

Plan to Cut Welfare Rolls Working



NATIONAL WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION INC.

Lupe Anguiano: "Women want jobs."

SUMMARY: A privately funded program to take welfare mothers off public aid by finding them jobs has succeeded for 3,000 women in five states since the plan was initiated in 1978. Founder Lupe Anguiano, an ex-nun, is trying to raise enough private-sector money, with the help of both political parties, to expand the program nationwide. She claims her plan could cut the number of welfare families nationwide by 85 percent in five years. She shuns the use of federal or state funds, however: The red tape would snarl the program, she says.

Lupe Anguiano is doing what politicians only promise to do: She is reforming the welfare system.

Since she started a program called Let's Get Off Welfare in San Antonio, Texas, in 1978, it has helped 3,000 welfare mothers in five states find work. A phenomenal 88 percent were still at their jobs a year after entering the program.

The program is supported entirely by private donations, and its founder, a 56-year-old former nun, intends to keep it that way. Applied nationwide, her approach could cut the number of families on welfare by 85 percent in five years, she claims.

"Wouldn't this be great if we could do it as a present for President Reagan?" she says. "We'd put the government to shame."

Though still an active Democrat, she says the problem with her party "is that they are locked into social delivery systems. They don't want to give them up even though they patronize the poor a lot.

"Walter Mondale criticized the Reagan administration as heartless, but the only thing he offered was more food stamps and welfare, as if that were God's gift to the poor," she says.

"It's very degrading. Women hate the welfare system. They want jobs."

Lupe Anguiano is seeking the support of both parties in raising funds for the program. But she wants no federal support because she says Congress would never be able to enact a program without red tape, which she feels would keep it from working.

Judy Hughes, the new president of the National Federation of Republican Women, has vowed to make the program one of her group's top priorities.

Republican National Committee Co-chairmen Betty Heitman and Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada also have promised their help in raising \$1 million a year over the next four years to expand the program. That's what it would take to replicate it in a group of key cities where most of the nation's welfare mothers are clustered, Anguiano estimates.

She says her program is geared to mothers because 91 percent of those who receive welfare are in families headed by a woman. The program was launched in cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and with help from other church and local groups.

The program has worked on a small scale in eight areas in five states, including Tacoma, Wash., and Denver. Placement costs about \$2,500 per person, compared to \$4,000 for programs under the Job Training Partnership Act created by the

Reagan administration and \$6,000 under Job Corps programs.

The Anguiano plan, officially called National Women's Employment and Education Inc., is more successful than federal programs, its founder says, because:

- There is more and longer contact with the women in the program. Federal placement programs call for only three-month follow-ups. Counselors meet clients in the Women's Employment and Education program once a week for a year to monitor progress.

- If a woman is fired at her first job, a counselor explains what she did wrong. "They learn they can't miss work, that they can't be late," Anguiano says.

- Real jobs are provided. Under the Anguiano program, the woman's salary and training are paid for by the employer. The jobs are usually entry-level, with pay of \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year and family health benefits. Women use existing education programs to get their job training.

Under federal job training programs, Lupe Anguiano says, the government pays for half the salary while the person is in training: "She is placed in a special category from Day 1."

- Counselors help the women make up a budget based on the least amount of money their families can live on in a year. This defines the type of job they need. Suitable child care, transportation and other items are part of the budget. Sometimes part of the placement money is used to offset those costs temporarily.

The New York City Department of Human Resources offered Anguiano's program a \$200,000 grant last year, twice the amount its New York chapter raised last year from private contributors. But Anguiano turned down the money because the agency wanted her to follow government rules, which would bar yearlong follow-ups, she said.

Most of the New York women have been placed in clerical jobs in Manhattan at private companies such as Chase Manhattan Bank and J.C. Penney. Others have non-traditional jobs, such as reading meters and doing utility repairs for Con Edison.

Gloria Livingston, 27, a single mother formerly on welfare, now works in the accounting department of J.C. Penney. After working for a year, she wrote Lupe Anguiano that her three children "look up to me and respect me more. Granted, it's a struggle, but I'd rather be struggling being employed than struggle on public assistance."

— Rita McWilliams

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