

Recreational Therapist Finds Rewarding Career

Brings energy and ideas to fragile kids

It's a dream job for Elizabeth Sullivan. She is providing activities and fun for very fragile children as a recreational therapist in the medical profession.

Sullivan recently joined the Center for Medically Fragile Children, a part of the Providence Child Center, where she works as the recreational activities and volunteer coordinator.

The center is home to 58 young people who have severe disabilities and complex medical needs. The facility strives to provide residents with typical outings and activities enjoyed by any person their age, from fishing trips to zoo visits to spring proms.

Sullivan is responsible for the therapeutic recreation and play of 58 young people ranging in



Elizabeth Sullivan

age from birth to 21 years.

"I believe that a child's only job is to play and I am thrilled to be a part of bringing these opportunities to our children here at the

center," said Sullivan.

Sullivan is a certified recreation therapy specialist, graduating from Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vt. She interned at Children's Hospital of New Orleans in Louisiana and worked previously as a counselor with the Hole In The Wall Camp system at the Double-H Ranch, a camp for children with terminal and chronic illnesses.

Sullivan also will be responsible for the large team of volunteers who help enrich the lives of the young residents.

Nearly 300 volunteers, from grandmas to elementary school students, spend time weekly with center residents reading books, wheelchair dancing and holding hands.

Minority-owned Businesses Growing

Gains in wealth, education helping

(AP) — Black-owned businesses are among the fastest-growing segments of the American economy.

The number of black-owned businesses grew by 45 percent from 1997 to 2002, more than four times the national rate for all businesses, according to a new report by Census Bureau.

Revenues from black-owned businesses increased by 25 percent during the period, to about \$89 billion.

However, nearly all black-owned businesses are small — 92 percent had no employees other than the owners. By comparison, about 75 percent of all U.S. businesses had no employees.

"We do have challenges, we are making progress," said Ronald Langston, director of the Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Agency. "This is the real challenge: to move these smaller businesses into the next step of growth."

The report is the third in a series of Census Bureau reports on businesses owned by women, Hispanics and blacks. Together, the reports show that the three groups are underrepresented in business ownership but are narrowing the gap with white men.

From 1997 to 2002: The number of all U.S. businesses grew by 10 percent, to about 23 million. The number of businesses owned by women grew by 20 percent, to 6.5 million; and the number of Hispanic-owned businesses grew by 31 percent, to nearly 1.6 million.

African American entrepreneurs owned 1.2 million companies in 2002 or about 5 percent of all non-farm businesses in the U.S., while making up about 12 percent of the population.



Ronald Langston

"We're about halfway there," said Harry Alford, president and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. "The future is bright. We will continue to spiral up."

Alford said black entrepreneurs have been helped by improved education levels and increased incomes among black consumers and business owners.

"We've got the first generation of significantly educated people," Alford said. "There's a black middle class like never before."

The largest sector for black-owned businesses was health care and social assistance, with 246,000 back-owned firms. The second largest was other services, such as personal services, repair and maintenance, with 210,000 firms.

New York state had the most black-owned firms, with 129,324. It was followed by California, Florida, Georgia and Texas. Together, the five states are home to 44 percent of all black-owned firms in the country.

Opening Doors to Business Growth

Certification to maximize success

BY JENNY MILES

In a competitive market, utilizing tools that can increase your small business' visibility is a wise strategy that can yield high returns. For many minority and women-owned companies, acquiring state or national certification opens doors to business opportunities that might otherwise have been overlooked.

Being informed about certification options and then taking the time to apply is a solid strategy for maximizing your business success.

Minority-owned enterprise (MBE) or woman-owned enterprise (WBE) certifications are granted by public and private agencies to companies that can prove they are at least 51 percent-owned and -operated by minorities or women. The certifications offer a seal of approval, showing that a company's claim of being a minority or woman-owned enterprise (M/WBE) has been investigated thoroughly by an outside group and found to be true.

For many companies, certification can mean the difference between winning and losing a contract. Being certified is one way to make the products or services you offer more attractive to these types of potential

customers. It may take some time to get certified. Fees may range as high as \$350 and the certification process tends to be stringent, involving a lot of

paperwork and even a site visit. You can help decrease the time it takes by submitting complete and accurate packages, double-

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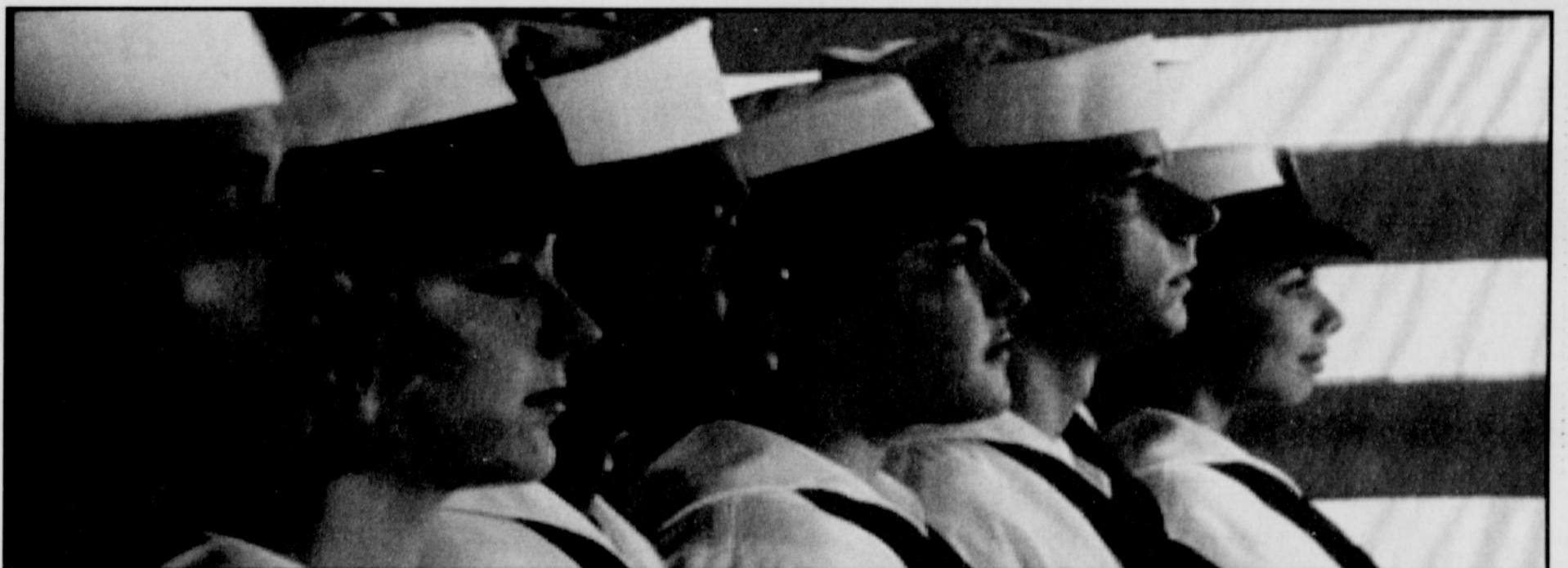
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