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Press Release

Atlanta's Westside Works Nationally Recognized for Construction Training, Job Placement Success

In First 18 Months of Operation, Program Has Placed 178 Neighborhood Residents into Construction Jobs

ATLANTA, GA - The Construction Training Program at Westside Works, a long-term neighborhood program focused on creating employment opportunities and job training for residents of Atlanta's Westside community, received national recognition in the area of Workforce Development from the Construction Users Roundtable (CURT).

According to CURT, the Workforce Development Award is designed "to give significant national and international recognition for extraordinary, exemplary and innovative training and education programs that lead others to a career in the construction industry."

CURT members include major industrial construction users, or companies who use construction services on a regular basis. Their membership includes General Electric, Merck & Company, Chevron, Johnson & Johnson, Procter & Gamble, ExxonMobil, DuPont and Southern Company.

The Construction Training Program at Westside Works is led by the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA) and HB NEXT. In its first 18 months of operation, The Construction Training Program has trained and credentialed 195 City of Atlanta Residents and placed 178 into full-time, living wage jobs for a placement rate of 91%.

The Construction Training Program at Westside Works was created to help transform the high unemployment rates in Atlanta's Westside communities through job training and placement. The program is made possible through a partnership of stakeholders, including The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Invest Atlanta and a large consortium of construction companies, including Holder, Hunt, Russell, Moody (HHRM- JV) - the Mercedes-Benz Stadium construction team. Westside Works is a cornerstone of Arthur Blank's vision to transform communities on Atlanta's Westside.

Other partners critical to the success of the Construction Training Program are Integrity Transformations CDC and the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA). Integrity, led by Rev. Howard Beckham, recruits residents into Westside Works, then assesses candidates for program eligibility. AWDA helps residents determine eligibility for federal assistance and provides significant funding for the program.

“This CURT Award is a testament to the vision of the Blank Family Foundation and the hard work of all of our partners who care about the residents in these neighborhoods,” said Scott Shelar, president and CEO of CEFGA. “We are having a positive impact on the lives of many Westside residents and we are bringing good, new employees into the construction industry. This award is proof that, when benchmarked against other similar workforce programs, the Construction Training Program at Westside Works is one of the best in the nation.”

In addition to AWDA and The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Westside Works financial investors include Enterprise Community Partners and several major construction employers.

Located on the Westside of Atlanta, the program recruits local residents, who are assessed to determine fitness for the program (literacy level, career aptitude, drug screen, background check, motivation / attitude). Residents who qualify are trained over the course of 18 days then given an opportunity to interview with local construction companies. They are then tracked for 365 days to determine retention, advancement and successful fit for both the graduate and the employer.

To date, residents are earning an average starting wage of \$12.60 per hour. Retention after 90 days is tracking at 82% and retention after 365 days is tracking at 70%. Westside Works graduates who remain employed for one year are reporting average wage increases of 8%.

CEFGA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Atlanta, Georgia. Founded in 1993 by construction industry leaders, CEFGA is Building the Construction Industry One Person at a Time. www.cefga.org