



Talking Points for Lifetrack

- **The work of Lifetrack is about strengthening communities by bringing those on the margins of society into stable, productive roles.** When people are able to work, they make a contribution that affects their families, their neighborhoods and the entire state. But in every community, there are people who live on the edge of society. They may be kept on the margins by physical or mental disabilities, by learning disabilities, by backgrounds that have included severe trauma, by prison records or language difficulties. In every case, there is a barrier that stands in the way of incorporating these potential workers into our companies and communities. Lifetrack attacks those barriers and brings people into the mainstream.
- **This is win-win work. Everyone benefits from enhanced quality of life.** When people in our community don't have useful work to do, everyone's quality of life begins to deteriorate. Businesses suffer because they lose customers. The tax base for schools and infrastructure suffers, because instead of contributing taxes people need public assistance. The appearance of our neighborhoods suffers, as stores are shuttered and homes deteriorate. But we don't have to get stuck in this cycle. One thing that will help the economy turn around is to help people solve the problems that keep them on the margins of society. We know these problems can be solved, because we've seen it happen with thousands of people who have had access to Lifetrack's services over the years. These people become role models for others, as each new productive worker has a ripple effect on the community.
- **Lifetrack is a practical community problem-solver.** It makes little sense to pretend these situations don't exist or that these are small, inconsequential problems that affect only a few. It makes no sense at all when we have solutions that have proven effective in helping people over barriers to stable employment and a role in the community. Last year alone, Lifetrack placed more than a thousand people in stable well-paying jobs. Lifetrack succeeds because it views each individual as a potentially productive and contributing member of the community. Lifetrack works with companies and the community to help people over the barriers – connecting potential workers with language training, housing and transportation, or basic work experience. Lifetrack provides an effective

combination of work experience, training, counseling and support. When the pieces all come together, everyone benefits.

Transition to examples of the affected populations, but always connect them to community.

- **It makes no sense to shut people out of society.** For example, in most communities there are few programs in place to help ex-offenders become established, productive members of the community. Therefore, most revert to the lifestyles and the situations that led them to crime in the first place. This virtually guarantees that they will continue to commit crimes. Why would we allow a revolving door in prison when we can use this opportunity to change lives and strengthen the community? Lifetrack works with companies and communities to give ex-offenders the skills and the work experience they need to re-enter society successfully. Lifetrack also works with new Americans to help them fit in unfamiliar work habits, language and customs. Our state can benefit by using the skills and hard work of many people whose contributions are currently being wasted.
- **Keeping the community in shape is everyone's job.** A community is like a building; all parts need to be in good shape for it to function well. If there are a few weak beams, or if parts of the foundation are crumbling, it affects the stability of the entire structure. It is up to all of us to keep the building in good shape by making necessary repairs in the way our community works and shoring up the foundation. Lifetrack is one of the ways we invest in prevention in Minnesota.
- **The key to success is work.** It is the foundation for people's sense of self-worth, and their ability to take up a role in a broader community. Lifetrack gives people the practice they need to become reliable, productive workers. They earn a paycheck, learn technical skills for higher wage jobs, learn language and work customs, and receive intensive mentoring and support. These are the services people need to get over the barriers that too often shut them out of the workforce, or provide only temporary work. Lifetrack's services get people stabilized.
- **Lifetrack is a sound investment.** Companies and their customers benefit from trained employees who are eager and ready to work. Our communities and neighborhoods benefit by having more people work are able to stand on their own feet, hold down a job, and become part of the fabric of everyday life. As taxpayers, we get a real return on our investment, as Lifetrack returns almost three dollars for every one dollar in welfare savings alone in some counties. Many of the benefits cannot be calculated because, when people are working and engaged, communities don't go into a tailspin. That's why Lifetrack enjoys the support of the business and civic community, and many members of the legislature, who see our work as supporting their work in strengthening the state.