

# Do you feel that you matter?

By Kathleen M. Connolly, Ph.D., LPC

Counselors and sociologists call it "mattering," and while it's a term you may never have heard, it's something that's important to all of us — being needed by others.

As individuals, we all want to feel that we matter to others. That feeling of being needed, of being significant to others, of "mattering," puts meaning in our lives. We need others to pay attention to us, take interest in us, consider us important and care about what we think and do.

Studies have found that people who perceive they matter to others are more likely to report feeling significant themselves, of having a positive self-concept and of having a stronger sense of belonging to society.

When mental health professionals look at mattering, they generally break it up into four components: attention, importance, dependency, and ego extension.

"Attention" is the most elementary form of mattering — the feeling that you have the interest or notice of another person. "Importance" refers to believing that we are important to the other person, and may even be the object of his or her concern.

"Dependence" is the term used to describe the notion that we are bonded to society not only by virtue of our dependence on others, but also by their dependence on us.

"Ego extension" is the belief that others are interested in our successes and disappointments, actively follow our progress, and are truly concerned with our fate.

Experts say mattering exists in two forms: interpersonal, which refers to mattering to other individuals; and general, which is mattering to the larger community, to society.

It is important to know that mattering is a perception. It is our perception of how much we matter to others or to society that is important. Sometimes, however, our perception may not be in line with how others actually feel about us. Getting fired by a boss we thought couldn't live without us is such an experience. On the other hand we may often matter to others more than we think, but are unable to feel that sense of importance.

Mattering is a key to how communities, cultures and societies develop. When we feel that we matter to society, it helps develop a sense of social cohesiveness and of belonging to the community in general. It's not too hard to imagine

## Connecticut Labor Department wins Gold Connecticut Innovation Prize

A Connecticut Department of Labor incumbent worker training program that helps small to mid-size manufacturers in this state address their training needs more efficiently and cost-effectively has earned the Agency a Gold Innovation Prize.

The Connecticut Department of Labor — the first state agency to implement and formally practice a statewide Multiple Employer concept for incumbent workers — has been singled out for this honor by the Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership. This year, the Partnership received 110 Connecticut Innovation Prize applications, and 22 Gold and Silver designations were awarded.

It is the fourth time that the Connecticut Department of Labor has won a Connecticut Quality Improvement Award. All four, ranging from Silver to Platinum, have been awarded to innovations made within the Agency's Customized Job Training Unit.

"Approximately two-thirds of all the small and mid-size businesses registered with the Agency's Customized Job Training Program are now served through the Multiple Employer concept, meaning that one master contract is written with a Department of Labor partner or lead company," explains State Labor Commissioner Shaun B. Cashman. "Working this way, employers are able to work better and

cut costs by sending small groups of employees to centrally located training."

By reducing the number of contracts written, the Connecticut Department of Labor has been able to provide training to more companies, but with lower administrative costs, Cashman notes. As a result of this innovation, the number of businesses served jumped from 125 to 450 — an increase of 360 percent — while the amount of instructional time made available to the state's incumbent workers increased by an additional 2,000 hours.

"This has also resulted in an added bonus of our Customized Job Training staff being able to spend more time with our customers," he said.

The key to this successful project, Cashman added, is the collaboration between partners, including industry clusters, state community and four-year colleges, the Institute for Industrial & Engineering Technology (IIET) in New Britain, the Connecticut State Technical Extension Program (CONN-STEP), and local chambers of commerce and labor organizations.

The Gold Innovation Prize will be presented to the Connecticut Department of Labor during the CQIA Partnership's 15th Annual Conference on Quality and Innovation, to be held Oct. 17 at the Southbury Hilton.

The Connecticut Quality Improvement Award Partnership is a not-for-profit Stamford-based group that annually recognizes organizations in this state that have excelled in managing quality improvement for business success and growth. Founded in 1987, the Partnership is a growing group of business people, educators, health care executives and government officials concerned with improving the economic