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### Women gain job skills, confidence at Center

By Chriss Swaney

Two mornings a week, for five weeks, a dozen women came together to remold their working lives at the Center for Women in Squirrel Hill.

The group was participating in New Choices, a one-stop career program under Pennsylvania Women Work, a statewide non-profit organization.

Chana Gittle Deray, program instructor, said she compares the benefits of the course to the benefits of working out at a gym.

"The women come to learn or relearn who they are and their [personal] value. They practice skills and perspectives, strengthening themselves, so that when they get out, these muscles and tools will be there for them, helping them make better decisions from a place of worthiness, knowing their strengths, values; where they will not compromise and [have] the strength to back them up," said Deray, who is a graduate of the New Choices program. She is an entrepreneur and inspirational coach.

The emphasis on self-work changes the trajectory of what they feel they can shoot for and ask for, finding jobs that are a good fit, with good employers, and the tools they need to make it work once they are there, according to Deray.

"Workshop participants are looking for a fresh start," said Susan Showalter-Bucher, director of Pennsylvania Women Work-New Choices.

In the 10-session workshop, participants learn job and interview skills and goal-setting, as well as the confidence to succeed.

"I've enjoyed the program because it gave me networking opportunities and helped build my confidence," said Michelle Korinko, of Squirrel Hill. "I've been out of the workforce, and I want to refresh some of my skills."

Other participants, such as Isabelle Billig of Highland Park, said the program is helping her define the type of position she wants. After spending 20 years in the academic world as a neuroscientist, Billig said she wants to adapt to the real world. She wants to work in industry or for a private institute.

Billig and her peers in the New Choices program are entering the workforce at a time when women are helping to reshape the economic landscape.

Today, women comprise 56 percent of the workforce and women-owned businesses employ 9 million people and generate \$1.6 trillion in revenue.

"We are so pleased with the progress women are making today starting and growing businesses. Pittsburgh provides a great entrepreneurial

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# Women gain job skills, confidence at Women's Center

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ecosystem to support startups and our Center for Women's Entrepreneurship and our Women's Business Center are excited to be part of these available resources. We encourage women to take calculated risks, to start companies where they are passionate about what they are doing – it is truly a 24/7 lifestyle," said Rebecca U. Harris, executive director of the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University.

Part of that ecosystem is the Center for Women under the direction of Becky Abrams.

"We are so excited to be partnering with the state's New Choices program," said Abrams whose center has already helped some 1,500 women in transition.

In addition to the New Choices program, the Center for Women offers a cache of programs and assistance in mentoring, internships, financial coaching, and job shadowing.

"We try not to duplicate services offered

by other organizations," said Abrams. "We wanted to create soft-skill programs."

The Center for Women has received seed funding of \$75,000 a year for three years from the Jewish Women's Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh. That three-year funding concludes at the end of 2018. The center is now seeking new grant funding.

Abrams said the center relies on 150 volunteers to help keep the programs running.

"We know there is a real need out there for us; we offer an important support system for those in transition," she said.

Ashele Brewer, a New Choices participant, said she took the class to help with her transition into adulthood.

"I feel like I have so much to offer," said Brewer, originally from Belle Vernon. She aspires to become a massage therapist.

The New Choices program ran Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from May 29 to June 21.



Photo courtesy of Center for Women  
Jeff Smonskey, manager of the Squirrel Hill branch of Dollar Bank, leads a session on budgeting and credit for the New Choices program.



PITTSBURGH  
BUREAU OF POLICE

- Intentionally, Knowingly or Recklessly  
Causing Bodily Injury

**OFFENSE:** 7600 block Mulford St.,  
**Homewood South**, 9 a.m. Theft from  
Vehicle. Access Device Fraud.

**ARREST:** Frankstown and N. Braddock  
avenues, **Homewood North**, 10:28  
a.m., Male, 58. Paraphernalia - Use or  
Possession. Driving While Operating  
Privilege is Suspended or Revoked.  
Limitations on Turning Around.

**ARREST:** Frankstown and N. Braddock  
avenues, **Homewood North**, 10:28

**Larimer**, 7:30 a.m. Missing Juvenile.

**OFFENSE:** 200 block Larimer Ave.,  
**Larimer**, 7:30 a.m. Missing Juvenile.

**OFFENSE:** 1500 block Wightman St.,  
**Squirrel Hill North**, 7:30 a.m. Miscellaneous  
Incident: suspicious male.

**OFFENSE:** 5900 block Stanton Ave., **East  
Liberty**, 9 a.m. Harassment by Physical  
Contact or Attempts or Threats.

**OFFENSE:** 5700 block Centre Ave.,  
**Shadyside**, 11:15 a.m. Harassment.

**OFFENSE:** 5800 block Nicholson St.,  
**Squirrel Hill North**, 11:22 a.m. Theft of

10:45 a.m., Male, 25. Theft by Unlawful  
Taking or Disposition - Movable Item.

**OFFENSE:** 1200 block Ferris Ct.,

**Homewood North**, 4:53 p.m. Recovered  
Stolen Vehicle (Outside City). Accidents  
Involving Damage to Unattended Vehicle or  
Property.

**ARREST:** 900 block Tyson St., **Homewood  
North**, 6 p.m., Male, 41. Driving Under the  
Influence - Highest Rate of Alcohol - Blood  
Alcohol Content Greater than or Equal to  
.16 Percent. Driving Under the Influence