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**Contact: Angie Cannon
301-656-0348**

New Book: Boston's YouthBuild USA One of America's 12 Best Nonprofits

Somerville, Mass., — YouthBuild USA has been selected as one of America's 12 best nonprofits by a survey of nearly 3,000 nonprofit CEOs and 60 expert interviews conducted for the new book *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*. The book is being published October 26 by Jossey-Bass.

YouthBuild USA is a national non-profit that has mobilized hundreds of community-based organizations to engage low-income youth in rebuilding their communities and their lives through building affordable housing while completing their high school education.

In YouthBuild programs, low-income youth ages 16-24 work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building housing for homeless and low-income people. YouthBuild emphasizes leadership development and creates a positive peer group that can compete with the lure of the streets while developing new young leaders who have transcended poverty in America's poorest communities.

Since 1994, more than 68,000 YouthBuild students have produced 16,000 units of low-income housing. Today, there are 226 YouthBuild programs across the nation, engaging approximately 8,000 young adults each year in America's poorest urban, rural and tribal communities. YouthBuild USA is based in Somerville, Mass., and its Web site is www.youthbuild.org.

In their new book, authors Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant, long-time nonprofit consultants, used rigorous research to identify and study the most successful nonprofits. They surveyed thousands of nonprofit leaders, conducted in-depth expert interviews, and analyzed reams of data just to select the 12 organizations featured in their book. They then studied these groups for several years to uncover their secrets to success. The practices they discovered provide a new roadmap for anyone seeking to change the world.

What the authors discovered in the course of their research surprised them, and flies in the face of conventional wisdom. The secret? Great nonprofits spend as much time working with institutions *outside* their four walls as they do managing their own internal operations. They use the power of leverage to become greater forces for good. This landmark book reveals the six powerful practices of these high-impact nonprofits:

- *Work with government and advocate for policy change;*
- *Harness market forces and see business as a powerful partner;*
- *Convert individual supporters into evangelists for the cause;*
- *Build and nurture nonprofit networks, treating other groups as allies;*
- *Adapt to the changing environment; and*
- *Share leadership, empowering others to be forces for good.*

The authors point to YouthBuild USA's success at nurturing its communities through active alumni engagement. The authors also cite YouthBuild USA's empowerment of its broader network of affiliates around the country. "YouthBuild USA shares wealth, knowledge, leadership *and* power with a broader network of affiliates," the authors write. They also note: "One organization that has been particularly thoughtful about evaluation is YouthBuild USA. . . YouthBuild USA is also proficient at sharing best practices across its network of affiliates. . . It publishes handbooks for local sites, conducts semi-annual training sessions, and involves site leaders in several layers of councils that guide and set policy for the organization."

The authors also credit YouthBuild founder and president Dorothy Stoneman, whom they describe as "brilliant at politics and lobbying . . . Anyone who has met her – Republican or Democrat – quickly realizes that she is a force to be reckoned with. Her staff describes her as 'relentless, dogged, and determined,' a reputation confirmed by YouthBuild USA's success at obtaining large federal grants for its program, regardless of which party is in power."

In addition to **YouthBuild USA**, the authors studied:

- **America's Second Harvest**, which annually distributes more than 2 billion pounds of emergency food to more than 25 million Americans.
- **The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**, which has helped to achieve massive policy gains for low-income families in areas ranging from the EITC to food stamps.
- **City Year**, whose young leaders last year completed more than 1.4 million hours of service in mentoring, tutoring, and educating children in school.
- **Environmental Defense**, which virtually eliminated acid rain and created new models for addressing climate change.
- **Exploratorium**, which has served as a model for interactive museums around the world and has catalyzed a worldwide hands-on science education movement.
- **Habitat for Humanity**, which has housed over a million poor people.
- **The Heritage Foundation**, considered by some to be America's most influential think tank, which helped produce a conservative majority in Congress.
- **National Council of La Raza**, which has restored safety net benefits to millions of immigrants and has shaped legislation to protect them.
- **Self-Help**, which has saved families billions annually by fighting predatory lending, and has provided over \$4.5 billion in financing to help borrowers build wealth through ownership of a home or business.
- **Share Our Strength**, which has raised over \$200 million to fight hunger.
- **Teach For America**, which has reached more than 2.5 million students, made teaching in public schools cool, and created a vanguard for education reform.

"YouthBuild USA is honored to be included with these other outstanding organizations," Stoneman said. "We hope that other nonprofits, foundations, business leaders, public officials and academics will learn from the work of these inspiring organizations."

Research for this book was sponsored by the Center for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, and by the Aspen Institute Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program. A number of additional foundations and individuals provided financial support to the project. AOL founder and philanthropist Steve Case wrote the foreword to the book—which has received early positive reviews. For more details information, please visit: www.forcesforgood.net

Leslie Crutchfield is a managing director of Ashoka: Innovators of the Public, a philanthropic advisor, and a research grantee of The Aspen Institute's Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program. Heather McLeod Grant is an adviser to the Center for Social Innovation at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business and to leading nonprofits and foundations. Books are available on www.amazon.com or in bookstores nationwide.

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YouthBuild is a youth and community development program that addresses core issues facing low-income communities: housing, education, employment, crime prevention and leadership development. In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16-24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people and participating in leadership development activities in their communities. For more information, visit www.youthbuild.org