

PROJECT MATCH



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Project Match

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Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

We are writing to share with you two significant changes at Project Match. First, as of January 4, Toby Herr has stepped down as Executive Director, though she is continuing her work at Project Match as Director of Program Development. Project Match's Board of Directors has appointed Suzanne Wagner as Interim Executive Director. Suzanne has been with the organization since 1993 and taken on many roles, including lead researcher and writer, fundraising coordinator, and administrative director; no one better understands how all the pieces of Project Match fit together. Of course, many of you already know Suzanne through working with her over the years or by reading the monographs and papers she has written with Project Match's research team.

The second significant change is a shift in the focus of Project Match's work. Since 1985, our focus has been on questions related to the labor force attachment of the long-term unemployed: How long does it take for welfare recipients and other very disadvantaged groups to become steady workers—that is, to work year-round—and what does this process look like? How can we improve welfare-to-work and workforce development programs—and the larger systems in which they are embedded—to facilitate this process? In exploring these questions, we have tended to look through the lens of human development, which has led us to develop theories about strengthening the work identity of adults in communities where mainstream employment has not been the norm.

Since many of Project Match's lessons regarding labor force attachment have now been integrated into workforce development programs around the country, particularly in the form of post-employment services, we have decided to turn our attention to the large group of long-term unemployed who are still unlikely ever to become steady workers. Our own research, as well as that of many others, has shown that at least 50% of participants in employment programs do not end up working year-round or do not work at all. Instead of devising yet another variation of an employment-focused intervention for the nonworkers in this group, at Project Match we have become interested in building on their identities as parents and community members. For us, the new questions are: How can we help nonworkers promote—in concrete, measurable ways—the healthy development and school success of their children and the safety and vitality of their communities? Are there ways that government systems—whether welfare, public housing, or school systems—can encourage these activities through either mandates or incentives, without deemphasizing the importance of work for those who can?

More than 20 years ago, when Project Match first suggested that leaving welfare for work is a process, not an event, we encountered considerable resistance to the idea, so we will not be surprised if our new agenda around “do for your kids” and community engagement for nonworkers is similarly received at first. But it is this willingness of ours to keep looking beyond the status quo that is at the heart of Project Match's mission. All of us here at Project Match are incredibly excited about the new direction in which we are heading, and we hope that you all will be with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fran Stott".

Fran Stott
Acting President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toby Herr".

Toby Herr
Founder and Director of Program Development