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New Haven Offers Residents Access to a Long-Term Career

An important new partnership has been forged between Empower New Haven, Inc. (the New Haven Empowerment Zone), the city of New Haven, local businesses and educational institutions, the State of Connecticut, and the building trade unions. The partnership, called the Construction Workforce Initiative, includes the Building and Construction Trades Council (BCTC), the Regional Workforce Development Board, the Regional Growth Partnership, the Connecticut Department of Labor, Yale University and the New Haven Board of Education.

“These arrangements are creating a demand and an opportunity for new entrants into the trade unions,” comments Sheri Killins, CEO of Empower New Haven. “Outreach, orientation, recruitment, intake, assessment, testing, referral, industry specific life skills training, placement, and follow-up and retention services included in the program are all critical to our success.”

The partnership aims to move 70 Empowerment Zone residents both unemployed and employed into career-path employment through access to 14 trade unions. The trade unions need more skilled workers to meet local demand.

The city and Yale University have both entered into project labor agreements with contractors and BCTC, with requirements for hiring not only minorities and women, but also city residents. In most cases, agreements specifically include first-year apprentices. Entrance into the union provides access to trade-specific training for up to 5 years.

The Construction Workforce Initiative has created an infrastructure and has gathered funding from a variety of partners. The program began in the fall of 1999, a slow season for construction work in New England; however, the project has enjoyed some early success. By March 2000, 299 residents of New Haven have been screened, 72 of which are Zone residents. To date, 18 people have joined either the bricklayers, tile setters, sheetmetal or roofers union and most are beginning to work.

For more information, contact Sheri Killins, President and CEO, Empower New Haven at (203) 776-2777.