

**THE LAURIE MITCHELL
EMPLOYMENT CENTER**

6295 Edsall Road #175
Alexandria, VA 22312



BUILDING THE BRIDGE TO RECOVERY AND CAREERS



*Celebrating
Fifteen Years!*



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*Celebrating
Fifteen Years!*

LAURIE MITCHELL EMPLOYMENT CENTER

OFFERING HOPE ALONG YOUR CHOSEN PATH



Dear Friend,

Come join us as we celebrate our 15th year helping people gain the skills they need to find a job! On Saturday night, December 11, 2010, the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center will host a *Bridgebuilding Party* to acknowledge the many bridges that we have helped construct... **bridges that have moved individuals toward their recovery and career goals.**

Listen to the stories of how LMEC has changed lives... here's what Kirsten has to say about her LMEC experience:

“LMEC is one of the few places on Earth where the things too good to be true *are in fact true*. I feel truly blessed to have walked through the doors of LMEC March 31, 2008 when I started my Technical Education Center (TEC) 2000 classes.

I have the skills I use now because of LMEC. It has been great to have an outlet to learn more and grow in my Recovery because of LMEC. When this whole thing started I was living in a homeless shelter and now I have an apartment! What more can I say—**my entire life has improved and this has benefited the lives of my children as well** because I am not so stressed out, worrying how to pay bills.”

In the last 15 years, we have touched many lives like this one. **Not only do we equip someone with skills to get a job, we give them hope.** That's what this *Bridgebuilding Party* is all about—sharing hope and healing with each other. Past, present, and future!

When life gets overwhelming, **LMEC is there for peer support.** Problems on the job? A co-worker causing trouble? Come talk about it at LMEC—we've all been there. We can help someone identify their emotional triggers and help them cope with a situation before it gets too difficult. Not only is LMEC helping individuals acquire the training and employment skills needed to *gain* employment, but we actively work with folks so that they can *keep* and *excel* in their jobs.

We all know that **when individuals who are in mental health and addiction recovery are employed, they are much less likely to experience a relapse.** The current job market is highly competitive with more people than ever looking for work. People with a mental health disability need LMEC's services to level the playing field and give them a fighting chance.

In Fiscal Year 2010, LMEC served over 1698 people who made over 25,000 visits to LMEC. **Our participants keep coming back—a clear indicator we're doing something right!** Read what one of our graduates, Joan, has to say:

“The Employment Specialists were wonderful support. I had holes in my employment history, and they suggested a resume emphasizing my job qualifications.

As a result, **I landed my job** with the Government, which I have held for the past 8 years. Only a small percentage of people with mental health disabilities are employed, **but many more of us want to hold jobs.**”

Come celebrate with us the lives that have been **changed**—the people who have become **employed**—the ones who have **moved off disability**—because of involvement with LMEC. Your gifts to the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center over the past 15 years have **positively impacted many lives in ways you can never imagine.**

In addition to coming to our Holiday Bridgebuilding Celebration, I want you to **open your checkbook and make a financial contribution** to the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center. To keep our doors open, our computers powered up, and our interns teaching, we need approximately \$3800 per month from individuals like you.

Can you please make a donation today?

We provide **critical employment services** to the community with the **grace and understanding that only a consumer-operated center can provide.** The interns and staff at LMEC know what it’s like to re-enter the job market after taking time off for a mental health crisis. And we know what it’s like to keep plugging away at work when we can barely function in other areas of our life.

You’ve heard the statistics... **one in four of us will experience a diagnosable mental illness within our lifetime.** LMEC, through our up-to-date training programs and wellness support, can minimize the interruption mental health challenges can have on our careers and social life. **Jobs and education can provide a feeling of purpose, contribution, and belonging when nothing else in life makes sense.** Check out Gregory’s story:

“I saw a flyer about how to become a Certified Microsoft Office Specialist when I attended a job fair at the Government Center. I was interested in computers so I followed up and was accepted into the TEC 2000 Class in March of 2008.

Within a year, I completed the course and an internship at LMEC which **propelled me into the next level of my career.** Once the student, I was now the instructor for computer classes. The education from being a TEC 2000 graduate and an intern at LMEC **gave me the confidence to accept the challenge of bringing computer training to my peers.**

This training is most important when the ones you teach learn something that **gives them hope and confidence** to use what they have learned to **empower themselves.** I was not only an instructor, but **I had an impact on their lives and touched families and communities.** We all benefit from the process.”

Gregory is just one example of someone who not only has been touched by LMEC, but who, in turn, is touching other lives with the knowledge and training he has received.

Gregory couldn’t succeed alone... and neither can LMEC. We need your contributions today.

If you, and others like you, can make a contribution to our work, **we can keep this cycle of hope evolving.** Please make a donation to LMEC so we can help others like Gregory. It may be you, a family member, or someone you’re just acquainted with that ends up needing LMEC’s

services. **Every dollar helps** those who are building their own road to recovery. I like thinking of LMEC as a *bridge*... sometimes it's over troubled waters, over a deep crevice in our lives, or over problems just too big for us to push through. **LMEC helps us over these obstacles by providing the support and the path to stay on track.**

When I began my work at LMEC in 20xx, I saw enormous potential for the organization and was proud to become part of it. Since then, you have provided many opportunities for us to grow. We've done this together. Please join me on December 11 so we may celebrate our 15 years of success stories. Here are a few accomplishments I am most proud of: (write whatever you want here, I just pulled out some stuff)

- Instituting the "Into The Future" Internship program, which has helped over 20 people take beginning steps to return to work. The Internship program offers a safe space for individuals to prepare themselves as they move forward on their journey of recovery and road to employment. Each year, interns contribute an estimated 5800 hours of work to LMEC and our community.
- LMEC created its first strategic plan with input from various stakeholders. The strategic plan focuses on five sections: Employment, Training, the LMEC Model, Marketing and Fundraising. I see our strategic plan as LMEC's roadmap to success!
- We have joined forces with our friends in recovery— In addition to the services offered at LMEC, we created strong partnerships and collaborations. For example, once a week LMEC staff travels to the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute (NVMHI) to provide WRAP classes, computer training, and recovery based employment groups. We also provide computer training to the Falls Church Consumer Wellness Center and the Reston Drop-In Center twice a week. No one likes to "go it alone." **Working together and sharing success, we create a stronger recovery movement.**

As we celebrate 15 years of the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center, we look to the future with boundless optimism. We've learned a lot and have a great bunch of people who come through our doors every day. **We've got a great reputation for success** and other groups across the country want to replicate our model. I hope you are as proud of our work as I am.

Since the early days of our establishment in 1995, **we have seen the demand for our services grow.** The center was founded by a group of people with mental health issues who wanted to support other people in their situation— and since then, **LMEC has literally helped thousands.** Our free computer training in standard software applications is more popular than ever. Training is available in Microsoft Office Suite (certification), Front Page, QuickBooks, Networking Basics, and Adobe PhotoShop. Knowledge of all of these applications is in demand in the competitive marketplace. **We are leveling the playing field for those experiencing differing abilities by offering these classes. LMEC offers a unique set of services!**

We also offer training in using the Internet and Email. We help people **make connections** and **build a virtual network with friends and supporters** via email. I have seen people **become reconnected to the world through the internet**— we can open up a world of possibilities and learning for each other once we get online.

At LMEC, **we provide access and connection** to a world that is moving so fast around us.

LMEC enables people to keep up with technology and even be on the leading edge. Our combination of offerings are unique— technology training along with support groups designed to keep us mentally healthy. At LMEC, we know what it means to have mental health issues and other disabilities. **We can relate to our peers in a very humanistic and safe environment while we learn a new way of functioning in the world.**

The Laurie Mitchell Employment Center is a bridge people use to help folks reach their mental health recovery and career goals... yet LMEC is also the bridge where it's safe to pause, sit down and dangle one's bare feet off the edge, to enjoy the rushing water. There's no where else like it!

As you can clearly tell by the length of this letter, I am excited about the work we are doing together at the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center. I hope you are, too. Every day we get requests to provide more and more services— what we offer is in demand.

There are two things I want you to do today:

1. **Go mark your calendar** for December 11, 6 pm, for the LMEC *Bridgebuilding Party*. It will be held at the center, and I hope you bring a friend.

2. **Grab your checkbook and make out a check to the Laurie Mitchell Employment Center.** Please be generous. You know the work we do is vital to the health and wholeness of our community and we change lives for the better.

I can't sum up the effect of our work any better than our student Stephanie can. Stephanie now holds a fulltime job:

“LMEC had faith in me from the beginning. They put forth every effort to get me where I want to be and help me to accomplish my goals. **I'm able to live a normal life and be a productive person in society.** I can't thank LMEC enough for everything they've done for me.”

That “thanks” really goes to our supporters like you. Thank you for believing in LMEC and celebrating our joy with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Goodwin".

Lisa Goodwin
Executive Director, LMEC

P. S.— I've enclosed a reply card so we can get a count of how many people will be attending our party. I also need you to contribute as much as you can to LMEC in the enclosed envelope. We are still feeling the effects of the economic downturn, and need to raise about \$25,000 by the end of the year. Thank you for your help! I look forward to seeing you on December 11.

LMEC is the bridge people use to reach their mental health recovery and career goals.

*Yes! I can help strengthen
the bridge to recovery!*



Enclosed is a TAX DEDUCTIBLE contribution of:

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$60 \$35 \$_____



I will* or will not be attending the *15th Anniversary Bridgebuilding party* on December 11, 2010 *(suggested donation \$35/person \$60/per couple)

**LAURIE MITCHELL
EMPLOYMENT CENTER**

CHECK ENCLOSED

USE MY CREDIT CARD Visa MasterCard

Ellen Osborne

Charlottesville, VA 22902

Card Number

Signature

Expiration Date CCV # (three numbers on back)

Please provide address on credit card if different from address on left.

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**LAURIE MITCHELL
EMPLOYMENT CENTER**

**6295 EDSALL ROAD #175
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22312**





The Laurie Mitchell Employment Center
invites you to the 15th Anniversary
Bridgebuilding Party

HORS D'OEUVRES • DINNER • SILENT AUCTION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2011

6 PM • AT THE CENTER

RSVP

\$35 DONATION PER PERSON/ \$60 COUPLE REQUESTED