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Workforce Development Council Receives \$1.1 Million YouthBuild Grant

VANCOUVER, Wash. (Aug. 14, 2014) — Up to 60 at-risk Clark County youth will get a helping “hand up” and support with academic and construction skills training from a group of nonprofit organizations that banded together and recently received a \$1.1 million YouthBuild Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

Led by the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), the group includes Partners in Careers, Innovative Services NW, Evergreen Habitat for Humanity, Vancouver Housing Authority and WorkSource.

“Youth unemployment is high in our region and these funds will enable us to provide opportunities for youth to complete their high school education while learning construction and other skills that will help them throughout their work years,” said Jeanne Bennett, SWWDC’s Chief Executive Officer. “We anticipate a need for additional construction workers in the near future and this program will give our youth the training they need to compete for these jobs.”

Vancouver YouthBuild will launch later this year and help at-risk youth obtain high school diplomas or GEDs and learn construction and other work-related skills through academic trainings, on-site work experiences and community service activities. Participants will also have access to apprenticeships and industry certifications in the construction trades as well as transitional housing opportunities through the Vancouver Housing Authority.

“This opportunity is truly transformational, not only to service delivery for our youth, but also for the organizations involved in this partnership,” said Sharon Pesut, Executive Director of Partners in Careers. “We look forward to aligning our efforts.”

The program will culminate with the youth building two energy-efficient homes for low-income families enrolled with Evergreen Habitat for Humanity.

“YouthBuild grants are incredibly competitive and we are overjoyed our strong and dedicated partnerships landed this unique opportunity for our region,” said Chelsea Chunn, SWWDC’s Youth Initiatives Manager. “YouthBuild participants will further their education and learn new jobs skills while at the same time giving back to their community. It will give young people without a diploma a second chance to accomplish their goals and become the leaders we envision for tomorrow.”

The YouthBuild Vancouver project will serve 45-60 disadvantaged youth, ages 17-21, who are low income, high school dropouts, and those that would otherwise be at risk of failing to reach key educational and career milestones.

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The grant is part of \$73,654,300 in [YouthBuild](#) grants the DOL will award. Grants range from approximately \$700,000 to \$1.1 million and will fund 71 YouthBuild programs across 31 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. YouthBuild is a non-residential, community-based alternative education program that provides classroom instruction and occupational skills training. The grants will help approximately 4,800 young people obtain the certifications and skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, is the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. SWWDC brings together funding, service providers, colleges, economic development and community organizations to provide free employment and training services to businesses, job seekers and youth. For more information, visit www.swwdc.org.

Partners in Careers (PIC) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create self-sufficiency through specialized job training and employment services. PIC has more than 30 years of experience connecting physically, educationally and economically-challenged people to career counseling, job training, placement and coaching to achieve economic self-sufficiency. PIC provides programs for at-risk youth, low-income seniors, refugees, people with limited English proficiency, veterans, ex-offenders and individuals receiving government assistance. www.partnersincareers.org.

Innovative Services NW has, for more than 50 years, been creating opportunities, achieving results and changing lives by offering a continuum of services including therapy and early learning for children, employment training and job support for teens and adults, intervention and support for foster youth and families, and adult day health care for senior citizens and adults who require daytime assistance. www.innovativeservicesnw.org.

Evergreen Habitat for Humanity (EHFH) is an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International and works in partnership with people in need from all walks of life to develop communities by building safe, affordable housing. Habitat builds and rehabilitates simple, decent houses with the help of the homeowner (partner) families. This is accomplished through volunteer labor and tax-deductible donations and materials. Habitat houses are then sold to the partner families at no profit and financed with affordable, no-interest loans. The homeowners' monthly mortgage payments are then placed into a revolving fund that is used to build more houses. www.ehfh.org.

Vancouver Housing Authority (www.vhausa.com) serves more than 7,500 very low-income children, parents, elderly and disabled people with 587 units of subsidized housing and more than 2,300 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. The VHA Work Opportunities programs provide subsidized residents with a wide range of services as they work toward self-reliance. The VHA contributes to the sustainability of Clark County with community development activities and 2,293 units of non-subsidized affordable workforce housing that provide homes for an additional 5,000 people.

WorkSource is a partnership of state agencies, local service providers, colleges and community organizations that provide free employment and training services to employers and job seekers. WorkSource assists employers to recruit and screen for qualified applicants, provides wage reimbursement opportunities through On-the-Job Trainings, and supplies cost-savings information on employment tax credits. WorkSource serves more than 1,000 jobseekers and 200 businesses each month. Go information, go to www.go2worksource.com.

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