



Southwest Georgia United

Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone, Inc.
**A Community Development Financial Institution and
Community Development Corporation**

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INTRODUCTION to Southwest GA United Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild Program

Welcome to the Southwest GA United (SWGAU) Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild Program! SWGAU is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. SWGAU operates the Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild program using funds from the US Department of Labor. The YouthBuild Program activities support SWGAU's mission of reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in the communities SWGAU serves. The Program is located in Cordele and Vienna, in the counties of Crisp and Dooly, and serves those counties and the surrounding Southwest Georgia area.

SWGAU is an accredited member of the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network. Through our activities and partnerships, we work to advance the YouthBuild social movement. We dedicate our Program to empowering the at-risk youth and young adults in our community to build their dreams, so that they may become generations of intelligent, informed, invested, and involved community leaders.

HOW TO ENROLL

Southwest Georgia United has two or three Cohorts during each Program year. Interested applicants may obtain more information regarding the SWGAU YouthBuild program by calling 229-276-1580, or by e-mailing Ms. Charlotte Dobbs, Program Manager, at charlotte.dobbs@swgau.org. Interested applicants must attend a recruitment meeting and Mental Toughness orientation to be eligible for enrollment.

SWGAU YouthBuild Purpose

SWGAU Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild is a program that helps youth, ages 16-24, develop the education, motivation, self-confidence and work skills necessary to succeed in life. Program participants are typically high school dropouts. The Program teaches them housing construction and provides teachers and tutors to improve their academic skills and prepare to take the GED. Most participants receive a national certification in housing construction before the conclusion of their Program activities. The Program staff assists Program graduates to begin post-secondary education or move into employment.

Program participants are guided by adult leaders who serve as mentors, role models, technical trainers, supervisors and case managers. The SWGAU YouthBuild Program is an excellent stepping stone to advance in traditional and non-traditional career opportunities. The Program embodies teamwork, self-discipline, determination, commitment, dedication, ambition and responsibility.

SWGAU YouthBuild Mission

The mission of the Southwest GA United Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild (SWGAU YB) is to provide out-of-school youth in Southwest Georgia area with the broadest range of tools, supports and opportunities available to become self-sufficient, responsible and productive citizens in their community.

SWGAU YouthBuild Philosophy

Southwest GA United Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild believes that youth are a valuable and underutilized resource in our society. We believe that given the opportunity, youth can and will take responsibility for themselves and their communities. With real work and meaningful education, youth can become powerful agents of change in our society.

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SWG AU YouthBuild Values

At Southwest GA United Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild, we have adopted three values that we all strive toward:
EXCELLENCE, RESPECT & PERSEVERANCE.

EXCELLENCE

Excellence is defined as the state of possessing good qualities in an eminent degree; of doing work that shows great merit; and of demonstrating superiority in virtue. At YouthBuild we expect staff and participants to strive to give their best at all times.

RESPECT

A respectful person is someone who demonstrates high regard for others' opinions, including participants, co-workers, subordinates and supervisors. At YouthBuild, this value includes respect for one's self and regard for one's character. Everyone, participants and staff, regards each other as worthy of esteem and supports conduct that demonstrates and earns more and more respect.

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is the ability to persist against the odds, to pursue success diligently despite opposition or discouragement.

The YouthBuild model fosters a supportive mini-community of youth and adults with explicitly positive values that encourages participants to define and achieve their own highest goals and aspirations. Emphasis is placed on leadership development and community service. Through this process, so-called "disconnected" young people change their relationship to society and develop a positive identity. They can enjoy taking responsibility and "giving back" to their communities and families. This new identity tends to increase their motivation to succeed at school and work. YouthBuild allows young people to simultaneously serve their communities and build their own future.

SWG AU YouthBuild is part of a larger network of over 250 YouthBuild programs from all over the country, in rural and urban areas, serving youth from many different racial and ethnic groups. The YouthBuild model has evolved over more than 30 years and has benefited from the experiences of those who designed the model and from those who have helped improve it over the years, including steady input from young people through various leadership councils.

YOUTHBUILD HISTORY

The first YouthBuild program was started in East Harlem in 1978 at a small, community-based, nonprofit organization now called Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc. (YAPH). Ms. Dorothy Stoneman developed YouthBuild outside of the existing public school, workforce development, and criminal justice systems. Her conversations with area young people were the spark that ignited this innovative and comprehensive approach to re-engaging those youth for whom those systems had not worked. Most had left high school without a diploma, and many were court-involved; yet they had enormous potential and desire to contribute to society. Ms. Stoneman engaged young people in East Harlem in the process of defining their own needs, and they guided the creation of YouthBuild.

The first YouthBuild program was so successful, and the demand to replicate it so strong, that in 1984 YAPH organized a coalition in New York City and succeeded in obtaining city tax levy funds to replicate it in five locations in the city. Soon there was such a demand nationally that in 1988 YAPH's leadership organized a national coalition to obtain federal funds for its long-term replication and spawned a national nonprofit organization called YouthBuild USA that orchestrated national replication in 11 cities with private funds. Dorothy Stoneman, formerly director of YAPH, became president of YouthBuild USA.

By 1992, YouthBuild USA and the National YouthBuild Coalition had succeeded in finding champions in Congress — Senator John Kerry (D-MA), and Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) — who got legislation passed called Hope for Youth: YouthBuild, that authorized YouthBuild as a federal program under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1993, 40 million dollars was appropriated to start the federal HUD YouthBuild program.

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In December of 2003, the Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth recommended that HUD's YouthBuild program be transferred to DOL because it was more closely aligned with purposes of DOL than of HUD and because DOL brought special resources to the program. In September 2006, the YouthBuild Transfer Act was passed by Congress unanimously, and the administration of the program was passed to DOL.

Since September 2006, DOL has taken responsibility for the development and expansion of YouthBuild to reach, engage, and transform the life prospects of disadvantaged youth in low-income communities, preparing them for post-secondary education, jobs and careers in high-growth industries, and community leadership. YouthBuild has now been integrated into America's workforce development systems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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