

MEDIA RELEASE

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CRT Receives \$1 Million Grant for YouthBuild Jobs Training Program *Only nonprofit in CT to receive award that will prepare 60 youth for workforce*



HARTFORD— Community Renewal Team (CRT) was awarded a \$1 million YouthBuild grant from the Department of Labor to continue operating the program that helps out-of-school youth earn a high school or General Educational Development diploma while learning critical occupational skills in the construction, hospitality, and health care fields.

A total of 74 YouthBuild programs in 28 states and the District of Columbia received grant awards ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.1 million each. Nearly 5,000 young people nationwide will obtain the certifications and skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

“Continuing our YouthBuild program for disadvantaged Hartford youth makes us proud to help prepare these young people- both mentally and physically - for productive careers,” said CRT’s President and CEO Lena Rodriguez. “Seeing the youth learn what it takes to be a successful professional while increasing their educational capacity is amazing to watch, so we’re excited to welcome this next crop that will become future leaders in the workforce.”

CRT has seen great success in its Capital City YouthBuild program since the inaugural class of 2009-2010. Despite being one of the few programs in the nation to welcome those who have been incarcerated or have substance abuse issues, 87 percent of the participants have graduated from the program – while the national completion average is just 59 percent.

Of the 45 total youth enrolled in the program from 2009-2011, 31 participants have obtained initial job placements and 15 of them were re-placed in another job. Many CRT participants also boosted

themselves academically. Fourteen youth obtained a high school diploma or GED, seven entered post-secondary education and nine entered vocational/ occupational skill training programs.

CRT's program this year will employ up to 60 out-of-work and out-of-school city youth ages 16-24 in construction, food preparation and health care, while receiving remedial education. Participants also engage in one-on-one case management with CRT staff to monitor and enhance their progress through the program.

Changes to the new YouthBuild grants expanded occupational skills training beyond the traditional construction field to include fast-growing industries such as health care and hospitality services. This year's participants interested in the health field will be able to pursue certifications including CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) and they will also receive hands-on training through a partnership with Capital Community College. Participants interested in culinary arts will acquire food safety trainings and work experience in cafeteria and restaurant settings. Participants interested in the construction track will gain work experience at Hartford Housing Authority job sites and be able to receive multiple including PACT (Pre-Apprentice Certificate Training) and NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research Certification) among others.

The case management component to the CRT program is critical to assisting youth in achieving their goals. One of the most important linkages is with CRT's own Behavioral Health Services, where many of the participants will have the ability to receive substance abuse and/or mental health assistance, at no cost to the youth or their families.

The nationwide YouthBuild model traditionally consists of a nonresidential, community-based alternative education program that provides classroom instruction and occupational skills training to at-risk individuals ages 16-24. Many participants have been in the juvenile justice system, are aging out of foster care, have dropped out of high school, or are otherwise at-risk of failing to reach key educational milestones and opportunities that lead to career fulfillment.

Including all recent DOL grantees, the Labor Department now actively funds 127 YouthBuild programs around the country.

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Community Renewal Team, Inc. is the designated Community Action Agency for Middlesex and Hartford Counties and is the largest non-profit provider of human services in Connecticut. The agency's mission is Preparing Our Community to Meet Life's Challenges. The mission is achieved each day by helping people and families become self-sufficient while making sure basic needs are met. CRT's programs include Head Start, Meals on Wheels, energy assistance, supportive housing and shelters, and many others, serving people in more than 60 cities and towns in both our core catchment area and throughout Connecticut. www.crtct.org