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YouthBuild Students Embark on Meaningful Spring Break

Volunteers Head to Mississippi for Katrina Rebuilding Efforts

Philadelphia, March 14, 2008 – Fifteen students and ten staff members of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School departed this afternoon to spend five days rebuilding housing just outside of Waveland, Miss., one of the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. The students and staff members have volunteered their time through YouthBuild USA, which sponsors the Katrina rebuilding efforts of local YouthBuild programs across the country.

At YouthBuild Philadelphia, former high school dropouts ages 18 to 21 work toward their diplomas while learning hands-on job skills. The spring break rebuilding trip is part of the school's legacy – providing community service in an effort to transform young people's lives while revitalizing neighborhoods. YouthBuild Philadelphia has joined rebuilding efforts in Gulfport twice in the past two years, and has constructed two house frames that were sent to Lafayette, La. and Gulfport, Miss. for new homes for families displaced by the Gulf States hurricane.

Carla Robinson, 25, is part of YouthBuild Philadelphia's AmeriCorps community service coordination team. For Carla, attending the trip is an opportunity for her to help rebuild an area with personal significance in her life.

"My family vacationed in the Gulfport area for years," said Robinson. "My parents went last year for the first time after Hurricane Katrina, and they told me how different it was. I want to help rebuild a place that I feel brought so much to the Gulf area."

For Westley Boyd, 19, a student in YouthBuild Philadelphia's construction program, the volunteer trip has a personal significance of a different kind.

"It makes me feel good to know that I can make a difference in the lives of people that I've never met, in an area that I've never been to before. It's something that I can always hold on to," said Boyd.

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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 academic curriculum with 900 hours of community service 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.