

Dawn Close is a Getting Ahead graduate and a facilitator in Dubuque, IA. She wrote "The Brilliance of Getting Ahead," a description of why and how Getting Ahead works.

# **The Brilliance of Getting Ahead**

**By: Dawn Close**

Getting Ahead (GA) is a curriculum developed from the work of Philip Devol's *Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting'-by-World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life*.

Most programs give you forms to fill out, then analyze and categorize you, and then you are told what you need to change and here are the ten things you need to do to fix everything wrong with you. Getting Ahead does not analyze and point out faults or offer generic solutions. The participants themselves decide what they learn and what they change, if anything, and how they are going to do it. Who better to make that determination? Brilliant!

GA is called a "class" only because the term is easily recognized and understood as a learning environment; but, with GA there are no teachers, there are only facilitators. Facilitators are people who are there to present the material and guide GA participants through activities. These facilitators are graduates from the GA class, so not only do they know the material from the participant point of view of a participant, but they have lived it themselves. Brilliant!

The material is timely and relevant to a NOW perspective, which is where people in poverty live. It is an awareness program. It brings to light everyday things that may not have been noticed before because they are presented from a different angle, the angle of the person in poverty. The purpose is to make participants aware of their own world, how the world around them functions, and gives them the tools to successfully navigate in that world. Brilliant!

Getting Ahead is experienced in a group setting where participants build relationships, share resources and provide valuable personal experience and perspective. We can often learn just as much from each other as we can from a book. Brilliant!

The most valuable and unique aspect of GA is the holistic approach. It examines poverty, not just as a personal choice issue, but on a much broader view. It is not just the individual personal choices that create poverty, but it is the cumulative effect of their inner circle, the community they live in, the agencies and governments that all contribute to poverty. Brilliant!

GA is all about choice and relationships. It gives the participants the opportunity to choose for themselves what they will do with the information presented. GA provides an atmosphere that encourages the development of relationships that support and help participants get ahead.

Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime. Brilliant!