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Contact: Julia Maglione, 360-567-3176, jmaglione@swwdc.org

Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council Partnership Receives Excellent in Collaboration Award

Nonprofit Network recognizes YouthBuild Vancouver Job Training and Education Program

VANCOUVER, Wash. (Sept. 9, 2015) — A partnership led by the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) received an Excellence in Collaboration Award from the Nonprofit Network Southwest Washington at an event September 8 at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver.

The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), Partners in Careers (PIC), Evergreen Habitat for Humanity, WorkSource and Vancouver Housing Authority received the Excellence in Collaboration Award for their partnership on YouthBuild Vancouver, a job training and education program for at-risk teens and young adults ages 16-24.

Through the program, low-income young people who have not completed high school can obtain their GED or high school diploma, gain two nationally-recognized construction certifications, learn leadership and other work-related skills, participate in on-site work experiences and community service activities and receive job, college and career preparation services. The program will culminate with participants building two energy-efficient homes for low-income families enrolled with Evergreen Habitat for Humanity.

Many YouthBuild participants face hurdles to completing their education and finding work. Some are homeless or aging out of the foster care system. Others have struggled with gang involvement, drug abuse, trouble with the law or are parents without income or resources to raise their children. YouthBuild Vancouver gives them the support and skills to get a job or continue their education, and goes beyond by providing housing for those without a place to stay, food at each class to ensure no one goes hungry, case management and someone to turn to for support, encouragement and guidance. The program provides these young people with things some of them might never have had before, stability, caring and positive adult role models and peers.

YouthBuild is helping young people gain confidence, leadership skills and self-esteem, along with a sense of belonging, purpose and direction.

Alone each organization can provide some services to young adults in our community, but together, through YouthBuild Vancouver, they are helping young people rebuild their lives and become successful members of the community.

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Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. SWWDC helps

ph 360.567.1070
fax 360.567.1054
www.swwdc.org

businesses find and hire the employees they need and provides people the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. SWWDC partners with employers, community colleges and universities, labor groups, government and economic development agencies, high schools and community organizations. Learn more at 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.

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.vhousa.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.