

# The 'Windy City' Says I-CAN!

**T**hanks to the Yeoman efforts of

Kubla Toure, Helen Latimore and Harold Davis, the Amer-ICan Program is spreading throughout Chicago, Illinois. Amer-I-Can is currently providing services to the Illinois Department of Corrections Juvenile Center, conducting a Pre-Construction Training Program, teaching Life Management Skills curriculum via a contract with the Chicago Board of Education and has worked with the Illinois Department of Children Family Services.

Youth ages 13 to 20 are benefiting from the presence of I-Can in Chicago that have been incarcerated for offenses that include drug sales, home invasions, endangering the lives of others, attempted murder, murder and theft. To date, more than 400 youngsters have been offered an alternative to anti-social behavior. Many of these young people have transitioned into the pre-construction training program upon their release from the youth center.

Under the direction of Harold Davis more than 100 youth are participating in the pre-construction training program. A contract with Chicago Public Schools enables these young people to learn construction skills; they are presently repairing seats, metal bases, applying epoxy, painting and repairing flooring in school auditoriums throughout the city of Chicago. The participating youngsters must attend school regularly and they are paid \$10-15 per hour for the work

performed. One of the lessons being taught to the students is the process of saving a portion of their income. Many of the students were able to save enough money to buy needed clothing, prom attire, pay for rental cars and pay school fees. The program has been a pathway to higher education for some students and an entry into the construction field for others.

The contract with the Chicago Board of Education focuses on reducing truancy at Bogan High School. One incentive used in this contract has been field trips. The main focus however has been exposing the kids to the Amer-I-Can doctrine of "the responsibility of self-determination. Amer-I-Can also utilizes other human resources in the Chicago area: Brother Jim, Deidre Brewster, Beauty Turner, Phillip Lowrey and the Cease Fire Organization to affect positive social change.