



New Solar Training Prepares Lake County Youth for Green Jobs

YouthBuild Lake County selected to train opportunity youth for careers in clean energy as they earn certified solar panel installer credentials

North Chicago, IL, Oct. 30, 2024 — In response to the growing demand for clean energy and the skilled workforce it requires, YouthBuild Lake County has been chosen as one of three local YouthBuild programs across the U.S. to launch a solar panel installation training and certification program for local youth. This pilot program—part of a national initiative driven by YouthBuild Global, the headquarters for the YouthBuild movement—is designed to address the critical skills gap in solar installation while creating pathways to success for opportunity youth.

The certification, which is being offered to 10 graduates from YouthBuild Lake County's YouthBuild and Pre-Apprenticeship programs, equips them with hands-on training and employer-recognized credentials, positioning them for careers in the rapidly expanding solar industry. It also underscores the growing importance of renewable energy in Lake County and nationwide. This training offers vital career opportunities for young adults in Lake County who are out of school and unemployed, equipping them to secure long-term, sustainable jobs in one of the nation's fastest-growing industries. In 2023, clean energy technology jobs grew by more than double the rate of economy-wide employment growth in the U.S.

"With clean energy at the forefront of economic development, this training program is a crucial step in ensuring Lake County's youth are prepared for future opportunities," **said Tameka Wilson, executive director of YouthBuild Lake County.** "Our program not only helps young people gain valuable skills but also strengthens the local workforce, positioning our community for growth in the renewable energy sector."

As a core element of the YouthBuild model, opportunity youth—young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor employed—learn job skills in construction and other high-demand employment sectors. To recognize this experience and remove any redundancies found in conventional curricula, YouthBuild Global's Strategic Partnerships team worked with partners Unirac, Solar Landscape's [STEP-UP Solar Training program](#), and the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) to develop and implement a curriculum specifically for YouthBuild students and graduates. The resulting credentials are specifically designed for opportunity youth who already have experience in construction and other skills training, streamlining the certification process and directly responding to the green jobs skills gap. This initiative was

initially supported and funded by RBC Foundation USA and Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

The 10 participants in the Lake County program began their training in October, with the first cohort set to complete their certification by the end of November.

“This program is not only an investment in our youth but in the future of Lake County itself,” **Wilson added.** “By equipping young people with the tools they need to thrive in this growing industry, we’re helping create a brighter future for our entire community.”

About YouthBuild Lake County

The mission of YouthBuild Lake County is to provide underserved young adults with education, training and life skills necessary to become gainfully employed and build a better future. Through two different education and career programs, YBLC offers career training opportunities in Construction, Healthcare, Transportation/Distribution & Logistics, and Utilities.

Currently celebrating its twentieth anniversary, YBLC now serves over 100 young people each year, and provides follow up and assistance to hundreds of alumni. YBLC Inc. is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c)(3) organization, with a 509 (a)(1) designation.

About YouthBuild

With love and respect, YouthBuild partners with opportunity youth to build the skillsets and mindsets that lead to lifelong learning, livelihood, and leadership. At more than 320 YouthBuild programs around the world, young people who are out of school and out of work reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become leaders in their communities through service and civic engagement. To date, YouthBuild has partnered with more than 210,000 young people to dedicate over 52 million hours of service benefitting urban, rural, and tribal communities. YouthBuild Global — the headquarters for the YouthBuild movement — unifies and partners with this expansive network of YouthBuild programs. From training, technical assistance, capacity building, and innovative program enhancements to leadership development, sustainability, and advocacy, YouthBuild Global serves as a convener, collaborator, and catalyst for the entire YouthBuild movement. YouthBuild strives to create a world where all young people are seen for their potential and power to transform themselves and their communities.

For more information about YouthBuild Global and the YouthBuild movement, visit YouthBuild.org.