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USA: WORLD BANK CHIEF HONORED FOR D.C. HOMELESS EFFORTS

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By Mark Egan

WASHINGTON, Jan 10 (Reuters) - World Bank President James *Wolfensohn* was honored on Wednesday for helping formerly homeless drug addicts in the U.S. capital by giving them jobs at the global lender.

Since 1997, the World Bank's International Finance Corp. unit has employed former drug addicts graduating from Gospel Rescue Ministries, a homeless shelter and drug rehabilitation center for men in the city's Chinatown district.

Rep. Tony Hall, an Ohio Democrat, presented *Wolfensohn* a plaque from the homeless shelter at a small lunch ceremony attended by some of the former homeless men who now work in clerical jobs at the bank.

"They don't have to do this. This is the World Bank, an international organization with programs outside this country," Hall said while commending *Wolfensohn* on his organization's efforts. "This is great work."

To date more than two dozen men have worked at the bank after completing their rehabilitation and education courses at Gospel Rescue Ministries. Ten of those still work at the bank.

"This is something that we believe should be more normal in the community," *Wolfensohn* said.

"It has not been normal always for our institution. But in recent years we have recognized that we have profited enormously from being part of this community and that it is very important that we do something for the community."

PROGRAM MIGHT BE EXPANDED

In recent years, *Wolfensohn* has tried to soften the image of the World Bank, which has been criticized in the past for corruption and the damage its huge dam projects have had on the environment.

Wolfensohn told the luncheon he would like to expand the jobs program at the World Bank's headquarters and make attempts to start similar initiatives abroad in conjunction with businesses.

"People at a disadvantage don't want charity. They want options and a chance for self esteem and the chance to be part of the solution and not the problem," he added.

Among those employed at the bank through the program is Clayton Scott, 53, who was homeless for a decade before he hit rock bottom and began to live at the ministries' shelter, where he overcame a crack cocaine addiction.

After spending three years at the halfway house, Scott got a minimum wage job as a porter before being hired at the World Bank as a clerk in the legal records department, where he earns \$11 an hour in the first white-collar job he has ever held.

"I went from minimum wage to \$11 an hour. Thank God for the bank," Scott said.

"I'll stay here as long as they'll have me," he added. "It's a great place. The people here treat you as if you are somebody.

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