

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Leavitt to lead YouthBuild Students through streets of Vancouver

VANCOUVER, Wash. (Jan. 29, 2015) – Vancouver Mayor, Tim Leavitt, will help launch the YouthBuild Vancouver program at Partners in Careers on Monday, February 2 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. where he will speak with youth on the importance of making the most of the opportunities before them, and then take the students on a short run through the neighborhood.

YouthBuild Vancouver will offer 45-60 high school dropouts, ages 17 to 24, a chance to earn their GEDs while learning job skills through hands-on activities in the construction trades. Through the program, participants will help build two energy-efficient houses for low-income families in our community. The program will bridge academic understanding with practical application and problem solving and participants will earn industry-recognized certificates in the construction trades as part of the \$1.1 million YouthBuild Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

"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."

In building homes, young people also rebuild their lives. Parenting teens, court-involved youth, foster youth, homeless youth and others will work together to understand their role in our community and, more importantly, in their own lives. They will gain competency, confidence and self-worth.

"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" said Chelsea Chunn, SWWDC's Youth Initiatives Manager.

YouthBuild U.S.A. was founded in 1978 by Dorothy Stoneman, a Harlem teacher with a desire to do something after she witnessed time and time again how poverty, gang violence and crime consumed the lives of her young students. YouthBuild now operates 273 programs in 46 states.

YouthBuild Vancouver has been brought to Vancouver through an unprecedented partnership of nonprofit agencies – the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), Partners in Careers, Evergreen Habitat for Humanity, Vancouver Housing Authority and WorkSource Vancouver.

"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."

Note: Partners in Careers is located at 3210 NE 52nd Street, Vancouver, WA 98663. Phone: 350.696.8417

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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.