



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Maggie Hirko
970-419-8240

Author Barbara Ehrenreich to Launch Local Dialog on Poverty Community to engage in five weeks of poverty-focused activity

To kick off its thematic programming for 2008, Beet Street announced a five week-long series titled *Life on a Shoestring: Perspectives on Stepping Out of Poverty*. The series will showcase performances, presentations, community discussions, and diverse perspectives in a collaborative effort to initiate a community dialog on the issue of poverty in Fort Collins/Northern Colorado and the role each of us plays in guiding our community to a path of renewed economic self-sufficiency.

In the first major event of the series, Barbara Ehrenreich, journalist, historian, social critic and author of eighteen books, will present her thoughts on "Working for Change." The *New York Times* best-selling work *Nickel and Dimed*, which chronicles Ms. Ehrenreich's attempt to live on minimum wage, is now required reading at more than 600 colleges and universities across the nation. Ehrenreich's *Bait and Switch*, also a *New York Times* bestseller, exposed the growing phenomenon of white-collar unemployment.

Ms. Ehrenreich's keynote presentation will be held Saturday, February 23rd at the City of Fort Collins' Northside Aztlan Community Center, located at 112 East Willow Avenue in Fort Collins. The Northside Aztlan Community Center is home to many of the City's programs which assist families who struggle with self-sufficiency. Tickets for this event are \$20 and \$10 for students with valid ID. A limited number of remaining tickets are available at www.fctix.com or by calling 970-419-8240. Those planning to attend are encouraged to arrive between 11:00-11:30am. A modest lunch will be served at 11:30am, and Ms. Ehrenreich's remarks followed by questions from the audience will promptly follow. Ms. Ehrenreich will be available for a book signing following her comments.

The events that comprise the *Life on a Shoestring* series will take place from February 19th through March 26th in locations throughout Fort Collins, Colorado. In addition to Ms. Ehrenreich's keynote presentation, series highlights include an evening discussion by *Bridges Out of Poverty* author/trainer Phil DeVol on the best practices used in other communities for alleviating poverty, a long-awaited production of *Nickel & Dimed* by OpenStage Theatre & Company, and several panel discussions with distinguished authorities in the field. Fundraising events for the Larimer County Food Bank and Project Self-Sufficiency are also highlighted.

This community-wide program is a collaborative effort of Beet Street with WomenGive, a leadership initiative of United Way of Larimer County, in partnership with the Women's Foundation of Colorado.

Details on events of the complete *Life on a Shoestring* schedule are be posted on the web, <http://www.beetstreet.org/en/Shoestring-Calendar.html>

In announcing the new series, Executive Director Carol Bennis expressed Beet Street's commitment to expanding the cultural offerings in the downtown area through collaboration. "We are overwhelmed with the community's response to this landmark dialog. In our efforts to create a forum where our community can benefit from considering varied perspectives and best practices from other regions of the country, we never imagined that this thematic series would grow into a six-week series. We believe this series offers something for everyone concerned with the increasing rate of poverty in our community. Our partnership with WomenGive, and support from United Way of Larimer County, provided us with a timely framework to design a meaningful dialog based on their previous work and knowledge base. We believe that the OpenStage Theatre & Company production will help the community to personalize the effects and concerns of those living in poverty. Rather than merely concentrating on the statistics of the situation, it's a unique opportunity to walk in someone else's shoes for two hours."

Beet Street (www.beetstreet.org) is an economic development initiative created by the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority in 2007 to distinguish Old Town Fort Collins as a cultural destination that fosters, celebrates, and inspires human creativity through diverse cultural experiences and programming. Beet Street will create a collaborative learning community in Fort Collins, Colorado, where everyone of every age is welcome to share in discussion, reflection, and creative expression.

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Full Bio for Barbara Ehrenreich

Journalist, historian, and social critic Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of eighteen books. In 2001, Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* became a *New York Times* bestseller, and has since sold over one million copies. *Nickel and Dimed*, a trenchant examination of working-class poverty that chronicles Ehrenreich's own attempt to live on minimum wage, is now required reading at more than 600 colleges and universities, from University of the Ozarks to Yale University to Western Wyoming Community College. In 2005, Ehrenreich's *Bait and Switch*, also a *New York Times* bestseller, exposed the ever more prevalent phenomenon of white-collar unemployment.

A frequent contributor to *Harper's* and *The Nation*, Ehrenreich has been a columnist at the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. In 2004, she received the Nation Institute/Puffin Foundation Prize for Creative Citizenship, given annually to an American who challenges the status quo "through distinctive, courageous, imaginative, socially responsible work of significance." Ehrenreich's next book, forthcoming from Metropolitan Books in the winter of 2007, is a history of the celebration of communal joy. Ehrenreich lives near Key West, Florida.

Publisher Synopsis of *NICKEL AND DIMED: On (Not) Getting By In America*

In early 1998 Barbara Ehrenreich, arguably our sharpest and most original social critic, posed the following questions to an editor at *Harper's Magazine*: How does anyone live on the wages available to the unskilled? And how, in particular, were the 12 million women about to be booted into the labor market by welfare reform going to make it on \$6 or \$7 an hour? Millions of Americans work full-time, year around, for poverty-level wages; in 1998, Ehrenreich joined them.

What ensued is an unprecedented and illuminating work of immersion journalism, captured in its provocative entirety in *NICKEL AND DIMED: On (Not) Getting By in America*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller. To answer her own questions, Ehrenreich left her home, took the cheapest lodgings she could find, and accepted the highest-paying jobs she was offered. Moving from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, she worked as a waitress, a hotel maid, a cleaning woman, a nursing-home aide, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk. She lived in trailer parks and crumbling residential motels, discovering quickly that no job is truly 'unskilled,' that even the lowliest occupations take an enormous mental and physical toll, and that one job is not enough - not, that is, if you intend to live indoors.

"With all the real life assets I've built up in middle age - bank account, IRA, health insurance, multi-room home - waiting indulgently in the background, there was no way I was going to 'experience poverty' or find out how it 'really feels' to be a long-term low-wage worker," Ehrenreich cautions. "My aim here was much more straightforward and objective - just to see whether I could match income to expenses, as the truly poor attempt to do every day." What she discovered was that, in fact, she could not. Ehrenreich's hair-raising and darkly funny odyssey through the underside of the working world brilliantly limns low-rent America in all its tenacity, anxiety and surprising generosity. A rare view of "prosperity" from the bottom puts a human face to the lives sustaining our economy.

Full Bio for Philip DeVol

Philip DeVol has been training and consulting on poverty issues since 1997 and is co-author of *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*. He works with organizations to redesign programs to better serve people in poverty, as well as with communities to systemically address community sustainability. Philip is the author of *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life*, a life-planning workbook for people in poverty that brings together three primary influences: Dr. Ruby K. Payne's work on the hidden rules of class, research on knowledge transfer, and the knowledge of participants living in poverty. DeVol builds on his 19 years as director of an out-patient substance abuse treatment facility where he designed treatment programs and collaborative systems for school-based prevention, school-based intervention, and Ohio's first alternative school for recovering young people. The agency also developed specific treatment programs for women and adolescents, plus a substance abuse treatment program for a correctional facility. He is co-author of *The Complete Guide to Elementary Student Assistance Programs*, and consults for **aha!** Process, Inc.