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Secretary Gassman Announces Recovery-funded “Green Jobs” Project Employing Young Adults in Home Energy Conservation Effort

Joins new “Energy Advocate” workers, as they offer Beloit family energy saving tips

BELOIT – In a city hit hard by the national recession, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a Wisconsin American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) project employing young adults in “green jobs” to help homeowners cut utility bills, saving money and energy.

“With this Recovery-funded pilot, we are employing young adults in ‘green jobs,’ opening the door to career opportunities,” Secretary Gassman said. “We are helping homeowners save money and conserve energy while protecting our environment.”

On behalf of Governor Doyle, Secretary Gassman officially unveiled the ARRA-funded “Energy Advocate Youth Pilot” at the home of DeCarlos and Michelle Nora in Beloit’s Merrill Neighborhood. As part of the announcement, she accompanied five “energy advocates,” as they inspected the young couple’s home and suggested ways to make the house more energy efficient.

“Governor Doyle worked closely with President Obama on the ARRA legislation,” Secretary Gassman said. “Now we’re seeing ARRA in action, in this case, helping both disadvantaged youth gain employment and homeowners save on energy costs. Using Energy Star fluorescent bulbs, keeping your dryer vent lint-free, installing a low-flow showerhead and faucet – these and other steps can significantly reduce utility bills.”

With federal ARRA funds, Governor Doyle provided for the employment of 25 individuals, who are 18 to 24 years of age, from low-income households, and meet one of six other criteria for disadvantaged youth. The project is one of many ARRA-funded efforts that will employ approximately 4,000 Wisconsin young adults statewide through June 2011.

Besides Beloit, five energy advocates will work in each of the following cities: Green Bay, Racine, Superior and Wisconsin Rapids, communities with high unemployment, predominantly older homes, and many young people seeking jobs. In June, Beloit had the highest unemployment rate, 18.6 percent. Milwaukee has a similar, independent project.

“These ARRA funds are creating new opportunities for youth to learn new skills while educating the public on energy efficiency,” said Rep. Kim Hixson, who joined Secretary Gassman for the announcement. “We’re helping folks lower their utility bills. Saving money at the meter will allow families to budget more money for important needs like groceries or school supplies.”

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DWD partnered with regional workforce development boards and the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation (WECC), which provided training. Besides training, WECC will provide outreach in the five cities to let homeowners know about the pilot and the opportunity for energy inspections.

DWD is using \$158,000 in federal recovery funds to fund the project, covering wages, training, outreach and administration.

For more information about Wisconsin ARRA efforts, visit: <http://recovery.wisconsin.gov/>

For more information about WECC's Focus on Energy initiative, visit: <http://www.focusonenergy.com/>