



Contact: Jill Marasa
Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County
jmarasa@youredc.com
Office: 772.336.6250 Cell: 772.370.8108

George to head Lincoln Park initiative

Fort Pierce/October 31 – Melanie George, a self-described product of the Lincoln Park area, has been named to lead the Common Good Initiative’s Lincoln Park Career Pathways training program as its career consultant.

Allegany Franciscan Ministries of Florida (AFMFL) launched the Common Good Initiative in Lincoln Park in 2014. In June of this year, AFMFL approved a \$415,000 grant to fund career training for 176 Lincoln Park residents over a two-year period.

George attended Lincoln Park Academy (LPA) during eighth grade and graduated from Fort Pierce Central High School. Her family originally came to St. Lucie County when her father was offered a coaching position at LPA, he went on to become principal at C. A. Moore Elementary School. Her mother taught at LPA.

“I am very, very excited about this opportunity. I know many of the people in Lincoln Park, businesses owned by family friends; so many things, so many memories,” said George who started work last week.

Starting in January, three training pathway certification programs will be offered in the Lincoln Park community at the Indian River State College (IRSC) Blackburn Center on Avenue D – Certified Production Technician (CPT), Certified Logistics Associate (CLA) and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). In addition to 100 percent of the tuition cost, the grant also covers classroom computers, student transportation, meal stipends, child care, a dedicated career consultant, marketing and outreach.

“The Common Good Initiative is excited to partner with the Economic Development Council (EDC), Treasure Coast Manufacturers Association (TCMA), and IRSC to provide access to Lincoln Park residents to become certified in one of three career pathways,” said Upendo Shabazz, regional vice president for Allegany Franciscan Ministries. “The Career Pathways Initiative is a unique offering for St. Lucie County, and allows residents of Lincoln Park the opportunity to become part of the skilled labor force and make a livable wage.”

George's role will be to build awareness of the program opportunities among Lincoln Park residents, mentor program participants, and provide accountability for the program. She lives in Fort Pierce and is experienced educator.

Most recently, George has been an advocate for migrant students in the St. Lucie Public Schools. She has a master's degree in counseling and previously worked with Families First of Florida as a therapist.

"I look forward to being part of the team to see the goals of the grant come to fruition and, hopefully, renew. (The training program) is an opportunity to be purposeful, show results; I can't think of anything more rewarding than that," said George.

"Having had the opportunity to work with both the Allegany Franciscan Ministries as a council member for the Common Good Initiative, as well as our economic development partners, I couldn't be more pleased with this collaboration," said St. Lucie County Administrator Howard Tipton. "Overcoming barriers to employment - it's exactly what we should be doing!"

"We are fortunate to have someone as experienced and enthusiastic as Melanie available to help launch this program," said Peter Tesch, EDC president. "While Melanie recruits students for the training programs, the EDC will be focusing on identifying local employers with job opportunities for the students at the completion of their training. This is a win-win for everyone involved, and is especially helpful for employers in healthcare, manufacturing and distribution."

The Career Pathways Program is funded for two years. The first training sessions will begin January 7, 2019. Individual CPT and CLA participants will complete their programs in six weeks. CNA participants will finish in eight weeks. Prospective employers are encouraged to contact Jill Marasa at the EDC at 772-336-6250. Employers are being sought to host site visits and for classroom discussions about relevant local job opportunities.

"We have high hopes for the outcome of this two-year program which aligns with our local workforce development area's strategic goal for building a skilled and qualified talent pipeline," said Brian Bauer, CSRC president/CEO.

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County prepared the grant proposal in partnership with Indian River State College and CareerSource Research Coast (CSRC).

About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

The EDC is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works

in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County's economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.336.6250 or <http://www.youredc.com>.

About Allegany Franciscan Ministries of Florida

Together. Connected. Empowered. Allegany Franciscan Ministries is deeply committed to healthier, safer and more connected communities in which our most vulnerable residents can live, learn, work and play. To date, this faith-based organization has contributed \$88 million through 4004 grants to 1519 organizations. For more information, visit <http://www.afmfl.org>.