

y Robert Hightower
 Tribune Staff Writer

Talk about getting a spruce up. Stephen Fortt insists being professionally dressed is the first step to obtaining a job that will benefit a man as well as his family.

Fortt is currently the manager for Work-N-Style for Men program, which falls under the umbrella of the Philadelphia Comprehensive Center Fathers, a program that gives support and training to men looking to become better dads.

Work-N-Style assists ex-offenders, homeless men and unemployed men make the transition into the workforce by providing attire suitable for interviews and court dates. The program outfits more than 1,000 men annually — mostly Black.

"We stress the importance of shirt, pants, tie," he said. "Some of the men in the program tell me that it's necessary for the job that they are going to get, but I tell them to dress professionally no matter the position."

Fortt also said he tries to get some of the younger men to concede that their regular "street" clothes may not



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make the best impression on the interviewer.

"We try to break them out of the habit of wearing the big clothes and get them into something that they can fit," he said.

Since it requires more than just a suit to look the part, the Work-N-Style program offers free haircuts twice a week and dispenses grooming products.

"You have to smell good and look

groomed which includes your hair," Fortt said.

Located at 1315 Walnut St. on the sixth floor of the Philadelphia Building, the atmosphere resembles something similar to a high-end haberdashery rather than a thrift store.

Although the suits are donated, they are not ragged pieces of cloth. The suits are well maintained and are altered by Fortt to fit properly.

Executive director of the PCCP

Want to help?

To make donations of clothes or money for food for this program, contact Kofi Asante at (215) 4004 or at e-mail at

KofiA@pccf2.org. Also contact Sara Canuso at (215) 356-21 at **Sara@ASuitableSolution**

Kofi Asante stated the Work-N-Style program does more than just help the men.

"It helps to make them responsible for themselves and their children," he said. "Getting a job helps to get him and his family off of the welfare system."

Sara Canuso, who serves as the president of A Suitable Solution, a consulting company, is the self-proclaimed "voice" of the Work-N-Style program. She is elated by the success of Work-N-Style.

"I was so amazed by what they are doing over there," Canuso said. "It's time for their cause to be recognized."

The program has been able to provide breakfast for the men because of budget cuts cannot provide other meals.

See Suits – Page 3E



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Suits

From Page 1B

Canuso feels this problem can be solved by donations.

“It’s hard to think when you are hungry,” she said. “These men need food to function.”

Canuso will soon initiate the “food for thought” program,

which is predicated on various companies forming teams to donate a monetary gift in June for the sustenance of the men in the program. Any company can participate.

“We want people to step up and hit home run for these men,” she said.

Acceptable donations are

ties, belts, cuff links, briefcases, grooming products, new socks, and big and tall clothing.

Canuso noted that she receives personal satisfaction from seeing the men succeed.

“There is such a good feeling to see the men moving forward,” she said.