

DISTRICT 1199C
Training &
Upgrading
Fund



CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER

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Her union banner aloft, a younger Cheryl Feldman marched for health care through the streets of Philadelphia. **Read Feldman's bio on page 2.**



TRAINING FUND LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Teresa Collins has been named interim executive director of District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund following longtime leader Cheryl Feldman's retirement on Dec. 11.

Collins, the Fund's Early Childhood Workforce (ECE) Strategy Director, distinguished herself in implementing the Training Fund's statewide Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship Career Pathway Program.

Welcoming Collins, Training Fund board co-chairs Cheryl Whitfield and Chris Woods thanked Feldman for her work, which advanced the lives and careers of thousands of students and built the Training Fund's national reputation in workforce development. The board expects to name Feldman's permanent successor in the winter or early spring.

*A fierce advocate for the marginalized, Teresa Collins, interim executive director of District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, believes everyone brings expertise to the table. "We have the potential to grow – to serve more union members and more community members." **Read Collins' bio on page 3.***

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ALL MY THANKS, CHERYL FELDMAN

Dear Training & Upgrading Fund Students,

After 43 years working at the Training Fund, I've retired as executive director of [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund](#). And as I do, I want to express my deepest gratitude to you.

So much of the work of an executive director can be demanding. There are budgets and grants, applications for insurances, and keeping up with regulatory requirements. It's very time consuming and sometimes it's overwhelming. Often you could find me buried underneath piles of paperwork in my office.

But sometimes I'd escape into the hallway. There, I'd hear your stories of success, of overcoming challenging obstacles. I'd see the light in your eyes and hear the excitement in your voices. And every June, I'd watch two blocks of graduates parading along Broad Street for ceremonies at the Kimmel Center.

Each time, I'd realize anew how I was so lucky to have a job where daily I could be inspired by the Training Fund's students and graduates. With resilience, you bravely took learning into your own hands. You decided, despite everything, to make a difference for yourselves and your families, while positively impacting your employers, your community, your city and really, the world.

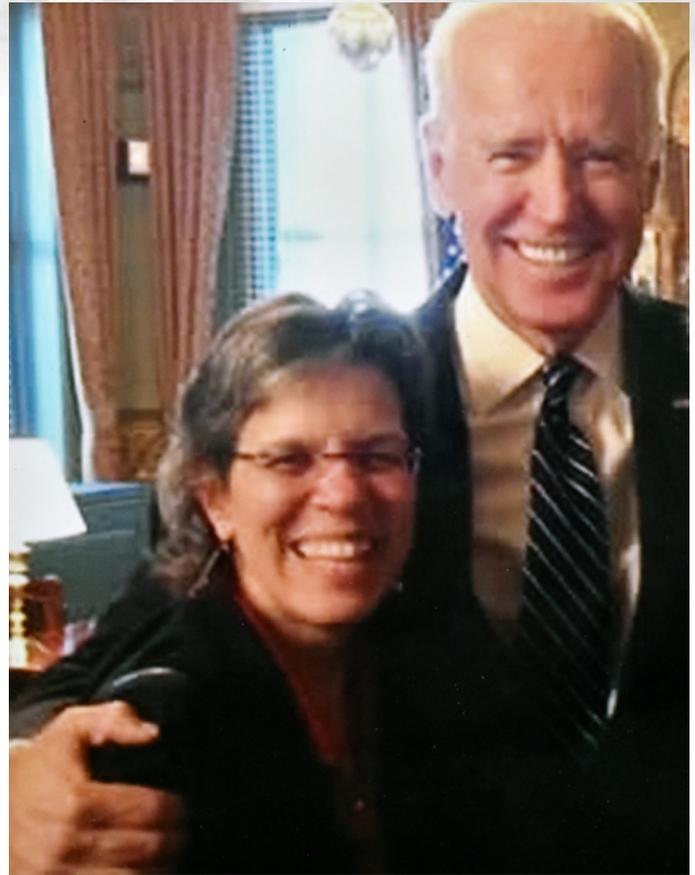
Your example made it possible for me to return to my tasks energized and inspired. Your example gave my life fulfillment and satisfaction.

I'm particularly grateful to my mentor, [Henry Nicholas](#), the visionary union leader who made equal access to education and the opportunity for advancement the major focus of a labor management organizing strategy.

To the Training Fund board, workforce partners, and my Training Fund colleagues, I thank you deeply as well for your support and encouragement. Together, we've shared many challenges and joys, pressing forward with the critically important work of creating quality education and training programs leading to family sustaining employment and career advancement.

Students, colleagues, friends, as we look to the future, I wish you continued fulfillment and much success.

All the best always,
CHERYL FELDMAN



Cheryl Feldman with then Vice President Joe Biden at a White House meeting on workforce development and training in 2015.

CHERYL FELDMAN: A STORIED CAREER

Cheryl Feldman's desk on the 10th floor of the Land Title building in Center City Philadelphia looked very different in early December.

Mountains of reports, files, documents, working papers and memos that usually towered over her head began to melt away as Feldman, long-time executive director of the [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund](#), prepared for her Dec. 11 retirement.

"It's a lot of work," she said, mid-filing and sorting.

Is and was.

On Dec. 11, 43 years to the day from when she started as a Training Fund project manager, Feldman turned over the reins to interim director

Teresa Collins with that blend of exhilaration and sadness so familiar to people lucky enough to have made their mission their work.

"We're a worker-based educational center," Feldman said. "The Training & Upgrading Fund has become an anchor institution in Philadelphia, serving everyone with its doors open."

Chris Woods, president of the [National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199C](#) and co-chair of the Training Fund's board, said Feldman's leadership is obvious at graduations when so many students are honored for their successes.

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TERESA COLLINS: NEW ENERGY

Teresa Collins, the interim executive director of [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund](#), tends hundreds of plants inside and outside her home in Philadelphia's East Oak Lane neighborhood.

She's gentle with them, nurturing.

But fierce would be a better description for Collins when it comes to advocating for the mistreated, downtrodden, and disadvantaged.

"I see things the way they are," she said. "If I see someone receiving something that's not equitable, I'm going to fight for that person, it doesn't matter what color they are."

Collins became the Training Fund's interim director Dec. 11, taking the reins from longtime leader Cheryl Feldman, who retired after 43 years of service. "I am thrilled to pass the torch of leadership to Teresa," Feldman wrote, describing Collins as passionate about workforce development and apprenticeships.

"Upgrading makes a lot of sense, because it is building up skills for the community," Collins said. "People feel good when they have a job, and they are good at it."

"COVID has changed everything, so my priority is to be ready post-COVID to support the poor communities, especially poor communities who have been impacted financially, job-wise and education-wise."

"When the doors open, I want to be there with my arms open wide to welcome them into the Training Fund -- to be ready to support communities, young people, people who were forced to leave the workforce because of COVID and get them on their feet again," Collins said.

"We have the potential to grow -- to serve more union members and more community members," she said.

With 25 years of experience in early childhood education and workforce compliance, Collins came to the Training Fund about four years ago. Serving as [Early Childhood Workforce Strategy Director](#), she distinguished herself by implementing a statewide apprenticeship program in early childhood education.

Collins, married and a mother of four, grew up in rural western Pennsylvania. While the larger community was white, her family and her neighbors were African American, homeowners who had purchased their properties from a wealthy African American determined to bring diversity to the region.

Collins describes a storybook childhood within her community, but a racially charged atmosphere outside of it.



Interim Executive Director Teresa Collins spent her whole career working to advance others through training and development. "Upgrading makes a lot of sense because it is building up skills for the community. People feel good when they have a job, and they are good at it."

"There are certain things, as a child, certain things you shouldn't say as a minority in a white community, but I said them anyway," Collins said.

"I was very vocal. I didn't have any fear of voicing my opinion," she said. "I was always the person to speak out."

Thanks to her mother and grandmother, Collins said, she learned how to channel her outspokenness into effective advocacy. "I learned how to advocate without being a rebel."

With an undergraduate degree from Penn State in human behavior, specializing in early childhood, and a master's degree in holistic nutrition, Collins went to work helping people -- severely handicapped children, people with HIV/AIDS, mothers and children.

"Poverty is a hard cycle to break, and I worked in programs where people lived in extreme poverty conditions," Collins said.

"Coming from a privileged community and working with people who didn't have those privileges, I didn't feel guilt, but a sense of rage," she said. "They don't have all the things they need. Why?"

"I couldn't change government. I couldn't change policies, but I could change programming," she said.

"Every program I went to, I tried to build it up. If the staff didn't have qualifications, I would bring in training, so they had the skills and the professional development," she said.

Collins also cares about quality. In one post where she monitored early childhood programs throughout the country, she closed two "because they were deplorable. It was not a good feeling, but it made a difference for the children."

Collins has always been a manager. In her first professional position, fresh out of college, she led a staff with 20 to 30 years seniority.

"You can't walk in thinking that you know it all. I had to recognize the value they brought to the program and I had to think about what I could learn from them, even though I was their supervisor."

"I learned that everyone is an expert," she said, "and I continue that philosophy today. Everyone has some expertise to contribute."

EMPLOYER FAQ

Management and labor are equal partners in **District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund**, a worker-centered education system to advance members' skills for free or at low cost while **helping employers** enhance worker recruitment, retention, satisfaction and competence on the job.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Get in touch if your employees need OSHA training or to improve skills in computer literacy, ServSafe, customer relations, CPR, conflict management, communications skills and more. Instructors can come onsite to meet your employees' schedules or, in this pandemic period, work with them online. We can also develop customized training for you at no cost.

NO COST?

No cost to our employer partners who, as part of their collective bargaining agreements, contribute 1.5 percent of gross union payroll dollars to underwrite the Training Fund.

CAN YOU HELP WITH RECRUITMENT? SOME POSITIONS ARE HARD TO FILL.

We get it! Community members know the Training Fund offers training for positions in hospitality, nursing and behavioral health, as well as allied health professions such as telemetry. We can help you meet our graduates, particularly if you partner with us to provide clinical practice.

MORE IDEAS?

Have you looked inside? Maybe your folks in housekeeping or dietary would be great at those hard-to-fill jobs but need to advance their skills or learn a new field. Send them our way. We'll help them help you.

WHAT ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS?

We love them and know how to navigate state regulations to set them up. It's a win-win. Employees build competencies with classroom and on-the-job mentoring while you benefit from their increased training. Plus, you'll earn their loyalty.

IS THE TRAINING FUND WORTH 1.5 PERCENT OF MY 1199C PAYROLL?

Ask **Cheryl Whitfield**, vice president of human resources at Inglis House. She says the services she receives from the Training Fund more than offset what she pays.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact Jim Keller, director of career services and continuing education, at jkeller@1199c.training.org or Charles Cunningham, employer liaison, at ccunningham@1199ctraining.org



Cheryl Whitfield, vice president for human resources at Inglis, considers the Training Fund an ally when it comes to recruiting Inglis employees and building their skills. "What we receive more than offsets what we contribute."

INGLIS / FUND PARTNERSHIP: MANAGEMENT, WORKERS BOTH WIN

During contract talks, Cheryl Whitfield, vice president for human resources at Inglis, and Chris Woods, president of District 1199C, National Union Hospital and Health Care Employees, sit on opposite sides of the bargaining table.

Wages, benefits, work rules – all negotiable. But there's one contract provision that Whitfield signs off on without a second thought – the 1.5 percent of union payroll Inglis pays to underwrite the work of District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund.

The Training Fund provides free or low-cost training to 400 eligible union members employed in nursing, engineering, environmental services, dining, security and in the Connections day program at Inglis, a skilled nursing, long-term care and community services institution for the differently abled.

The Training Fund also **provides free training, customized for employer needs**. "It's a little-known secret," Whitfield said, and she takes full advantage of it. Whitfield encourages her fellow human resource executives who have signed similar agreements with District 1199C to follow suit.

The biggest challenge, she said, is encouraging union employees to use the Training Fund's free or low-cost training. As they learn more, they earn more, and quality of care improves.

Whitfield has brought Training Fund

instructors on site for OSHA training and computer literacy.

Importantly, the Training Fund helps Inglis recruit for hard-to-fill positions such as certified nursing assistant and licensed practical nurse. "With the pandemic, there's a national shortage," Whitfield said. "We've never had as many LPN openings as we have now during the pandemic."

Community members know they can turn to the Training Fund to prepare for nursing assistant certification and then to upgrade to licensed practical nursing, which pays more. Some Inglis LPNs took that path and now are poised to upgrade again to registered nurse.

Inglis is working with the Training Fund to bring students to Inglis for clinical training. It's a win-win. Inglis supervisors gain a chance to observe the students – and perhaps recruit them -- even as the students become accustomed to Inglis culture. "It shortens the time between recruitment and onboarding," Whitfield said.

As Whitfield knows, the Training Fund is a joint labor-management endeavor. She and Woods co-chair the **Training Fund's board**. Whitfield considers the Training Fund a bargain. Its services "would absolutely cost us more," she said. "What we receive more than offsets what we contribute."

FREE CLASSES, TUITION ASSISTANCE OPEN NEW CHAPTER

There was nothing wrong with Equilla Nelms' union job as a cafeteria worker at Temple University Hospital. The pay was decent, her co-workers were nice, and as a member of the [National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199C](#), her benefits were excellent.

But it wasn't enough.

"It was a good job," she said, "but I didn't want to be there for the rest of my life."

In December, Nelms opened a new chapter, thanks to one of the union's most [generous benefits](#) – the ability to access educational resources through the District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund.

To underwrite the Training Fund, employers contribute 1.5 percent of union payroll. [Employers](#) can turn to the Training Fund to set up trainings and union members can enroll in free classes or receive [tuition assistance](#).

Through the Training Fund, and at no cost to her, Nelms trained and upgraded, first from cafeteria worker to certified nursing assistant and now to radiologic technologist. In December, she started a new job at Temple as a radiologic technologist, earning \$36 an hour, a \$13 raise.

"It's an awesome thing," said Nelms, of West Oak Lane, the mother of three. "People need to take more advantage of it. How can you *not* take advantage it? *Why not?*"

Nelms grew up hard – abuse in her family, a runaway at 15, a single mother at 17 and along with that, the constant drumbeat in her head that she would never be smart enough to succeed.

"I couldn't see myself as having a future," she said. However, the cafeteria job was steady, allowing her the opportunity to get her own place with her children. At work, she met another cafeteria staffer, a union member taking [certified nursing assistant](#) (CNA) classes at the Training Fund.

Nelms enrolled. At first, it was overwhelming. She nearly quit. "When you tell yourself you can't do it, you start convincing yourself. I was blocking my blessings." When she missed class, her Training Fund teacher called Nelms and insisted, in no uncertain terms, that she return.

Nelms became certified and when Temple posted an opening as a patient care assistant (the



At Temple University Hospital, Equilla Nelms advanced from dietary worker to radiologic technologist. A District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund scholarship provided tuition and a stipend for living expenses, allowing her to study fulltime.

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EMPLOYEE FAQ

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT 1199C TRAINING & UPGRADING FUND?

The Training & Upgrading Fund is a worker-centered educational program with special benefits for eligible union members. Your union wants you to upgrade to a better life for you – better pay, better job satisfaction – all through training.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING?

Professional development courses include career planning, resume writing, computer education, and money management. High school equivalency, English language, and college preparatory classes are available along with certificate training in CPR, ServSafe food handling and addiction counseling as well as in sterilization processing and distribution and more.

HOW ABOUT A NEW CAREER?

Yes! There are many options. The Training Fund can prepare you to be a nurse aide or a practical nurse, both stepping-stones to

high-paying nursing careers. You can also train for certification in allied health fields such as telemetry, pharmacy, behavioral health and emergency medicine as well as for positions in the hospitality industry. Some programs include college credits toward an associate degree.

SOUNDS GOOD. HOW MUCH IS IT?

It's free or low-cost for eligible union members.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ELIGIBLE?

If your employer contributes to the Training Fund, you are eligible. For some programs, you are eligible immediately. For others, eligibility comes after six months or a year. Even if your employer doesn't contribute, you can still enroll at a low cost.

WHAT IF I WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE?

Go ahead. We offer \$5,000 in annual tuition assistance to eligible members. The Training Fund must pre-approve your courses and will reimburse you if you earn a C or above. Depending on the course, you can get up to \$5,000 annually in tuition paid upfront at

Community College of Philadelphia, Peirce College, and Thomas Jefferson University. There are deadlines. See 1199ctraining.org/tuition-reimbursement

I WISH I COULD GO TO COLLEGE FULLTIME.

About 10 union members a year are awarded a two-year **James T. Ryan Fulltime Scholarship** including up to \$10,000 annually for tuition and a biweekly stipend for living expenses. Your union health and pension benefits continue. See 1199ctraining.org/scholarship for information.

BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAREER TO PURSUE.

We've got you covered. The Training Fund regularly schedules career workshops, now over Zoom. You can also sign up for one-on-one counseling. <https://1199ctraining.org/tuition-reimbursement>

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Visit our website, 1199ctraining.org. Particularly check out 1199ctraining.org/get-started and 1199ctraining.org/1199c-member-benefits.

PREPARED FOR A CAREER – AND A PANDEMIC

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March, it wasn't that Jerome Richardson, a certified nursing assistant at Inglis, wasn't afraid.

He was afraid – very afraid.

Richardson was afraid of getting sick himself, afraid of bringing sickness home to his family, afraid for the people he bathed and dressed daily at Inglis, a skilled nursing, long-term care and community services institution for the differently abled.

But he was also prepared.

And for that, Richardson credits what he learned at [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund](#), training available to him as a union member through his union's contract with Inglis.

"I learned so much," he said. "The Training Fund has molded me into what I am today."

Through the Training Fund, he learned anatomy, behavioral health, OSHA safety training and more. After taking classes at the Training Fund, he passed the examination allowing aides like him – grandfathered in under previous regulations – to become fully certified as nursing assistants.

Most importantly, he learned to use critical thinking skills developed in class – vital in COVID times.

"You have to be smart about how you go about your business, especially when you are taking care of residents," Richardson said. "You have PPE (personal protective equipment); use the PPE. You can't shortcut. Any shortcut could be dangerous, not only to you, but to the residents and to your family."

At Inglis House, Richardson wears three

hats. To the differently abled residents he assists, he's the man who bathes, feeds and dresses them. He is also a union delegate, representing his Inglis co-workers -- fellow members of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, District 1199C.

Beyond that, he sits on [District 1199C's executive board](#), making decisions that impact all its members, including bargaining for participation in the Training Fund. Employers like Inglis pay 1.5 percent of gross union payroll to underwrite the Training Fund, allowing members to gain access to career-advancing education.

The Training Fund's tuition reimbursement program helped Richardson earn an associate degree in behavioral health, which inspired him to complete his bachelor's degree.

The degrees provide insight into COVID's psychological toll. "For the residents, it is really hard because they can't leave their rooms. They've almost been prisoners in their rooms for eight months," he said.

"When it comes to myself, I do a lot of praying and make sure I'm thinking, that I have the right equipment, that I don't take chances," he said. When he comes home, he showers immediately. To relax, he reads comic books and watches cartoons – Bugs Bunny and Japanese anime.

Richardson urges others to seek stress relief.

"We're trying to stay healthy and praying that this thing ends," he said. "We're all frontline workers and we're doing what we do best, which is giving care and making sure we stay healthy."



Certified nursing assistant Jerome Richardson, working at Inglis, credits the Training Fund for giving him the skills to keep himself and his clients healthy during the pandemic.

A QUICK PIVOT: TRAINING IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Covid-19 slammed into Philadelphia in mid-March and by 5 p.m. Friday, March 13, Karen Poles, director of [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund's practical nursing program](#), knew what she had to do – and she knew that time was critical.

Earlier that week, she learned

that someone at the Training Fund had been exposed to COVID-19, the first known case at the Training Fund. That person went home. An entire floor of classrooms and offices was closed for cleaning. "Then, it dawned on me that my students wouldn't be coming back."

However, by 5 a.m. on Monday morning, classes were reconstituted -- online. Over the weekend, Poles and her team,

including educational vendors that supplied textbooks, simulations and assessments, had completely revamped the practical nursing program. The 2020 class graduated on time a month later.

Throughout the Training Fund, similar efforts were being made.

Jim Keller, director of [employer and career services](#), remembers trying Zoom in the conference room with his fellow

staffers. "We did a practice then and there using our phones," he said, and a little later, using computers. "Some of our younger staff were more familiar with it. We all had to learn this virtual world."

A safety committee, including OSHA experts, worked to determine how students could return for hands-on training – a must

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EMT PROGRAM POSITIONS STUDENTS FOR GROWTH

Around the nation and in Philadelphia, emergency medical technicians – the professionals who show up first to deal with medical emergencies – are in short supply.

That's why the [District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund](#), first in partnership with the Philadelphia Fire Department, and now with SafeTec Training Services, began an [Emergency Medical Technician \(EMT\)](#) course last fall, before the pandemic.

"We're doing our part and our students are doing their part going to this field where, honestly, people are calling them heroes," said Stephanie Webb, program manager at the Training Fund. "People call the EMT when they are at their sickest, when it's a last resort.

"There are opportunities for actual employment with good wages," she said. "Since there's a shortage, they can get a job and there's opportunity for growth."

For the Training Fund, the EMT program fulfills a deeply-held educational philosophy: It positions students on a career ladder for upward mobility, allowing them to grow both skills – and wages.

EMTs, earning up to \$20 an hour in Philadelphia, can become Advanced EMTs, and take additional coursework to pass a paramedic examination. Paramedics earn \$25 to \$35 an hour.

"It's a stepping-stone," said Dominique Johnson, 27, a student in the Training Fund's inaugural EMT class. She had long dreamed of becoming a respiratory therapist, but graduated with a child development degree. After working in a pre-school, her yearning for a medical career drew her to EMT training.

Johnson still aims to become a respira-



Dominique Johnson practices rescue techniques as she prepares for Emergency Medical Technician certification at the Training Fund.

tory therapist and she believes her EMT training will help her succeed. Meanwhile, "most EMTs are getting a raise every year. As an EMT with five years experience, I can go anywhere," Johnson said.

When the Training Fund first offered EMT training, it focused on the city's unemployed and underemployed with grants from Philadelphia Works Inc. Career Link, JOIN (Job Opportunities Investment Network of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey) and LISC (Local Initiative Support Corp.) Now the Training Fund has broadened its EMT reach to include District 1199C union members. Education through the Training Fund and elsewhere is a union benefit for 1199C members employed at participating organizations.

Beyond providing training so students could pass the EMT certification exam, the Training also offered wrap-around classes in academic prep, personal finances, career readiness, medical terminology and customer service.

"You have to learn to treat each patient as if it were someone in your family," said Nate Dixon, EMT program coordinator for the Training Fund. Employers "were extremely insistent on that."

Classes began before the pandemic hit, but students were able to continue through online learning, and later, through classroom practice under strict safety protocols.

These days, Johnson reports to work at LifeMed Ambulance in Juniata Park, where her employers think highly of her. Chief operations officer Richard Davison hopes to deepen his partnership with Training Fund to employ more graduates like her.

"The stuff I learned is actually coming into fruition," Johnson said. "It is satisfying to know I'm capable and that I can use my skills to help save someone's life."

A QUICK PIVOT: TRAINING IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

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for students entering health fields.

"Signage, spacing, masks – everything from soup to nuts," Keller said.

Instructors teaching [high school equivalency test preparation](#), [college bridge](#) and [English as a Second Language](#) classes, shifted to Zoom and Google Classroom, helped by six weeks of daily

professional development.

Many students lacked computers, using their phones. For them, an essay amounts to a long text message. Instructors taught verb tenses along with technology. One student, patiently coached until he learned Zoom, started to cry. In pandemic isolation, his teacher was the first person he "saw."

There were unexpected challenges – how to handle a shirt-

less student who signed from bed and what to do when students' children interrupted class.

"Teachers started to do more case management because they were the ones who were looking into students' houses," said Michael Westover, director of [college and career readiness](#). "Staff got to know the students really well," a positive.

As challenging as adjusting to the new virtual world has been,

Poles, Westover and Keller say lessons learned yield potential for the future – even post vaccine.

Communication has improved. By necessity, more staff and students have become tech savvy. Going forward, more classes will blend online and in-person instruction. "We can do all kinds of things," Keller said. "It presents opportunities if we wrap our arms around it."

CHERYL FELDMAN: A STORIED CAREER

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"The work speaks for itself," he said. "Under her leadership, they have been able to achieve."

When Feldman came to the Training Fund, she was in her 20s, fresh off a union organizing campaign at the Philadelphia Geriatric Center. Feldman, a social worker with a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and her fellow professionals wanted to unionize so they could better advocate for improved patient care.

In the process, Feldman convinced her fellow professionals to affiliate with 1199C, the union representing the Geriatric Center's aides, housekeepers and kitchen staff.

"Working with the nurse aides, I became very involved with their struggle in the workplace," she said. "They struggled every day. I always thought they were treated as if they were invisible."

"I thought it would be more powerful to be in solidarity with them," she said.

Through contract bargaining, she met Henry Nicholas, the legendary union and civil rights leader long at the helm of the union and immediate past president. He believed education could lift union members and others in the community out of low-wage dead-end jobs.

"It was President Nicholas' vision to provide this incredible foundation for the union to provide a service to the community at the same time that we could build leaders – leaders who would come out of an educational experience that was grounded in values, values that support workers having a voice, values that support workers in being able to advance," Feldman said.

"All those things came together and made me totally committed to the vision," she said. "For me, the Training Fund and the union were inseparable."

The Training Fund was just over three years old when Feldman began. "I had no clue," she said. "I thought I was walking into a position where people had been around for a long time. I was 26."

By the time she was hired, Feldman had spent years in activism – protesting the Vietnam War, campaigning for change in the Civil Rights era and joining efforts to deny former Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo a third term in office.

In 2002, Feldman became executive director. At retirement, she was leading an \$11 million organization with about 80 full and part-time employees serving thousands of students a year in partnership with a [board](#) that reflects both labor and management perspectives.

"Cheryl put the Training Fund on the map where we are known nationally,"

said Cheryl Whitfield, vice president for human resources at the Inglis House and co-chair of the Training Fund's board. "She has already developed the platform. Now the next person has to pick up the baton and go further."

Feldman is known as an innovator in the field of workforce development, testifying before Congress and being hosted by then Vice President Joe Biden at the White House during the Obama administration. Her expertise influenced the national Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that funds workforce organizations around the nation.

"Cheryl Feldman is a national 'rock star' in workforce development," said H. Patrick Clancy, president and chief executive of Philadelphia Works, the city's workforce investment organization.

"Cheryl's passion, professionalism and dedication to helping individuals connect to meaningful employment is a testament to the wonderful person she is," he said. "Philadelphia has been blessed to have Cheryl play such a critical role in shaping workforce development services for many generations."

Through Feldman, the Training Fund pioneered apprenticeships in non-traditional fields, such as behavioral and community health, early childhood education and advanced homecare, as opposed to traditional apprenticeships in construction and manufacturing.

"We've been growing and expanding those programs," she said. "It was a really good fit into our labor-management context and the implementation of a best-practice training model. The integration of on-the-job training and classroom learning – the whole model is phenomenal."

Feldman, who lives in Roxborough, hopes to continue project work on early childhood education apprenticeships, as she waits to see what her new life will bring. Besides increasing her practice sessions on the piano, she'll be able to spend more time with her husband Stephen Ebner, their adult daughters, Nina and Rebecca, and her mother, 92, who still lives in the Long Island home where Feldman grew up.

"I've been working since I was 14 years old," she said. "It's going to be an interesting time to explore what it means not be working fulltime."

"I look forward to having the opportunity to learn new things and find new ways to use my commitment to activism," she said. "That's been ingrained in me since I was a child. That can't be switched off."

A NEW CHAPTER

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hospital equivalent of a CNA), Nelms applied and was hired. "I fell in love with the patients – just being part of their lives and taking care of them," she said. "And they appreciate it."

But Nelms remained restless.

First, she returned to Community College of Philadelphia and earned her associate degree in 2017 with help from the Training Fund's tuition reimbursement program.

At the hospital, during quiet times, she shadowed a radiologic technologist. "When you see the images, it's just beautiful," Nelms said. (Her email profile picture is an X-ray).

Nelms wanted to pursue radiology, but it requires two fulltime years of study and Nelms had a family to support. It seemed impossible.

Then Nelms learned about Training Fund's [James T. Ryan Full Time Scholarship](#). The scholarship covers \$10,000 a year in tuition and provide a bi-weekly stipend for living expenses, allowing members to study fulltime instead of working.

Nelms applied, becoming one of about 12 members awarded a scholarship each year. She started at the Philadelphia School for Radiologic Technology at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in August 2018 and passed her boards in October 2020.

Going into the exam, Nelms was confident. "I never thought I was going to fail."

Nelms wants to keep upgrading – mammography is next. Meanwhile, on the job, she plans to talk up how the Training Fund changed her life.

"This is a good opportunity," she said. "I always try to motivate my co-workers. Always."