church, pastored by Rev. Dr. Aaron L. Parker (Faith Partner); Ms. Charlotte Marcus, Retired State Legislator and a member of the Odyssey III Board of Directors (Unsung Heroine), Mr. Clay Quarterman, CEO of Quarterman Construction (Business) and Mr. Mark Swinger, Odyssey III Client (Journeyman) Award. Atlanta Daily World columnist and City of East Point Police Department Chaplain, Rev. Dr. Herbert J. Bridgewater served as Master of Ceremonies.

The event was a prelude to the 20th Anniversary of Community Concerns Inc. and recognizing the dedicated sponsors and work of an agency that continues to respond to the needs of the regional homeless population.

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Arthur McClung



Aaron L. Parker



Charlotte Marcus



Joe Beasley



Clay Quarterman



Mark Swinger

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## From the Director's Desk



Rev. Dr. J. Allen Milner

The year 2007 was an exciting time at Odyssey III. We saw so many lives changed and so much effort and enthusiasm on the part of the entire staff and volunteers. I want to express my sincere thanks to the Board of Directors and the whole team of service providers. I must surely thank all those who provide funding for these efforts be they individuals who give regularly of their resources or the corporations like Coca Cola, CEWE Builders, Mrs. Winners Chicken and others. The various levels of government play no small part in the financing of these programs. We could not function without the support of the State Department of Community Affairs, The State Department of Human Resources, The Fulton County Department of Human Services, The City of Atlanta, HUD, and FEMA/United Way. They all created the funding stream that makes the miracles that happen through Community Concerns possible.

The excitement has been heightened by the addition of two new programs that Community Concerns operates and the expansion of the Ellis Street Facility for women and children. The first of the new programs is the Transitional Apartments for women and children. This program provides seventy (70) new beds, intensive case management, housing placement (permanent housing), and employment assistance. We have housed over 300 persons in this program since February 2007. We have moved 74 persons into permanent housing, 51 persons have been reconnected with their families, and 23 persons were placed into long-term transitional housing with supportive services.

There are now ten substance abuse treatment beds comprising the Homeless Recovery Program located in the Odyssey III Facility. This program also began January of this year and has served more than 50 persons. The program has moved these persons into gainful employment and permanent housing. We are experiencing great success with this program and all the other programs of Community Concerns, Inc.

The Ellis Street Emergency Shelter has been changed to an assessment center/emergency shelter. The Fulton County Department of Human Services has provided additional staffing to include two full-time case managers. The women are no longer put out of the shelter early in the mornings, but they participate in the development of an individualized service plan and the case managers assist them in carrying out their plan to obtain employment and permanent housing. Finally, we are expecting to expand our employment program and add additional staffing for job development.

To help provide all these services, The Board of Directors for Community Concerns, Inc. hosted The Second Annual Tedious Journey Awards Luncheon, December 1, 2007 at the Loudermilk Center. From our lead article in this edition of the Outlook, you can see that we recognized those persons who have helped the consumers of Community Concerns, Inc. to make it along their journey to success. Many of you were there as we honored Mayor Shirley Franklin and many others for their contributions to our mission. Our thanks to you for your continued support.

*Rev. Dr. J. Allen Milner*

## Editorial Committee

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## THE ODYSSEY III WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE: MAPPING THE JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT

Metropolitan Atlanta can be a costly place to live for even persons who possess the necessary skills to attain and retain a job that provides a livable wage. For persons lacking such skills making a living becomes fraught with frustration sapping the energy that normally leads to a productive life, active civic engagement and tax paying participation in the surrounding economy.

The Metropolitan Atlanta area has been fortunate to have leaders that care about a quality of life for all of its citizens, including those who find themselves at the margins, often at no fault of their own. The changing nature of the economic climate and increased cost of living in the area have caused growing hardship even among families where two wage earners are present; note the growth in foreclosures in recent months.

Community Concerns, Inc. has received \$75,000 for a 12-month expansion of its Odyssey III Workforce Development Program to be known as the Odyssey III Workforce Collaborative for low-income persons residing in the former Atlanta Empowerment Zone. The program will serve a minimum of 100 clients who may be new entrants to the job market, underemployed persons seeking better employment and/or ex-offenders.

November 2007 statistics indicate a favorable comparison between the unemployment rates for Metropolitan Atlanta (4.0%), the State of Georgia (4.2%) and the entire U.S. (4.7%). However, persons residing within the former Atlanta Empowerment Zone census tracts tend to suffer unemployment rates at more than twice the average for Metropolitan Atlanta.

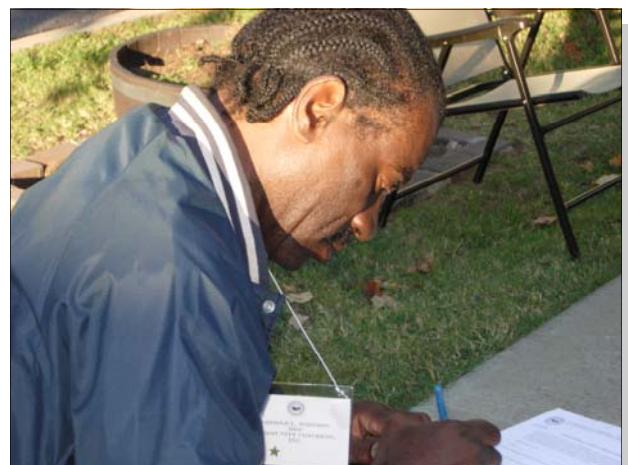
From displaced workers to discouraged workers, the prospects among low and moderate-income persons often are dim. There are a number of barriers to employment that prevent many of these clients from securing adequate employment and retaining that employment on a long-term basis. Many of these persons have limited educational attainment, low self-esteem, inadequate housing and transportation

and lack the basic soft skills to overcome such barriers.

Consistent with the Odyssey III mission, the Collaborative will focus primarily upon those currently experiencing or facing the immediate threat of homelessness. However, through a newly established partnership with the New Beginnings Job Training Program of Damascus Ministries, Inc. the program will reach beyond those facing homelessness to strengthen other low to moderate income individuals and families in the target area. Training will include job-readiness, job search skills, job retention strategies and client follow up with at least \$30,000 (40%) of the total program budget earmarked to address many of the social barriers to employment (i.e. child care, work attire, and transportation).

Odyssey III has always assisted clients in securing employment as a part of its holistic approach to homelessness. The formalization of this process was the establishment of the Workforce Development Program implemented in April 2002 as an expansion of the Supportive Service Program. The program developed from the recognition that there was a consensus among case managers that individual barriers that are likely to hinder the advancement of the program's population in the workplace are issues with low self-esteem and poor self-image, inadequate skill preparation, low literacy levels and poor career planning.

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**Mission Statement**

The mission of Community Concerns, Inc. is to provide a comprehensive, holistic approach to serving the needs of homeless people in metro Atlanta.

**Become a partner** in this effort by making a generous contribution to Community Concerns, Inc. for *Odyssey III*:

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\_\_\_\_\_ Please send me more information about your program.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer my time; please contact me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am enclosing my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONES: Business ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and mail to: Odyssey III, 276 Decatur Street, Atlanta, GA 30312. Phone:(404) 659-3390 \* Fax (404) 659-2108

Odyssey III of Community Concerns Inc.  
276 Decatur Street,  
Atlanta, GA 30312

**Celebrating 20 Years of Community Service**  
**Look for a calendar for**  
**20th Anniversary Events**  
**Coming Soon!**

## A TRUE STORY: ODYSSEY IS A BEACON OF LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD



Puffy white clouds race across a full moon. Venus twinkled and winked at me against a dark blue canopy. I was lying on my back looking up at a beautiful pre-dawn summer sky. A cool August breeze traced its fingers across my forehead. This could have been one of a million magical moments in my life. Instead it was the worst moment of my entire life. There I was lying on my back along a concrete wall, three feet above the sidewalk, waiting on a charity meal. The smell of urine that permeated the church step I had been sitting on chased me up the wall. I had just spent the night at a homeless shelter. The shelter, in which I spent the night, is one of the most notorious spots in Atlanta. It's an under-statement to say, I got little sleep that night. Two bunks from me I could hear the steady hiss of a guy "hitting" his crack pipe. Multi-hued hobgoblins caroused all night long – cackling, laughing, and screaming in their deranged merriment. I slept on my shoes, using them as a pillow; since someone had commented on how much they liked my Reeboks. With one eye open, I slept clutching my tennis shoes. When they knocked on my bunk at six o'clock in the morning, it was a relief. I had made it through the night.

Just one short month ago, I was producing commercials, infomercials, and radio spots for an advertising marketing agency. I was young, single, and getting paid extremely well. The agency had even committed to backing a short film I was planning to enter into the Atlanta film festival. I had all the exterior trappings of material success and yet it was all a meaningless façade covering an empty shell.

For the last five years I had been holding on by my fingernails. I was falling deeper and deeper into a downward spiral of drugs, alcohol, and depression. I was making great money, yet I was behind on all my bills, my rent, and I owed several people money. My car was in desperate need of maintenance. I had nothing in my bank account. It seemed, the more I made the more I spent. I kept telling myself I could stop this behavior by myself. When I realized I couldn't, I started looking for some way out. I attended AA meetings but I would sit in a corner in the back praying to God that no one would recognize me. After each binge, I thought about killing myself. When the end came, it came with a surprising suddenness. In the span of one month, I lost my car, my job, and my apartment. There I was, fraught with hunger, hoping no one I knew would see and recognize me as I stood in line, waiting on a charity meal.

Later that day, I was walking to Georgia State University (GSU). I was a GSU Alumnus and was allowed to use their computers. Half of me wanted to get back up and look for another job. I was sure I could find something. The other part of me wanted to step out in front of a moving car. Deep down inside, I recognized I could not keep living the lie I was living. I could not keep holding on. I knew I was doomed to repeat the same cycle. I had reached a hopeless state of mind. Little did I know but the hand of God was guiding me that day. There was a guy walking towards me. He looked like he just might know something about trying to recover. He looked as if he might know about a rehabilitation clinic nearby. He turned around and pointed at the building we were standing next to. "Right there buddy," he shrugged as he walked away. I walked in and a receptionist with a friendly smile greeted me. "What can we do for you?" she asked. "Is this a place for alcohol and drug rehabilitation?" I was nervous and yet desperate for help. "We do some of that," she smiled. "Are you homeless?" I answered, "Well, I've lost my job, my car, my apartment, and I just spent the worst night of my life at a homeless shelter. Does that count?" "Uh yes, just go through those doors and tell Mr. Smith you would like to get into the HRP program." That moment would be a turning point in my life, a turning point for the better. I had walked into a place that was so filled with the Spirit that I was surprised it did not glow from the outside. I had found Odyssey III.

In Odyssey, I began a voyage of discovery. I recovered things about myself I had lost – some of them good and some bad. I rediscovered my spirit. I began to see my path back to God. I woke up from a lifelong nightmare. I entered Odyssey looking for a magic pill to stop me from my self-destructive behavior; instead Odyssey helped me rediscover my soul. To me, Odyssey represents a second chance. There are many souls in this world that are lost, wandering blindly. They are urgently looking for a point of light. They are trapped within a sea of darkness. Odyssey III offers hope to those who have lost theirs; even if it is in the form of a friendly smile, a good meal, and an encouraging word. For those searching for more, Odyssey has so much more to offer. In an often angry and uncaring world, Odyssey is helping prepare our little shadowy corner of the world for the sunrise. Odyssey III is a beacon of light in a seemingly endless night.



(continued from page 3—Work Force Collaborative)

Artie Cobb was employed as a Career Development Facilitator to provide a more comprehensive and effective Employment Readiness and Job Placement service for homeless clients in a relatively short period of time. Since its inception Odyssey III Workforce Development has assisted nine hundred plus (900+) unduplicated clients with Employment Readiness and Employment Assessments and the program has placed more than six hundred (600) clients into employment.

The New Beginnings Job Training program, an affiliate of Damascus Ministries Training & Development, Inc. a 501(c)(3) organization, has been in operation since March 2000 and will serve among other partners to expand the reach and effectiveness of Odyssey III’s workforce efforts. Under the leadership of Barbara Morgan, its founder and Director/Trainer, the New Beginnings Job Training program has assisted three hundred plus (300+) clients with Job Readiness and Job Placement services with over half becoming employed.

The Collaborative will partner these two programs, each according to its strengths, curricular structure and service provision strategies.



Both programs serve clients that are entry level job seekers, residents seeking better employment and ex-offenders. However, Odyssey III Workforce Development serves primarily persons experiencing homelessness, those who are difficult to employ and those reentering the community from incarceration. New Beginnings primarily serves those who are not homeless. Through the Odyssey III Workforce Collaborative, both programs, along with other partners, will now serve both populations by “mapping the journey to employment.”



### ***Odyssey III Services***

*“The journey from homelessness to self-sufficiency”*

- ◆ Case Management and Referral Services
- ◆ Food Stamps through the Department of Family and Children Service
- ◆ Safe Haven Transitional Housing
- ◆ Workforce Counseling, Placement, and Follow-up
  - ◆ Job Training
  - ◆ Job Placement
  - ◆ Job Housing
  - ◆ Access to area Social Service Agencies
- ◆ Substance Abuse Counseling
- ◆ Helping Hands Day Service Center
- ◆ Overnight Shelter