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NATIONAL NON-PROFIT SEES DRAMATIC DROP IN RECIDIVISM AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Report shows select YouthBuild programs in nine cities reduce recidivism in ex-offenders to one percent

BOSTON, MA, January 21, 2016—YouthBuild USA, Inc., a national non-profit providing low-income young adults a unique pathway towards completing their secondary education and gaining job skills, today released a report that shows a specific cohort of YouthBuild programs serving court-involved youth resulted in a recidivism rate of just one percent within 12 months of graduation.

According to the “Life After Lock-Up” report, national numbers show previously convicted YouthBuild students have a reconviction rate of 11 percent, compared to the 21-33 percent one-year reconviction rate nationwide in similar populations. With the incarceration of a young adult costing as much as $100,000 or more per year, YouthBuild offers a proven model that reduces recidivism and enables ex-offenders to achieve more education, job skills, and self-sufficiency.

Nine local YouthBuild programs completed a pilot program in 2015 of the YouthBuild SMART (Start Making a Real Transformation) Initiative funded by the Department of Labor’s High Poverty/High Crime Youth Offender grant award to YouthBuild USA. The SMART programs built on the already comprehensive YouthBuild model by working with ex-offenders pre-release (“behind the walls”) and through other enhanced approaches to recidivism reduction and re-entry. After three years of operation involving a total of over 500 ex-offenders, the SMART YouthBuild programs demonstrated a reconviction recidivism rate of only one percent after one year from release from incarceration.

The “Life After Lock-up” report illustrates that this approach produces strong, consistent, and replicable reductions in recidivism among young adults who have been convicted of crimes.

The report was outlined during a conference call on Thursday that featured report author David Abromowitz, Chief Public Policy Officer at YouthBuild USA, Inc.; Congressman John Katko (NY-24); Massachusetts Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian; Terry Green, previously convicted YouthBuild alumnus from Columbus, OH; and Mark Cohen, Professor of Law and Management at Vanderbilt University.

Criminal justice reform has been widely reported as one of the few bipartisan issues that may be taken up in Congress this year, with recidivism reduction being a key part the conversation.
“Before being elected to Congress, I spent two decades as a federal prosecutor -- where I was assigned to organized crime and drug enforcement prosecution,” said Congressman Katko. “In this role, I saw first-hand the impact of poverty and violent crime on communities nationwide. I understand the great need for reducing recidivism and ensuring that young adults who have committed crimes are given the training, education, and mentorship to turn their lives around. Real change comes from the continued work of organizations like YouthBuild, and I was happy to join in today’s conversation on the services and opportunities that they provide,” Katko added.

The nine YouthBuild SMART programs include YouthBuild Fresno (Fresno, CA); Antelope Valley YouthBuild (Palmdale, CA); D.R.E.A.M.S. YouthBuild and Young Adult Training Program (Brooklyn, NY); Franklin County YouthBuild (Columbus, OH); CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell (Lowell, MA); YouthBuild Newark (Newark, NJ); San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps YouthBuild (San Gabriel Valley, CA); YouthBuild San Jose (San Jose, CA); and YouthBuild SoBro (South Bronx, NY).

CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell is located in Sheriff Koutoujian’s district and his office has participated in some of their efforts.

“Reducing recidivism requires more than just a law enforcement effort,” said Sheriff Koutoujian, who is also a founding member of Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration. “It requires the efforts of those like YouthBuild, whose intensive case management model has demonstrated success amongst at-risk, young adults. Through educational and vocational programming, as well as one-on-one mentoring, YouthBuild is improving thousands of lives each year.”

Professor Cohen has spent 30 years studying the cost of crime and said YouthBuild programs produce a favorable cost-benefit analysis.

“A typical career offender is a high school dropout and oftentimes a drug abuser. They impose $3 to $6 million in social costs over their lifetime,” said Cohen. “Research has shown that programs like YouthBuild have proven to significantly lower recidivism rates and increase graduation rates for young people who have started down this path.”

On the conference call, Green shared his personal story of how he found YouthBuild. He was incarcerated in 2009 on drug charges. He was released early and moved to a halfway house in Columbus, OH, where he was introduced to the local YouthBuild program. He successfully completed and graduated the YouthBuild program in June 2013. Now, he has a full-time job at a warehouse and is a part-time business management student.

“As a YouthBuild graduate, I know firsthand how effective this program is,” said Green who is a member of the SMART Start Council, the first YouthBuild USA national advisory council that focuses on the issues with court-involved youth. “The support and sense of community found at
YouthBuild is so rare for some young people, and it’s the crucial difference that gives them the confidence they need to turn their lives around.”

Green is one of hundreds of success stories coming out of the 260 YouthBuild locations worldwide, according to Abromowitz.

“Anyone searching for cost-effective ways to reduce crime and over-incarceration should look to the YouthBuild model, which has proven time and again successful in reducing recidivism for court-involved youth,” said Abromowitz. “YouthBuild programs across the country produce these results and improve the lives of young people in poor communities by giving them support, teaching them life skills and imparting the value of education, and the national network has the capacity to expand to turn more ex-offenders into self-reliant citizens.”

The full report is available on the YouthBuild USA website.

About YouthBuild USA, Inc.

YouthBuild USA, Inc., https://www.youthbuild.org, based in Somerville, MA, is the non-profit support center for over 260 local YouthBuild programs operating in 45 states and the District of Columbia. It also sponsors the YouthBuild International effort that has generated over 100 local YouthBuild programs in 20 countries worldwide. In the U.S., there are two ways local programs can be authorized to use the YouthBuild brand: either they can directly win a U.S. Department of Labor YouthBuild grant of funds appropriated by Congress through a competitive process run by the DOL, or they can be licensed by YouthBuild USA to use the name when they demonstrate commitment to the basic philosophy and design.

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