

## **HOPE VI Community & Supportive Services Best Practices – Section 3 Denver Housing Authority**

### **Mile High Youth Corps Builds Youth Employment Skills**

Two of the most critical issues facing Denver Housing Authority (DHA) residents were a lack of safe affordable housing and a high unemployment rate for young adults. In an effort to address both of the issues simultaneously, in 2006 DHA partnered with Mile High Youth Corps' (MHYC) Youthbuild Program to provide Section 3 job training and education opportunities to Denver youth.

Youthbuild engages low-income, out-of-school young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in up to six months of service. Participants learn construction skills while building affordable homes for low-income families. Youthbuild members ("Youthbuilders") participate in all aspects of construction, from laying a foundation to electrical wiring and other specialized projects. In addition, 50% of each participant's time is spent in GED courses, life skills classes and job readiness training to prepare them for careers in the construction industry. By integrating a paid work experience on affordable housing projects with leadership development, educational activities and career exploration, MHYC helps young adults develop the skills they need to succeed in the classroom, the workforce and everyday life.

MHYP's Youthbuilders spent approximately six months working on the Park Avenue HOPE VI site in 2006. In total, 65 youth were screened, hired and trained by Mile High Youth Corps. Denver Housing Authority and Mile High Youth Corps specifically targeted HOPE VI, public housing and Section 8 residents for participation on the Park Avenue site. The Youthbuilders were matched with subcontractors and spent time shadowing them to learn their techniques. The trades Youthbuilders studied included painting, plumbing, mechanical work, electrical work, fire sprinkler installation, framing, interior trim carpentry, drywall, and roofing.

In 2006 alone, MHYC youth contributed over 41,000 hours of service to the Metro-Denver community, earned 21 GEDs, and received 50 Americorps education awards totaling \$100,776 for higher education. The program continues to be successful because youth learn valuable career skills and life skills in conjunction with each other in a safe and rewarding atmosphere, while at the same time improving the neighborhood's affordable housing stock.

**For more information on this Best Practice contact:**

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