



For Immediate Release

**Contact: Amy Kapp
215-627-8671, ext. 39**

Gates Foundation Awards YouthBuild USA \$6 Million To Help Low-Income Youth Graduate from College

Somerville, Mass. – The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is awarding YouthBuild USA \$6 million to support seven local YouthBuild programs, **including one in Philadelphia**, so that 1,500 low-income young adults who have dropped out of high school can earn GEDs or diplomas and go on to complete postsecondary programs, including two- and four-year colleges, technical schools and apprenticeships, YouthBuild USA officials announced today. YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School will receive \$190,000 per year for three years, which will help a total of 600 students in the city.

The grant is a part of an ambitious \$69 million effort by the Gates Foundation to double the number of low-income students who earn a college degree or vocational credential by age 26.

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

Through a three-year grant with the Gates Foundation, YouthBuild USA and YouthBuild programs are testing and putting into place a set of interventions that will ensure high rates of postsecondary enrollment and credential attainment by program graduates.

Program activities within this initiative will dramatically improve the rate at which YouthBuild students graduate with a high school diploma or GED and enroll in and complete postsecondary education and career credential programs.

Analia, a graduate of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, says YouthBuild has helped her stay in LaSalle University.

"When I started at LaSalle, I thought the academics would be the hardest part, but the hardest part is time management and being responsible for your own learning," she said. "It's really all about making a commitment to do the work. But it helps a lot to know that I have a support network in YouthBuild that I can fall back on. It's kind of like the Verizon network, it's there whenever you need it."

With the Gates Foundation funding, YouthBuild USA will provide technical assistance, training, funding and support to seven local YouthBuild programs. In addition to YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, the other programs are YouthBuild Brockton, Mass.; Metro Atlanta YouthBuild AmeriCorps, Atlanta and Marietta, Ga.; YouthBuild Columbus, Ohio; YouthBuild McLean County Inc., Bloomington, Ill.; Operation Fresh Start Inc., Madison, Wisc.; and Portland YouthBuilders, Portland, Ore.

“We see postsecondary credentialing as a central part of our work – to open the widest set of opportunities for low-income youth to be prepared for the new economy and to provide leadership within their communities,” said Dorothy Stoneman, president and founder of YouthBuild USA.

While increasing numbers of YouthBuild graduates have enrolled in postsecondary institutions in recent years, fewer of them finish because of financial barriers and other obstacles.

The seven YouthBuild sites were selected based on their readiness and capacity to strengthen postsecondary partnerships, deepen their graduate supports and academic offerings, and increase significantly the numbers of YouthBuild graduates attaining post-secondary and career credentials. Graduates from each site are AmeriCorps members, who earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards of up to \$2,300 for postsecondary education expenses in return for their community service.

Since 1994, 76,000 YouthBuild students have produced 17,000 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. Of the students, 72 percent are young men; 91 percent have left high school without a diploma; a third have been court-involved.

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YouthBuild is a youth and community development program that simultaneously addresses the 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 GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people and participating in leadership development activities in their communities.

The national YouthBuild network represents an extraordinary public-private partnership. Community- and faith-based nonprofit organizations sponsor most YouthBuild programs; some are sponsored by local public agencies. YouthBuild USA and local YouthBuild programs receive financial support from diverse public and private national and local sources. Primary funding for YouthBuild programs comes from the U.S. Department of Labor under the federal YouthBuild program, administered by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). For more information, visit www.youthbuild.org.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses

on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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 program, which blends a rigorous, diploma-based 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 and post-secondary educational programs. For more information, visit www.youthbuildphilly.org.