

ETA Recognition of Excellence 2005



U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration



Congratulations to all of the 2005 honorees in our second annual Recognition of Excellence! We are proud to announce these honorees who represent the highest levels of resourcefulness and innovation for which the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) looks in the demand-driven public workforce investment system.

Recognition of Excellence 2005 is an important opportunity to again honor programs, projects or initiatives that have demonstrated quality performance and successful partnerships. These honorees have displayed innovation; collaboration; admirable performance outcomes; linkages to business, education and community needs; and program replicability in the categories of:

1. Educating America's 21st Century Workforce;
2. Building an Industry/Business-Driven Workforce Investment System;
3. e³ Partnerships;
4. Recognizing Special Populations in the Workforce; and
5. Serving Out-of-School Youth.

ETA received more than 100 applications from entities across the country for Recognition of Excellence this year. These applicants described a powerful variety of services and strategies, represented many industries and served diverse populations. It was apparent from the applications that our honorees are only a small representation of the outstanding work being done throughout the workforce investment system.

Our honorees are being announced during the Workforce Innovations 2005 conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Conference attendees may visit with our honorees or pick up material about their programs in the Workforce Innovations 2005 Research Showcase. Readers can learn more about the honorees and their initiatives in this brochure.

Please join me in honoring these outstanding innovators. I look forward to hearing from even more of you during next year's Recognition of Excellence process.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Stover DeRocco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Stover DeRocco



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ETA Recognition of Excellence 2005

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is proud to sponsor the second annual ETA Recognition of Excellence! This process, established by Assistant Secretary Emily Stover DeRocco in 2004, honors highly successful programs and practices of ETA-funded activities or entities partnering with ETA-funded programs. The key attributes of honored programs, projects or initiatives are: innovation; collaboration; positive performance outcomes; linkages to business, occupations in demand, economic development, and community services; and replicability. Through the Recognition of Excellence, ETA seeks to acknowledge high levels of success in state and local programs, projects and initiatives, and facilitate the distribution and replication of promising practices about our demand-driven system throughout the workforce community.

Each year, the Assistant Secretary identifies areas of focus for the recognition. The focus categories reflect the themes and priorities of ETA in addressing the needs of the American workforce and the economy. This year over 100 applications were submitted through an electronic process newly devised for Recognition of Excellence. The applications underwent a two-phase review and evaluation process involving ETA staff and system stakeholders and vetting prior to final selection. The 2005 winners rose to the top of the list.

This year's categories, similar to last year, are:

EDUCATING AMERICA'S 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

This category recognizes organizations that have developed new and effective strategies for training and development that will prepare our workforce for the economic and demographic changes and challenges that lie ahead in the global marketplace.

BUILDING AN INDUSTRY/BUSINESS-DRIVEN WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM

To succeed in today's global economy, we must maintain and expand upon our market-driven focus, simultaneously responding to business' existing needs and preparing a skilled workforce for further job growth and evolution. This category's honorees have built the capacity to respond effectively to the needs of industry, employers, workers, and job seekers in a seamless fashion to accomplish this goal.

e³ PARTNERSHIPS

The honorees of this category are organizations that demonstrate sustained partnerships between three critical workforce investment partners: employment, education and economic development; and have been successful in preparing job seekers and incumbent workers for jobs with upward career mobility, thereby meeting the needs of employers. These linkages are referred to as the "power of e³."

RECOGNIZING SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN THE WORKFORCE

Honorees in this category have projects, programs, or initiatives that effectively serve populations with unique characteristics and barriers to employment, such as persons with disabilities, older workers, and migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The honorees demonstrate admirable results, ensuring that job seekers were adequately prepared to secure and retain employment.

SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

This category recognizes organizations that employ innovative techniques and actively collaborate with business, industry, and other essential partners in workforce and economic development to develop successful workforce solutions that address education, training, and hiring challenges of serving out-of-school youth.

READ ON TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HONOREES!

This brochure provides additional information about the Recognition of Excellence 2005 winners and their outstanding programs, projects, and initiatives. You will also find information for contacting them to speak first hand with people about what and how they are doing. Take a brochure home with you and take a few moments to read through these pages.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

ETA would like to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to two Department of Labor programs that have been providing excellent service for 40 years! Felicitations to the Senior Community Service Employment Program and Job Corps for providing 40 years of opportunities for improving the social and economic lifestyle of our youth and senior citizens.

Educating America's 21st Century Workforce

WINNER

REGIONAL ENERGY TRAINING CENTER SAN JUAN COLLEGE – FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO

“Education Answers the Needs of Energy”

The Challenge: San Juan College, a two-year community college, is situated in the heart of the San Juan Basin of New Mexico, one of the country's largest oil and natural gas producing regions. Energy exploration and production is the most important driver of the region's economy. Prompted by conversations initiated by local oil and gas producing companies and the large community of service companies that drill, complete and maintain wells, San Juan College began to explore ways to collaborate with employers to address the labor and skills needs of the oil and gas industry.

The Solution: The industry-college partnership that grew from this dialogue led to the creation of the Regional Energy Training Center; a project focused exclusively on the training and skill needs of oil and gas employers, incumbent workers, and unemployed persons seeking entry to careers in the industry. The project's primary goals were: (1) the creation of a regional training center responsive to the critical skill and labor needs of the energy industry, particularly oil and gas producers and the oilfield service companies and suppliers that support exploration and production activities; (2) the provision of training for incumbent workers needing certifications or new skills for advancement; and (3) training for dislocated workers seeking re-entry to the labor pool, and unemployed individuals needing skills to obtain entry-level jobs with career potential. The project placed particular emphasis on providing learning opportunities for the region's large Native American and Hispanic population.

This five-state regional training initiative included New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming and offers training, licenses, and certification related to gas production and other oilfield services that support oil production through three regionally dispersed training facilities, which are located in northern New Mexico. The facilities were established with support from the New Mexico Department of Labor and over 75 employers. Individuals from all five states are trained in these three centers. The project works with other community colleges in the region to assist in building their capacity to serve oil and gas employers.

The Results: The project was initially expected to serve 400 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participants referred from One-Stop Career Centers, but this estimate was dramatically exceeded. Through December 2004, the project trained 598 unemployed and dislocated workers, more than 90 percent of whom went directly to unsubsidized employment under the High Growth Job Training Initiative. To date, these centers have been successful in providing training for over 5,600 unemployed, dislocated, and incumbent workers and new hires.

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Educating America's 21st Century Workforce

HONORABLE MENTION

TEXTILES TO TECHNOLOGY: DEVELOPING A BIOTECHNOLOGY WORKFORCE FOR THE WESTERN
PIEDMONT – FORSYTH TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE – WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

“A Partnership to Retrain Displaced Workers in a Shifting Economy”

The Challenge: While experiencing an economic downturn due to a decline in the furniture, textiles, and tobacco industries, the Piedmont Triad Region of North Carolina sought out opportunities for growth in the biotechnology industry. This new industry is being fostered to help revitalize the faltering regional economy and to become the driving force behind the transformation of a manufacturing dependent economy to one based on technology.

The Solution: Forsyth Tech Community College (FTCC)'s *“Textiles to Technology: Developing a Biotechnology Workforce,”* was developed to train displaced workers laid off from the furniture, textiles, and tobacco industries as laboratory technicians in biotechnology. High school students are also given the opportunity for a seamless transition into postsecondary work. Collaborative agreements with other regional community colleges and the local One-Stop Career Center system ensure broad access to the program. Local biotechnology industry partners and university biotechnology research experts participated in the development of the program curriculum and hosted program participants in a required internship. Participants graduate with an associate degree in applied science in biotechnology from FTCC with the opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree, continue with internships, or enter the workforce.

The Results: Program enrollment has grown from 6 in 2002 to 138 in 2005 with a 68 percent retention rate. In June 2004, Forsyth Tech was recognized as the lead institution for the creation of the National Center for the Biotechnology Workforce where the college is now linked as a Center of Excellence in Research & Development curriculum and standards development.

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HONORABLE MENTION

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING TRAINING IN LEAN MANUFACTURING
OREGON MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP – BEAVERTON, OREGON

“Collaborating to Successfully Meet the Challenges of the Global Economy”

The Challenge: Local-area manufacturers in Oregon and southwest Washington identified a need to increase their ability to compete in the global marketplace by providing Advanced Lean Manufacturing Training to their employees. The Northwest High Performance Enterprise Consortium (NWHPEC), a group of cross-industry manufacturing companies in Oregon and southwest Washington dedicated to education, sharing best practices, and improving processes of enterprises, needed a program to address local workforce shortages. The Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP) was created to meet this need. The Advanced Manufacturing Training in Lean Manufacturing project was the outcome of this partnership.

The Solution: The collaboration between OMEP and NWHPEC took shape around assessing the needs of NWHPEC members and project development. NWHPEC companies span eight counties in Oregon and three counties in southwest Washington. This program employs an employer-driven model for training both employees and employers in Lean techniques. The purpose is to help prepare these employees and companies for competition in the global marketplace through cost- and time-saving strategies employed right on the shop floor. Embracing and implementing Lean Manufacturing principles allow employers and employees to work smarter, more efficiently, and more productively.

The Results: To date, over 800 employees have received training, including 566 H-1B employees; 20 persons have been hired due to growth resulting from Lean training; 10 persons have been promoted; and 22 persons have received wage increases.

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Building an Industry/Business-Driven Workforce Investment System

WINNER

BAY AREA BIOTECH CONSORTIUM, CAREER PATH PROJECT
ALAMEDA AND SAN MATEO COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

“Successful Marriage of Biotech Industry and Airline Workers”

The Challenge: In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bay Area regional workforce system was faced with assisting thousands of skilled, yet dislocated airline workers. These airline layoffs came on the heels of the “dot.com bust” in what was known as Silicon Valley. At the same time, the region faced the need to build manufacturing capacity in biotechnology as promising new drugs moved into large-scale production. This pilot program was designed to attract and train unemployed airline workers and others in the new and expanding biotechnology sector.

The Solution: The Bay Area Biotech Consortium is the successful marriage of these two complimentary needs: the need of the regional biotechnology industry to build manufacturing capacity for promising new drugs and the need to help the skilled dislocated airline and information technology workers. This innovative consortium, composed of the Alameda and San Mateo Counties Workforce Investment Boards and their industry partners, applied the talents and skills of more than 3,000 laid off airline mechanics and other workers to help meet the needs and expand the biotechnology sector through Genentech, one of the largest biotechnology employers in the nation.

The Career Path Project has five components: 1) a One-Stop targeted to displaced airline workers which was opened by the San Mateo County Workforce Investment Board from State funding; 2) an intensive 3-month, 200-hour curriculum to deliver key skills and competencies developed with Genentech, the consortium’s major employment partner; 3) 3-month full-time internships for all graduates of the 200-hour curriculum to provide on-the-job training that was arranged with Genentech; 4) job placement with Genentech for those participants who successfully completed the internships with the company; and 5) continuing training opportunities available through the Career Path Project.

The Results: The consortium has been successful in training 160 new biotech workers and plans to train 300 more over the next 2 years. The placement rate has exceeded 75 percent in jobs paying upwards of \$35,000. The regional partnership concept used here in the bio-tech industry is being considered to address the needs of biopharmaceutical manufacturing companies in the region.

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Building an Industry/Business-Driven Workforce Investment System

HONORABLE MENTION

H.E.A.L.T.H. CAREERS
(HIGH GROWTH EDUCATION AND LEARNING TRACKS IN HEALTHCARE)
WORKFORCE ALLIANCE, INC. – NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

“Workforce Alliance Creates Healthcare Workforce Initiative”

The Challenge: The partnership of Workforce Alliance and the Workforce Investment Board for the south central region of Connecticut was faced with on-going challenges in the healthcare industry. The critical shortage in Connecticut of skilled workers in the healthcare industry was identified as one of five strategic priority areas to be addressed in that region.

The Solution: The partnership with healthcare and educational entities resulted in a multi-faceted initiative to address the healthcare industry’s shortages in south central Connecticut. The elements of the initiative ranged from skills training programs implementation and One-Stop capacity-building to the promotion of awareness about the issues, as well as the creation of partnerships with healthcare and educational entities that enhanced the achievement of program goals.

The Results: The Healthcare Alliance boasts of many successes including a reduction in the Intensive Care Unit Vacancy rate, a decrease in the time and costs required to train inexperienced nurses, a 40 percent to 65 percent graduation rate, and high job placement rates. Forty-two incumbent workers have completed training and been placed in jobs averaging an 18 percent gain in wages. More than 125 persons are currently in training.

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HONORABLE MENTION

BUILD CHARLOTTE
CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE – CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

“City of Charlotte Benefits From Demand-Driven Training”

The Challenge: North Carolina was faced with the downturn in the textile/manufacturing industry. This created a need to re-train unemployed workers and place them in entry-level jobs in other industries. The need, coupled with the shortage of skilled craft workers in all of the construction trades, created a high demand for training in the construction industry. The Mayor seized this as an opportunity to re-train workers and place them in city-sponsored capital projects to help “Build Charlotte.”

The Solution: A 16-week training program was developed by the partnership with Central Piedmont Community College, the City of Charlotte, Carolinas Associated General Contractors, Charlotte-Mecklenberg Workforce Development Board, and Job Link for unemployed/laid off persons. The shortage of skilled craft workers in all of the construction trades created a high demand for this training and its graduates.

The Results: The project has served 130 students and graduated 110 persons in the 7 classes that have been completed. Of the 110 graduates, 54 were employed in the construction industry with full- or part-time jobs. Many participants continue their training after graduation, thus enhancing their longevity within the industry.

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e³ Partnerships WINNER

P.R.O.M.I.S.E. PROJECT – ACADEMY FOR PRACTICAL NURSING AND HEALTH OCCUPATIONS – PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

“Fulfilling the Promise of Jobs”

The Challenge: In recent years, Palm Beach County, Florida, like many communities across America, has faced a shortage of healthcare workers. This problem was especially critical since the local population is largely composed of elderly citizens, a demographic requiring constant medical care. Further compounding this crisis was the low retention rates of nurses and students in nursing programs in the region. In addition, the youth labor pool was highly disadvantaged due to a rise in gang violence and juvenile criminal activity, resulting in high drop out rates at the secondary school level. The P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project created an innovative and comprehensive initiative which aimed to concurrently solve all of these problems.

The Solution: Recognizing the situation, local leaders from employment, education, and economic development programs collaborated to form the P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project, which stands for Preventing Recidivism with Opportunities, Mandates, and Initiatives for Successful Employment. The P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project contributors identified the skills healthcare workers must possess in order to successfully attain and retain employment, as well as advance within the industry. Then, P.R.O.M.I.S.E. devised a strategy and designed programs to address this critical shortage.

To tap the at-risk youth labor pool, P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project staff introduced healthcare as a career to high school students as early as ninth grade. At the post-secondary level, a standardized nursing curriculum was developed with input from industry professionals. The training curriculum not only included basic nursing skills but life-management, work-readiness and special technical training. Additional literacy training was also available to those in need. Once the at-risk youth program produced initial success, operations were expanded to include at-risk adults.

The P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project also addressed the deteriorating situation the healthcare industry faced with current employees. Incumbent worker training was introduced to help update the skills of those already working in healthcare. This component enhanced the skills of experienced workers thereby strengthening a once failing system.

The Results: The initial goal of a 75 percent program completion rate was far exceeded. In fact, 100 percent of program participants completed their curriculum. Recently, community leaders have recognized the renewed vitality of the healthcare industry in Palm Beach County and proposed initiatives which would introduce a state-of-the-art bio-medical industrial park, introduce a new research hospital, expand the county’s open heart surgery capability, and expand cancer treatment options within the county. The P.R.O.M.I.S.E. Project has indeed been successful, and has made good on its name by fulfilling its promise to bring economic strength and much-needed healthcare to Palm Beach County.

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e³ Partnerships

HONORABLE MENTION

CNA-TO-LPN PROGRAM, COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER – DENVER, COLORADO

“The Power of Partnerships Demonstrated in Local Healthcare Industry”

The Challenge: The shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in Denver, Colorado, was part of a national trend dictated by high growth in the healthcare industry. Inspired by this new economic challenge, the Community College of Denver (CCD) teamed up with local hospitals to expand the supply of LPN candidates. Despite this initial partnership which resulted in a 25 percent increase in CCD nursing enrollments, the demand for LPNs continually outpaced the supply in Denver. Faced with this daunting situation, the CCD took its efforts to a new level of innovation in order to increase the nursing program capacity and draw applicants from diverse labor pools.

The Solution: The CCD and its partners, the Denver workforce system and metropolitan healthcare providers, set their sights on increasing nursing enrollment capabilities while identifying non-traditional nursing candidates. Such candidates were low-skilled incumbent workers who otherwise might not have pursued LPN certification, as well as low-income workers unable to afford a traditional LPN program. The 3-year curriculum consists of a 30-week Learning Lab for basic math and reading followed by the nursing coursework. Local hospitals provided additional facilities for classroom and on-site instruction, as well as RNs and other healthcare professionals who served as instructors in the program.

The Results: The program’s capacity has continued to expand since its inception, with high percentages of students moving beyond the Learning Lab phase and about 50 percent or more immediately enrolling in the LPN program, or plan to in the near future. CNA-to-LPN has increased nursing instruction capacity by 230 students, and 76 new LPNs are expected to join the workforce in the next 2 years.

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HONORABLE MENTION

CHOICE-WORKFORCE FLORIDA, INC. – OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

“Creating Options for Students Leading to Career Success”

The Challenge: Okaloosa County, Florida, rests in the northern panhandle region of the Sunshine State. Workforce investment system officials, in an effort to provide meaningful training and educational opportunities for young Americans, conducted a survey of businesses in the region. The purpose of the survey was to highlight the skills for the high-demand sectors of the economy. The CHOICE program was devised utilizing information collected by this survey .

The Solution: Results from the initial survey led workforce staff as well as community and education leaders to focus on Aeronautics and Aviation, Information Technology, and Construction, three industries vital to the 21st century economy. The Okaloosa County School Board and JobsPlus Youth Stops together created the innovative educational approach of establishing three sector-specific institutes on high school campuses. These institutes help students gain the skills they need to enter the target fields. At the same time, students may earn college credit and aeronautical certification. A valuable component of the program provides students with multiple options when choosing curricula, catering to low-skilled or at-risk youth. These multiple pathways exemplify the “choice” element of this innovative program.

The Results: In quantitative terms, major companies in the fields of Aeronautics and Aviation, Information Technology, and Construction have added over 1,700 new jobs since CHOICE was instituted. Overall, 807 students participated in the 3 institutes and by the end of the 2003-2004: 17 Information Technology Certifications had been awarded; 179 college courses exempted through dual enrollment or advanced placement with 537 credit-hours earned; and 5 Federal Aviation Administration pilot examinations completed.

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Recognizing Special Populations in the Workforce

WINNER

THE PILLOWTEX PROJECT – ROWAN-CABARRUS COMMUNITY COLLEGE ROWAN AND CABARRUS COUNTIES, NORTH CAROLINA

“Helping Workers Prepare for a Soft Landing”

The Challenge: When Pillowtex Corporation closed its doors, 4,790 jobs were lost in North Carolina – 3,984 of them in the service area of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. As 45 percent of the displaced employees lacked a high school credential, it was clear the college was going to need to play a critical role in basic skills and vocational training to meet this unprecedented worker dislocation. The innovators also had to anticipate and address the permanent loss of income because the workers’ new jobs in the service industry could not match the wages in their manufacturing jobs.

The Solution: For 18 months, college staff members worked at a Job Link Office onsite at a closed plant where they conducted workshops in stress management, test anxiety, and GED preparation. Information and placement testing to help dislocated workers enroll in college was also provided.

A National Emergency Grant enabled Rowan-Cabarrus Community College to hire additional instructors, increase administrative capacity, purchase equipment, and develop translation and tutoring services. New short-term training programs helped dislocated workers enter high growth jobs in the health occupation cluster quickly.

Among the many partnerships formed, the college partnered with the public schools to share space in the evenings and summer months for off-campus offerings in English as a Second Language and short-term construction and masonry programs. Local schools hosted job-seeking skills workshops, and a literacy council was reactivated. GED and Adult Basic Education classes were held at area churches. College officials translated outreach materials into Spanish and Laotian. Clothing closets helped students dress for job interviews. Cosmetology students provided free manicures and haircuts to dislocated workers as part of their job preparation. The Small Business Center developed programs in entrepreneurial training. Capacities were increased in all courses, allowing more dislocated workers to benefit from college instruction.

The Results: Rowan-Cabarrus Community College has enrolled 47 percent of all National Emergency Grant-eligible clients and has provided direct services to over 80 percent of the affected population. More than 231 individuals have received their GED; approximately 125 have become certified nurse aids; and approximately 400 have enrolled in human resources development programs and short-term occupational extension training programs. On May 22, 2005, the first wave of students marched in their college graduation.

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Recognizing Special Populations in the Workforce

HONORABLE MENTION

FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT PILOT PROJECT TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION – STATE OF TEXAS

“Selling the Case for Higher Education”

The Challenge: Texas Governor Rick Perry announced a higher education initiative to recruit and prepare disadvantaged “first generation college students” for postsecondary education, and to retain them in college once enrolled. In many instances, first generation college students must face additional obstacles in pursuing higher education. The Texas Workforce Commission’s aim was to alleviate these burdens and level the playing field for disadvantaged students.

The Solution: The Texas Workforce Commission led a consortium of state and local entities in implementing a comprehensive program that provides the support structure necessary for disadvantaged first generation students to succeed throughout high school and into postsecondary education. The program’s components target youth, parents, teachers, employers, and workforce entities, and are geared towards enhancing the coordination between institutions of higher education, public school districts, and local Workforce Development Boards with the goal of successful completion of secondary education by project participants.

The Results: First Generation College Student Pilot Project efforts have facilitated twenty institutions of higher learning in providing supplemental scholarship funding in grants to more than 1,200 first generation college students. Ninety-five to 99 percent of the scholarship recipients are remaining in college, greatly exceeding the average state-wide rate of 70 percent.

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HONORABLE MENTION

TRANSITION TO ADULT LIVING – YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE UTAH DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES – STATE OF UTAH

“Providing a Safety Net for Unattached Youth”

The Challenge: A concern about the poor outcomes of youth who had aged out of foster care in Utah led to a statewide commitment to enhance services and improve the lives of youth, both in foster care and those aging out of the system.

The Solution: At a Youth Leadership Summit, youth created and prioritized a list of their needs for making a successful transition to adulthood. In response, the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) led a cross-agency team that coordinated services to foster care youth and leveraged multiple funding resources and community-based organizations. An Education and Training Voucher allowed DWS and the Division of Child and Family Services to deliver postsecondary education funds seamlessly through the existing WIA service delivery system.

The Results: Although it is too soon to judge quantitative outcomes definitively, preliminary data suggest that outcomes for foster care youth are significantly improving. There has been a 50 percent increase in the number of youth receiving extended Medicaid coverage, and WIA services to youth in foster care have increased from 14 percent to 25 percent.

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Serving Out-of-School Youth

WINNER

YOUTH CAREER ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM – ALLIED HEALTH ATLANTIC AND CAPE MAY COUNTIES – NEW JERSEY

“Out-of-school Youth Find New Opportunity for Long-term Career Success”

The Challenge: Within the sphere of workforce investment, some target populations are more difficult to serve than others. One such population is out-of-school youth aged 18-21 years. Young people fresh out of secondary schools must wrestle with critical factors such as the costs of transportation, childcare, and housing, factors not nearly as important to their younger peers. Each of these concerns makes it much more difficult for out-of-school youth to successfully complete WIA programs. In Atlantic and Cape May Counties, New Jersey, this situation holds true.

In 2002, another issue facing the Atlantic/Cape May area was the shortage of workers in patient care and technology services in the healthcare industry. With these challenges in mind, the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) created a program designed to provide this industry with highly demanded healthcare workers, while at the same time providing meaningful employment opportunities for at-risk out-of-school youth.

The Solution: The Atlantic and Cape May area WIB sponsored a study analyzing local economic conditions so as to fully understand how best to serve their communities. This study highlighted the high growth in the healthcare industry and its demand for entry-level employees which was not being satisfied. Armed with this vital information, the WIB staff in collaboration with Atlantic Cape Community College, AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, Burdette Tomlin Memorial Hospital, and Shore Memorial Hospital and several medical centers created the demand-driven Allied Health Youth Advancement Program (AHAP).

The success of the program hinged on the invaluable input from healthcare employers. At every stage, employers in the business community provided information about their needs, thus making AHAP truly demand-driven. In addition, the medical centers made their facilities available for instruction, onsite clinical training, on-the-job training, and personnel to serve as instructors and mentors. Hands-on experience is vital for a program designed for out-of-school youth. Researchers and WIB staff found that quickly introducing program participants to “real world” learning experiences vastly increases their motivation, thus increasing program retention.

Other key components of AHAP addressed the specific needs of out-of-school youth. Program designers understood that young people enjoy programs that give them a sense of belonging. AHAP created a social, interactive atmosphere for its participants, helping them feel connected with their peers. Equally important, AHAP also addressed the financial needs of its participants through the use of stipends. Additionally, a job coach is available to provide support and address issues that may arise during and after completion of the program. Catering to the special needs of out-of-school youth allowed AHAP to achieve above-average success for an out-of-school youth program.

The Results: During its first 3 cycles, AHAP has enrolled over 50 out-of-school youth with nearly 30 having already gained employment with Atlantic and Cape May County healthcare providers. Program participants have gained valuable healthcare credentials such as EKG and Phlebotomy certifications. Next year AHAP plans to add Certified Nursing Assistant certification.

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Serving Out-of-School Youth

HONORABLE MENTION

CVS PHARMACY TECH TRAINING PROGRAM CASSADAGA JOB CORPS CENTER – CASSADAGA, NEW YORK

“Job Corps Continuing its Legacy Through CVS Partnership”

The Challenge: Out-of-school students face the uncertainty of the working world. Many youth can benefit greatly from programs which provide direction as well as much-needed soft and specialized skills. Today the pharmaceutical industry is booming. In order to meet the high demand for trained pharmacy technicians, CVS Pharmacy developed an innovative partnership with Job Corps focused on providing an intensive and real world program that gives students skills specialized to their in-store needs, as well as other soft skills useable in a wide array of occupations.

The Solution: What began as a pilot project initiated by one CVS location in upstate New York has grown into an innovative and adaptive program across New York and surrounding states. Job Corps students take part in an intensive curriculum beginning in the classroom. CVS Pharmacy provides all the materials needed to transform an average classroom into a mock CVS store. After three weeks, students move on to work at an actual CVS location, receiving on-the-job instruction and mentorship from CVS employees. These positions evolve into paid internships, with the ultimate goal of employment as full-time CVS employees. Students may also pursue certification as pharmacy technicians via the National Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination, credentials that graduates may use at pharmacies nationwide.

The Results: Since its inception, the CVS Pharmacy Tech Training Program has instructed over 100 students; 42 have been hired by CVS or other pharmacies and 12 have entered college or military. CVS operates a loan program for program graduates who decide to go to pharmacy school.

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HONORABLE MENTION

PROJECT REACH – SNOHOMISH COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SNOHOMISH COUNTY, WASHINGTON

“Turning High-Risk Youth Onto High-Demand Occupations”

The Challenge: For every community the process of reintegrating youth offenders into society, including the workforce, is a daunting one. Community leaders in Snohomish County, Washington, have chosen to explore new paths of innovation in order to provide youth offenders, many of them chemically dependent, with employment and training alternatives to traditional punitive measures. Partners from every corner of Snohomish County have come together to address this issue, one that speaks to the heart of every resident within its borders.

The Solution: An impressive array of community stakeholders collaborates on Project REACH. By way of court orders, participants are offered a unique opportunity to turn their lives around by receiving training for high-demand occupations which will in turn aid local industries. An advisory board oversees project components, and is assisted by local entities including from the Superior Court of Snohomish County, Lakewood School System, Everett Community College, Catholic Community Services, Compass Health, Center for Career Alternatives, and Sunrise Services Community Trades and Careers. Strong partnerships between these public and private entities and other local organizations enable Project REACH to provide comprehensive educational and training services through One-Stop centers. Additional services have also been crafted to address the needs of chemically dependent youth. Expert drug and alcohol techniques have been incorporated to ensure that youth make a strong transition away from this destructive cycle of abuse.

The Results: To date, Project REACH has served 164 young adults between the ages of 14 and 24. Of these youth, 74 were out-of-school when enrolled. Through these efforts, 71 have gained employment, 3 have entered military service, and 3 have earned their high school diploma. Of the 59 dropouts, 48 have earned their GED.

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Again, we extend a sincere **“thank you”** to **all** who played a part in making the second year of Recognition of Excellence a great success!



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