



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Amy Kapp, Public Relations Coordinator  
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School  
(215) 627-8671x39  
[akapp@youthbuildphilly.org](mailto:akapp@youthbuildphilly.org)

**YOUTHBUILD PHILADELPHIA STUDENT LEADERS JOIN OTHER YOUTH  
IN WASHINGTON, D.C. TO SUPPORT LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAM**

Philadelphia, March 13, 2006 – YouthBuild Philadelphia students Noah Longmore and Lakesha Purnell will join more than 100 other young leaders from across the country on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, March 15 to encourage more than 100 national legislators and staff to support YouthBuild, a comprehensive community development, job training, and educational program for low-income youth. The young leaders will discuss their experiences as YouthBuild students and emphasize the need to support the expansion of YouthBuild to more communities across the country.

YouthBuild Philadelphia is one of 226 YouthBuild programs in the U.S. Within variations of the YouthBuild model, unemployed and undereducated individuals ages 16-24 work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while building or refurbishing affordable community housing. Since 1992, 60,000 YouthBuild participants have produced 15,000 units of affordable housing, nationally.

YouthBuild students are high school dropouts, 30 percent of which are adjudicated and 100 percent of which face economic challenges. Despite these odds, more than half of the students complete the YouthBuild program and go on to college or a job with an average wage of above \$8 per hour.

Since its inception in 1992, YouthBuild Philadelphia has refurbished 62 houses and has plans to finish four houses during 2006. In addition, students have refurbished more than 1,000 computers in YouthBuild Philadelphia's technology training program.

Longmore, aged 20, and Purnell, aged 19, are members of YouthBuild Philadelphia's student congress and are active voices within the student body. Longmore plans to attend college and hopes to study carpentry. When asked what he likes most about YouthBuild Philadelphia, he replied, "the motivation and love."

Purnell would like to acquire further education and training after YouthBuild Philadelphia, and is currently in the process of exploring various options. Purnell stated, “What I like most about YouthBuild is that we are a family, and I can get all the help I need here.”

The visit to Capitol Hill takes place immediately following the 2006 YouthBuild USA Conference of Young Leaders, March 12-14, where Longmore and Purnell are both attendees. It is hoped that the conference activities and Capitol Hill visit will result in building support for YouthBuild. Last year a bi-partisan majority in the Senate (53 Senators) and 119 Representatives called on the appropriations subcommittee governing HUD to increase by almost 50% the appropriation for YouthBuild. Earlier this year, YouthBuild Philadelphia received a \$700,000 HUD grant.

“We are excited to have Noah and Lakesha represent us in D.C.,” says Adriana Borzellino, YouthBuild Philadelphia’s leadership development coordinator. “They are both incredibly proactive, and I know they will return and infect the student body with their energy and enthusiasm. They are proof that youth can make a difference in their communities and in the lives of others.”

# # #

**YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School** is a not-for-profit organization that provides out-of-school youth in Philadelphia the broadest range of tools, supports and opportunities available to become self-sufficient, responsible and productive citizens. YouthBuild Philadelphia offers an innovative 10-month program, which blends a rigorous educational curriculum with valuable community service experience and on-the-job training in construction, technology or nursing.

Students at YouthBuild Philadelphia can earn their high school diplomas and make successful transitions to full-time jobs, post-secondary education and training opportunities, or further service with AmeriCorps.

**YouthBuild USA** ([www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)) is a nonprofit organization that works to increase the number of youth transitioning out of poverty by supporting a nationwide network of more than 200 local YouthBuild programs. YouthBuild USA also advocates for changes in public policy on issues that impact low-income young people, develops future leaders, and contributes knowledge and best practices to the greater youth development field worldwide.