



AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

FOUNDATIONS FOR STRONG FAMILIES

In the Lincoln Garden neighborhood of Austin, Texas, low-income families now realize their dreams of homeownership in affordable houses on streets that were a wasteland of broken glass and burned-out shells. Remarkably, these homes represent a second set of success stories: those of the young adults who built them, gaining job skills and life skills to sustain their families in the process.

American YouthWorks, a workforce and community development organization, started Casa Verde Builders (CVB) to achieve these dual goals. “We went to families in the community and asked what they needed from us to succeed,” says Richard Halpin, Chief Executive Officer, American YouthWorks. “The resounding answers were jobs and education. We responded with much more.”

In CVB, young parents receive not only training in construction and home-building, but also supportive services that help them maintain employment. Classes that teach positive discipline and child development strengthen them in their parenting roles as well.



CASA VERDE BUILDERS GOES BEYOND
TEACHING WORK SKILLS TO HELP
YOUNG PARENTS DEVELOP LONG-TERM
SUSTAINABLE LIFE SKILLS. OUR GOAL IS
TO PROVIDE THEM WITH WHATEVER THEY
NEED FOR THEIR FAMILIES TO REACH
SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

—Richard Halpin, Chief Executive Officer, American YouthWorks

FROM BUILDER TO BUYER

Mostly single parents with little education or work experience, the young people in Casa Verde Builders gain hands-on experience and build their resumes. Over the six to 12 months of the program, their work also earns them college credits at a local community college. CVB provides child care, and a counselor helps them deal with issues that arise on the job. And each young person develops a plan for seeking employment.

Through a partnership with AmeriCorps, CVB workers receive a stipend and free or low-cost health care. After 1,700 hours in CVB, they also earn an AmeriCorps award for college tuition. These financial benefits help young people start building assets for their families.

CVB encourages young people to open savings accounts and works with a community bank to teach financial literacy. “We want CVB workers to build a solid financial base for their families, says Halpin. “It’s rewarding to see CVB graduates come back to buy one of our houses for their family.”

Since the program started in 1993, more than 100 young people have participated in building 91 houses. By selling the houses to low-income families at affordable prices, CVB revitalizes the community and renews the funds that keep the program going. Best of all, 80 percent of graduates have obtained jobs with the wages and benefits that will permit them to support their families.

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize NCLR Affiliates with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

American YouthWorks demonstrates the partnership that the Affiliates of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) form with Latino families. Nationally, nearly 300 of these organizations provide community and workforce development, education, social services, immigration, citizenship and other services. Collectively, the Affiliates serve millions of Hispanic Americans and immigrant families. “Day in and day out, our Affiliates work to strengthen families and communities,” says Janet Murguía, President and CEO of NCLR. “Together, we are creating more opportunities for Latino parents to build a better future for themselves and their children.”

AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS

Award-winning Program:

Casa Verde Builders

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