



THE NATIONAL  
HONORS PROGRAM

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# Connectinc.

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## We'll Call Back

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**C**onnectinc. combines skilled counselors with sophisticated computer and communications technologies to help rural residents of North Carolina find and keep jobs, develop careers and build assets. Connectinc.'s success has meant greater economic security for thousands of low-income families, scattered across a dozen rural counties.

Counselors at Work Central, Connectinc.'s call center, field between 600 and 1,000 phone calls daily. The initial contact starts a stream of information from Connectinc., everything from money management tips to the location of sites for free tax preparation. Connectinc.'s technology-infused approach means counselors have instant access to a jobs data base, childcare resources, financial institutions, training opportunities — even transportation routes.

Through the call center, Connectinc.'s creators knew they could reach virtually all families without requiring them to travel long distances. "Everyone has access to a phone, even in rural communities, through family, a boyfriend, a church," says Connectinc. president Jackie Savage. Instead of spending hours arranging child care and then transportation to access services, clients can get support via phone to fulfill their roles as parents and earners. Counselors use three-way calling to help clients set up interviews; the call center faxes or e-mails resumes and job applications to potential employers while the call takes place.

"We are customer-driven and always checking in to see what we can do to help. Anything that happens in the family — a sick child, problems at school — is a job retention issue," Savage says. "We work with families until they say they no longer need us, and then we ask if we can call back in six months because, you know, life changes."

**"I really feel supported.  
It seems like I've known  
them for a lifetime."**

**Sue Troublefield  
Scotland County, N.C.**

## Staying on the Line

**W**hen Jackie Savage envisioned a state-of-the-art communications center turned into a human services delivery system, she knew that highly trained counselors would be essential. Because families aren't required to use Connectinc., "we knew we needed the best phone skills in the world, because people could just hang up on us," she says.

One woman who called, and stayed on the line, is Sue Troublefield, a mother of seven who found employment in rural Scotland County, N.C., through

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## Staying on the Line

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Connectinc. "Around here, job leads are slim to none," says Troublefield, who praises Work Central for calling her almost daily with information about local jobs that could improve her financial future.

Though most of her grown children have left home, two teens and a seven-year-old grandchild depend upon Troublefield's earnings at a convenience store. Her Work Central counselor has made sure Troublefield, who quit school in eleventh grade, has access to services that will help her acquire a GED, plus asset-building supports such as a checking account and applications for tax credits. Troublefield says the personal attention has made a difference. "They are more like a friend to you."

**"We are economic development, one family at a time."**

**Jackie Savage  
President of Connectinc.**

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## Results that Count

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**F**ounded in 1999 to support former welfare recipients making a transition to the work force, Connectinc. encourages families to think long-term. Among 4,400 former TANF clients who entered Connectinc.'s program between 2000 and 2002, 84 percent remain employed and their combined earnings top \$41 million. Several hundred Connectinc. customers have opened bank accounts, and customers referred to free tax preparation have claimed more than \$250,000 in tax refunds. Connectinc.'s unique delivery system has helped 1,000 displaced tobacco workers apply for unemployment benefits, and a pilot program is now supporting low-income textile workers in applying for IRS health coverage tax credits. Connectinc. has also launched Teach Central, a program designed to help rural communities retain teachers by using three-way calling to connect first-year novices with experienced classroom mentors. "Strengthening education is one way to support economic development in rural communities," Savage contends.

**Kids do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive communities.**

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## Connectinc.

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### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

10

### PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

9,423

### MAJOR FUNDERS

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