

# Cutting Costs and Enhancing Quality

Grant from Rhode Island Foundation

Allows Looking Upwards to tap technology for staff training

*May 2011*---- Research shows that training employees through a combination of online and in-person coursework is highly effective. It's also economical. Yet, nonprofits on a tight budget often cannot afford the initial cost of the necessary equipment, coupled with the staff resources it takes to create a quality online training program.

For Looking Upwards, the solution came through the forward-thinking grant focus of the Newport County Fund and a partnership with nearby nonprofit agency, Bridges of Jamestown. Together, Looking Upwards and Bridges were awarded \$41,767 by The Rhode Island Foundation's Newport County Fund. Both organizations provide services for people with developmental disabilities and have always had a strong relationship in working towards mutual goals.

The grant helps the two nonprofits to collaborate in developing a shared online training component for the direct-support staff in their adult services programs. Direct support workers play a critical role in the quality of life for the individuals they support. Especially in the adult services, where some individuals with disabilities have intensive medical needs and receive 24 hour support services, staff members must develop a wide variety of skills.

Savings from this cost-effective approach to staff development will help the organizations to maintain a high quality of staff training, while navigating funding cuts and the challenges of the recessionary economy. The new training is a hybrid model of both online and in-person training that is anticipated to save Bridges 20% and Looking Upwards 25% of the cost of staff training in adult services.

The grant from the Newport County Fund enabled both organizations to purchase the computers and other technology needed for their staff members to access the training online. It's part of Newport County Funds' Common Ground initiative designed to promote regional collaboration among Newport County nonprofits.

Development of the training is underway. By fall of 2011, staff members of both organizations will be able to access the new training online.