



Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board

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“Building Partnerships for Workforce Solutions”

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEADLINE: Gang Prevention Initiative To Serve Dutchess County Youth

Poughkeepsie, New York, January 31, 2005 – The Dutchess County Workforce Investment Board has received a grant for \$115,000 from the Dutchess County Executive William R. Steinhaus through the County’s Youth Bureau to support workforce programs that target 14 – 18 year-olds involved in gangs or at risk from living in gang affected areas. This initiative is the result of priorities established by Dutchess County Executive William R. Steinhaus, and was supported by the County Legislature. The County Executive said, “This initiative may not only make a healthier life for the youth it serves, but provides a positive path for the future.” DCWIB Chairman Tom Sipos states: "We must offer tangible skills development programs, to all disenfranchised youth, aimed at combating the lure of gang involvement. One indicator of the need for alternative programs is our area's high school dropout rate of 20 to 30 percent. Without proper training it is extremely difficult to earn a self sufficiency wage. This lack of self sufficiency makes individuals vulnerable."

Through an RFP process three programs in Dutchess County have been selected to receive funding to implement this initiative through December 2006.

- **Mill Street Loft** has committed to serve Hispanic youth from Poughkeepsie High School in its arts and job-skills based program *Habilidad*, which means *ability* in Spanish.
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension Green Teen** program will serve youth in Beacon and Poughkeepsie. They will learn skills in agriculture, product development and marketing as they create a food product from “seed to shelf”.
- The **Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill** will expand its already existing *Partnerships with Schools and Businesses* program to serve youth in Beacon and in Hyde Park. Youth in this program learn job skills and are placed on internships with local businesses; the business gains the benefit of another worker while the youth experience a real job and are mentored by their employers and co-workers.

The vision of these programs is to decrease the negative effect of gang culture on the youth in our communities. All programs provide wages for youth participants while teaching valuable skills within a supportive atmosphere. Agencies were chosen based on their ability to identify and serve youth who are at risk of gang involvement and are not currently served through school or community-based programs, and those residing in underserved geographic areas of the county.

Offering local youth a viable alternative to a life of crime is the idea behind the Youth Gang Prevention Initiative. Research shows that many youth disconnected from supportive homes and communities join gangs to fulfill needs of identity, belonging, safety, friendship and financial opportunity. The DCWIB's approach to this initiative is based on the belief that if youth are offered positive alternatives that meet these needs, then the draw of gangs will be averted. The Justice Policy Institute in its 2005 study, *Ganging Up on Communities? Putting Gang Crime in Context* states that, "investing in job opportunities in high-risk communities may be one solution to juvenile gang crime."

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Workforce Investment Boards administer federal funds for job counseling and training, and are advocates for workforce issues to help employers and employees improve their competitiveness in business.

The programs provided by this agency are partially funded by moneys received from the County of Dutchess, the New York State Workforce Investment Board and the New York State Department of Labor.

EOE/P, auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities