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## **Secretary Gassman: Over 4,000 Youth Employed in Summer Jobs under Recovery Act, Learning Skills, Gaining Experience, Earning Paycheck**

MADISON – Citing Recovery funds in action, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman announced today over 4,000 youth and young adults were employed last summer in a wide range of jobs, providing them real work experience, valuable skills and opportunities to explore careers.

"With the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, we put people to work and accomplished a great deal more," Secretary Gassman said. "We made a big investment in the future. Some 4,000 young people had a positive, summer work experience. More than providing summer jobs, we're preparing this new generation of workers for their future."

Secretary Gassman presented Governor Doyle's Council on Workforce Investment with the 2009 Wisconsin ARRA Summer Youth Employment Report, a comprehensive look at initiatives by DWD and its regional partners, the 11 workforce development boards. She and board representatives urged the Council to recommend continuation of this summer youth employment effort.

Several young workers shared their experiences. The report also includes comments from participants. In Madison, TeKila Wilks, 24, was one of nearly 50 watercraft inspectors employed in the Invasive Species Project, a collaborative effort between DWD, the Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Workforce Development Boards.

"I'm learning so much this summer," said Wilks, who was interviewed for the report. She and other watercraft inspectors worked at boat landings, inspecting boats while educating and enlisting boat owners in the fight against aquatic invasive species. "I have the chance to protect our environment while I build my skills for a career. People need opportunities like the Summer Youth Employment Program."

In Beloit, Nate Castro, 19, was among the youth employed in the Energy Advocates Project, DWD's pilot in collaboration with regional workforce development boards. Nate was one of five the Southwest Wisconsin WDB employed in Beloit. They inspected homes, gave homeowners energy saving tips and distributed energy saving devices, such as a low-flow showerhead and energy efficient fluorescent bulb. "I like this job a lot because it is allowing me to help my community," Castro said.

Wisconsin received more than \$13.8 million in ARRA funding for youth employment, nearly all of it distributed to the Boards through the existing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth program. DWD administers the program and set goals for serving youth and young people 16 to 24 years of age, primarily youth from low-income families. Targeted categories also included young people with disabilities and young veterans. Report findings include:

- Participants earned over \$4.4 million in wages with an average wage of \$7.25 per hour;
- Participants worked from 20 to 30 hours per week;
- Nearly 700 youth were employed in green jobs;
- Of those completing the program, 91 percent earned work-readiness credentials;
- Approximately 1,200 employers, public and private, participated and also benefited from the program.

The full report is available at: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/recovery/>