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Goodwill receives \$228G for YouthBuild program

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JOHNSTOWN — YouthBuild Johnstown will continue to help young people rebuild their lives.

Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley Inc., which operates the program, received a \$228,154 grant from the U.S. Labor Department to continue and expand its efforts.

The funding was part of \$66.7 million in YouthBuild grants announced Tuesday that are going to 183 community groups that provide education and training to young people across the country.

Goodwill's YouthBuild Johnstown program is now in its second year of funding.

The six- to 11-month program assists out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24 in obtaining their diploma or GED while providing occupational training in construction. While acquiring leadership skills and participating in community service, at-risk youth build and renovate affordable housing within their communities.

“This means we will be able to serve the 24 individuals we already have enrolled in the program and provide services to another 24 people,” said Mindy Rickabaugh, YouthBuild Johnstown program manager.

“We've had 18 students graduate from the program and our enrollment is growing each day.”

Rickabaugh added that funds also will be used to provide better instruction to students on “green” building techniques.

“We're always looking for ways to provide better training, and we want to expand on this into next year so students can understand energy concepts like windmills and geothermal pumps,” she said.

“This (grant) helps us expand on the base training we already provide.”

In October 2007, Goodwill received a \$500,000 grant through the U.S. Department of Labor to start and operate YouthBuild Johnstown. In June 2009, Goodwill received another competitive grant of \$500,000, which enabled the nonprofit agency to continue work begun under the original grant and expand its operations into Somerset County.

YouthBuild Johnstown graduated its first class in February 2009 and its second in December.

“There is a need here and we are here to serve,” Rickabaugh said. “We have respect for our students and their backgrounds and that's why this works.”

For more information, call 536-3536, ext. 291.