

Fellows program builds lives, communities

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INDIANAPOLIS (NNPA) - Donna Brown knew that furthering her education was a requirement in her family. Her father, McKenzie, a sharecropper in rural Mississippi before relocating to Indianapolis, did not have a chance to gain a degree, but vowed that his children would.

At times, he worked three jobs to build his children's college education fund. His focus on education and public service motivated Donna to complete an undergraduate degree from Butler University.

That same inspiration became the driving force for her to hone her leadership skills by entering the National Urban Fellows program.

Founded in 1969, National Urban Fellows is the nation's leading professional development program for women and ethnic minorities. The fully paid program offers participants, or fellows, the credentialing needed for management positions by earning a Master's of Public Administration and the professional development and networking that is needed to navigate public and private businesses.

Benefits of the program — a \$25,000 stipend, full payment of tuition, health insurance, a relocation allowance, program-related travel expenses, a book allowance and professional networking — help remove barriers to higher education and set a solid course for women and minorities to advance to high-level management.

The fellowship is comprised of two semesters of academic coursework at Bernard M. Baruch College, School of Public Affairs in New York, and a nine-month mentorship with senior-level administration in a partnering government agency, not-for-profit organization or private company. After completion, NUF alumni are expected to apply their knowledge and skills to improve the work of organizations and quality of life of those in the communities they serve.

Brown said her experience thus far has been fulfilling.

"Being a fellow is a life-changing event, especially for someone who has never lived outside of Indianapolis. Residing in New York is an

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—Donna Brown

experience I will never forget."

Brown recently completed the academic requirements in New York and has returned to Indianapolis to work on the mentorship component in Mayor Bart Peterson's office.

"From a mentorship standpoint, National Urban Fellows goes to great lengths to pair fellows with prominent figures of well-established organizations," she said.

"I look forward to learning more about city government and encouraging citizens to become more involved in their neighborhoods."

The benefits of the program and experiences like Brown's are attractive for participants.

"The program is often described by NUF alumni as the single transformative experience in their professional careers. For many mid-career minority managers, who lack a graduate degree, it provides visibility, opportunity and entrée within the management ranks of their organizations. It is not by accident that most fellows' careers spiral upward after completing the program.

Fellows develop a new sense of awareness and fearlessness about becoming active and engaged agents of social change within the public sector arena," said Miguel A. Garcia Jr., program director of NUF.

With more than 1,000 graduates to its credit, Paula Gavin, the new president of NUF, said that the impact of NUF is widespread.

"Relationships with public and private mentors has evolved over the years to very meaningful assignments with significant role model leaders. We have increased mentorships in the nonprofit and philanthropy sector as these organizations have enhanced their skills and diversity at their top levels of management. Our impact in addressing equity and social justice has come from the work and commitment of our

alumni. In addition, our fellows have impacted mentor organization philosophies and cultures in their assignments."

National Urban Fellows Inc. is currently seeking applicants for its 2009 fellow-

ship class. Up to a total of 50 men and women will be recruited nationwide.

NUF seeks women and minority residents who have U.S. citizenship; a bachelor's degree; a minimum of five to seven years of administrative or managerial employment; and the ability to meet the admission requirements of Baruch College. GRE scores are not required for the NUF program.

After nearly 40 years, the passion of National Urban Fellows remains strong. The

new president is committed to the growth of the organization and is reaching out to targeted areas such as Indiana to gain new fellows and mentors.

"The mission of our organization is to prepare accomplished and courageous leaders who reflect the diversity of our nation. As the new president, I want the three pillars of our program to be the highest quality — the academics, mentorships and the lifelong network of development. We will expand

our strategic partnerships, enhance our fellow pipeline, diversify the functions and geography of mentors and significantly increase the engagement, as well as development of alumni. We will seek to prepare great individual leaders and also to direct our collective leadership to the social issues most impacting equity and social justice, such as public education, health care, and poverty," said Gavin.

The organization's website is www.nuf.org.

Why Not a new kitchen. **Why Not** get that 18-year-old out of your new titanium refrigerator and into college. **Why Not** a convertible two-seater stick shift that the kids can't drive. **Why Not** two. **Why Not** a two-car garage. **Why Not** a backyard high performance hot tub that seats six. **Why Not** a stand up/sit down self propelled power mower. **Why Not** have a lot of cash ready and waiting for any emergency. **Why Not** a 24/7 home security system. **Why Not** a second bathroom with a steam shower. **Why Not** environmentally friendly toilets. **Why Not** Italian ceramic tiles. **Why Not** a Tuscan vacation. **Why Not** learn to parlare Italiano. **Why Not** opera season roof and add on a second in the kitchen. **Why Not** pedigree than you have. **Why Not** that looks like it's gone master's degree. **Why Not** a 60" HD Plasma. **Why Not** discard high turn an interesting hobby a home office. **Why Not** buy that autographed baseball. **Why Not** a country club membership. **Why Not** a single-stack home gym. **Why Not** a gym membership. **Why Not** a personal trainer. **Why Not** training to tango. **Why Not** upping the carats on that anniversary gift. **Why Not** a 'bigger' wedding. **Why Not** a second honeymoon. Heck! **Why Not** a third honeymoon. **Why Not** a hard cedar porch swing. **Why Not** a lot of red cedar bird feeders. **Why Not** a cedar-shingled roof with solar panels. **Why Not** amusing the grandkids with a triple-decker swing set. **Why Not** anything wonderfully tech-y. **Why Not** a spa weekend. **Why Not** night school. **Why Not** culinary school. **Why Not** a 60" dual fuel range. **Why Not** cook up something to do with that unfinished basement. **Why Not** expand the deck. **Why Not** bring back your hairline. **Why Not** a sunroom. **Why Not** sunny Cancun. **Why Not** a 30-foot rig sloop. **Why Not** a year round beach house. **Why Not** mahogany hardwood floors. **Why Not** see one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. **Why Not** see three. Well, alright, **Why Not** all seven. **Why Not?** Yeah! **Why Not?**

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