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Keith Coleman is concerned with proving himself on the job at the World Bank unit.

By Gerald Mizejewski
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Tucked away amid the legal papers and manila folders in a fast-paced Pennsylvania Avenue office building are 10 middle-aged men engaged in some of the most important work of their lives — re-adjusting to society.

They look like ordinary office workers, with their eyeglasses, neatly pressed pants and dangling ID badges. But these clerks at the International Finance Corp., part of the World Bank, are recovering drug addicts who not so long ago lived on the streets.

Or, as reformed crack addict Clayton Scott puts it: "I was bent up from the feet up."

The men are the latest to take advantage of a program devised by Jennifer A. Sullivan, deputy general counsel for the International Finance Corp. and a volunteer at Gospel Rescue Ministries in Northwest.

She began by enlisting some of the homeless to

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Homeless get a helping hand

World Bank unit, rescue mission collaborate on jobs



Photos by J.M. Eddins Jr./The Washington Times

Edward McCutcheon (left) and Dana Chrisp are formerly homeless men who have found jobs.

volunteer at an animal shelter, then decided in 1997 to bring them to work with her.

the 10 current workers. They make \$11 to \$12 an hour doing data entry, photocopying and routing mail, among other duties.

So far, 24 men have passed through, including



William Bayne broke his drug addiction and now works for the International Finance Corporation.

After a year on the job, some have gone on to private-sector work in hotel management and with computer firms. Others gained employment in other divisions of the World Bank.

"This is not really charity," Miss Sullivan said. "We're getting work done in a cost-effective way, and they're getting a fresh start, something on their resume."

"Those 24 affect so many others," Miss Sullivan said. "These guys are back in touch with their families now. They're supporting their children."

Keith Coleman, wearing khakis and a dark dress shirt yesterday, lived for marijuana and cocaine for 20 years, and even dabbled in heroin. Now he's more concerned with proving himself on the job and getting home to see his 1½-month-old child.

"I look at myself as successful," said Mr. Coleman, 35. "It just gives you a feeling of assurance when you're walking out, and you say to the person

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beside you in the elevator. 'Have a good night. See you in the morning,'"

Edward McCutcheon, 45, longed for something simple: the rush to board a subway every morning. He had worked for Bell Atlantic in Philadelphia for 18 years, but had not seen steady work the past six or seven years.

His new job not only provided him the chance to take the Metro Green line every morning, but

gave him the money to rent an apartment in the city's Petworth neighborhood.

Mr. Scott, who comes in at 8 a.m. and leaves at 4:30 p.m., is supporting his eight children and second wife. He is in the process of buying a house in Southeast.

He admits the adjustment took some time.

"I came here and I knew nothing. I looked in here and said, 'Oh boy,'" said Mr. Scott, 53. "I always thought of people in offices as paper pushers. Boy, did I get a rude awakening. These people work hard."

The clerks get advice on per-

sonal finance and other matters during brown-bag lunches every Tuesday at the World Bank. They then visit Gospel Rescue Ministries and encourage the other men.

Gospel Rescue Ministries provides a bed, shower and food to men who come to the shelter for the short term. Those looking to change their lives can enter a year-long, faith-based program that gets them off drugs and into computer and vocational classrooms.

The most successful of the participants have a chance to work at the World Bank. About 35 of the 100 men at the shelter on any given night are there for long-term help.

A rehabilitation facility for women recently opened — 18 are enlisted now — and some eventually may be eligible to work at the World Bank.

Last week, Rep. Tony P. Hall, Ohio Democrat, presented an award to World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn for a "unique community-outreach effort." Miss Sullivan said she and Mr. Wolfensohn hope to make her program a model for other international workplaces.

Why? "Because a chance to work is fundamental to basic human needs," said program administrator Michael J. Cortese.