



SIDE STREET TO MAIN STREET BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Presented by: The Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce

Facilitated by: The Essex Group

Sponsored & Funded by: Aetna, Inc.

In 1996, there were very few minority owned businesses in Middlesex County. At the urging of the Middlesex County NAACP, the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce created the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program, and sought the financial support of Aetna, Inc., who has generously funded and supported the Program ever since.

Now entering its **20th** year, the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program, is a one year long entrepreneurial and business development course, with a rigorous curriculum, designed to assist **minority small business owners** in the community, who have not had formal business training, to become more successful by developing the attitudes, skills and qualities necessary for effective business ownership and success, taking them from the **Side Street to the Main Street** of the business community. Since the inception of the Program in 1997, over **235** people have graduated from the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program, and it has been a successful and effective way in which we have encouraged the development and growth of small, minority-owned businesses, which are now part of the greater Middlesex County business community.

Beginning with 16 facilitated, interactive 3 to 4 hour weekly work sessions, two hours of outside reading and written homework for each hour of the weekly group sessions, the Program is designed to build skills, explore the true entrepreneurial interests of each person, by producing a formal, compelling and operational version of their business and financial plans. Quarterly follow-up sessions reinforce the process so that participants meet with their expert business facilitators over the course of one full year.

Admission to the Program is competitive. Each fall, new Applicants must attend a Mandatory 3-4 hour Program Orientation and complete a detailed Application. The top 16 qualified Applicants are admitted to the Program. Although open to any Connecticut minority business, priority is given to Middlesex County minority businesses.

Classes are held at the Chamber offices, 393 Main Street, Middletown. The fee for this Program is normally over \$5,000 per participant, but because Aetna, Inc. provides a generous Grant, there is **no charge** for qualified participants.

Taught by The Essex Group Facilitator, **JIM JACKSON**, the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program has won a number of awards since its first Program began in 1997/1998.

The 1998 Middlesex County NAACP Business Award for the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program was the **first NAACP Business Award to any state Chamber of Commerce.**

The **U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy** honored the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program with the **Vision 2000 Award as the State Model of Excellence for Minority Business Development.**

In **2006**, **The Middlesex County NAACP's Annual Business Award** was renamed the **Lawrence D. McHugh Business Award** in recognition of Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce President, Larry McHugh's ongoing commitment to minority business development. The first recipients of the renamed award were: **Aetna, Inc.** for their funding and support of the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program.

Jim Jackson and David Bohy of The Essex Group for designing and facilitating the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program.

In **2007**, the **U.S. Small Business Administration** gave its **Connecticut Minority Small Business Champion Award to Jim Jackson** for his work on the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program.

In **2011**, the Side Street to Main Street Business & Leadership Development Program was presented with a **Celebrate Connecticut! Award** by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC), along with a Statement of Recognition from Governor Dannel P. Malloy, for commitment and service, promoting economic development in the State of Connecticut.

In **2012**, the Side Street to Main Street Program was again honored by the **Middlesex County NAACP** at their annual Membership and Freedom Fund Dinner and presented with a **Community Service Award** "In Gratitude for Providing Entrepreneurial and Business Development Course Designed to Assist Minority Small Business Owners in Middlesex County."

For more detailed information, Email: jennifer@middlesexchamber.com

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