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## Ithaca Creates, Sustains Green Jobs

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In an continued effort to develop energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly innovation, Ithaca is set to launch a multitude of new programs this summer directed at training workers in the local community.

According to Julia Mattick, director of the Tompkins County Workforce Investment Board, the Board will invest approximately \$120,000 in 2009 to fund various programs meant to create and sustain green-collar jobs for Ithacans under the age of 24. The funding comes primarily from the federal government's workforce investment act and stimulus bill, according to Mattick.

This move towards a “greener” Ithaca is a collaborative effort between a multitude of agencies and programs that specialize in various services, ranging from training disadvantaged youth for green-collar jobs; to providing free or low-cost weatherization renovations to disadvantaged households; to creating demand for green-collar services.

One such program participating in this venture is Tompkins Community Action (TCA), a private non-profit agency that employs youth ages 14 to 24 in weatherization programs. Working together with other public assistance groups like EmPower New York, TCA has sufficient funding to weatherize 400 houses this summer.

TCA will be hiring 50 youth to participate in a door-to-door outreach to “educate homeowners in basic electricity reduction, ... [provide] no-cost ways to reduce energy use and link participants to weatherization remediation programs to help improve home energy efficiency and cost savings,” said Dominic Frongillo, coordinator for N.Y. Energy Smart Communities with Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Tompkins County.

Newly created jobs in the weatherization field will provide the community with paid employment, which will build job skills, low-cost weatherization education and remediation for low-income households.

“Both participants and low-income households will gain economic benefits and long-range potential for economic gains and energy savings,” Frongillo said.

In addition to the six weeks, Frongillo believes participants' experience with TCA will help them for future employment.

“Providing exposure to ... hands-on construction-related skill development such as basic carpentry, air sealing, and insulation will enable participants to better prepare for green-collar employment,” Frongillo said.

Working in tandem with organizations such as Tompkins Workforce New York Career Center, which trains individuals seeking new career paths in green-collar jobs, TCA funnels trained workers into the green workforce to provide the Tompkins community with energy conservation services.

Simultaneously, outreach programs such as Cornell Cooperative Extension are creating specialized groups intended to increase the demand for green jobs.

Launching this summer, The Tompkins Energy Conservation Corps, a pilot program of CCE, will be working to create demand for green housing solutions by working to encourage homeowners who do not qualify for free and no-cost assistance to weatherize their homes.

Using energy analysis software, TECC employees will provide participants with detailed analysis of their energy usages.

“The software requires both measurements of the house — area of doors, windows, foundations, utility usage — and a blower-door test,” Frongillo said. “Homeowners will be able to visually see the greatest energy users and make informed choices about how to best seal and insulate their homes.”

By providing residents with this comprehensive analysis, TECC hopes to convince homeowners to seek the services of local green-collar workers.

“Knowledge is power,” Frongillo said. “Home energy assessment results would allow homeowners to shop around their work to contractors.”

“TC3 [Cortland Community College] received funds to infuse green-collar concepts into all of their program,” Mattick said. “In the long term, we’re working with our community and our training providers to ensure that we have available training programs to provide classroom training for green-collar jobs.

Mattick hopes that the green-collar workforce will be sustained as more training programs better equip participants for this line of work.

“Ithaca’s been at the forefront of the green field for years,” Mattick said, “and it looks like it will stay that way.”