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Youth Opportunity Center Expands Programs

With an unprecedented demand for services, South County Community Action Agency's YouthLinks program has expanded its programs in Wakefield, Charlestown, Westerly and Johnston for youth ages 14 to 24. The free program helps eligible youth to develop the skills necessary to qualify for meaningful employment and long-term careers. YouthLinks provides academic and vocational assessment and exploration, GED preparation, basic skills remediation, occupational skills training, employment assistance, work experience, job placement, case management and adult mentoring.

In the past year, the program enrolled 562 new youth, continued to serve 47 youth previously enrolled, and provided follow-up services to 114 youth. The agency had anticipated a total enrollment of about 350 youth under its contract with Workforce Partnership of Greater RI.

To meet the increased demand, YouthLinks is using employment development funds from the American Recovery Reinvestment Act to:

- Add evening hours for Adult Education and work-based training.
- Add work-based training classes for youth who need to develop career and employability skills. The curriculum includes identifying a career path, goal setting; developing job readiness skills; finding job opportunities; resume writing; interviewing skills; and development of job retention techniques such as understanding employer expectations, conflict resolution and interpersonal relationships.
 - Hire a full-time staff in Westerly, including a master's level case manager and RI certified Adult Education/Work-Based Instructor
 - Add an additional classroom in Johnston to accommodate work-based training.
 - Add post-secondary transition classes at all sites to assist students with college and course selection, financial aid applications, and developing



college level study, research and writing skills.

The Westerly Youth Opportunities Center is being renovated to include larger classrooms and computer-based training. It is also expanding classes in the high-demand Hospitality, Construction, Technology and Green Industry sectors.

YouthLinks offers open enrollment and youth must complete an assessment to determine eligibility for the program which runs 40 to 60 hours depending on individual needs.

For further information on YouthLinks, contact:

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Westerly and Charlestown: Tammy DaSilva 401 596-7272 x 115

Johnston: Jamie Sisto, 401 519-1929

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