



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Funding Workforce Training for Women in Growing Industries

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS November 8, 2012

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A new program, funded by New York State, will give unemployed or underemployed women from Westchester a chance to find a job in the green energy industry. At a press conference, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assemblyman Gary Pretlow and Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer presented a \$40,000 check to the Yonkers YWCA to fund a free Solar Workforce Training Program in partnership with Rockland Community College. The grant came from the New York State Department of Labor and was allocated to the Yonkers YWCA as part of the 2011 Regional Economic Development Council awards.

The Solar Workforce Training Program will provide 16 unemployed or underemployed women from Westchester an introductory course in photovoltaics (PV), solar panel installation training and preparation for the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) exam – the gold standard for PV and solar thermal installation certification. Job placement support will also be provided to the trainees, and all services and courses will be offered free of charge. Successful participants will leave the program with a NABCEP certification and an opportunity to break into a high-wage job in the growing solar energy industry. The courses and training will be administered by Rockland Community College.

Ten spots are still open for the program, which began October 11, 2012. A high school diploma or GED is required. To sign up, contact the Yonkers YWCA at 914-963-0640 ext. 109.

“This grant will open doors to good paying jobs for 16 unemployed and underemployed women,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “It will give participants a chance to get on their feet and find a job in this difficult economy, and it will support New York’s growing solar energy industry. Growth in the green energy sector will spur sustainable economic growth in New York and help the environment, so this partnership, and others like it around the state, will pay dividends in the future.”

Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer commented, "This grant provides the training opportunity women need to move into a new, energy-smart economy. It offers them a meaningful chance to move into good paying jobs that meet real economic demand, and is a model of what government should do."

Assemblyman Gary Pretlow commented, “I am pleased to stand with my colleagues to present this grant to the Yonkers YWCA. I firmly believe that this grant will allow participants to attain jobs, improve their earnings and contribute to their local economies all

by supporting the environment.”

“This is another example of YWCA’s mission of women’s economic empowerment at work,” said Yejide Okunribido, Esq., Executive Director, YWCA Yonkers. “Through this funding, we can help women consider careers in the new green economy, help them acquire relevant and transferable skills needed to become or remain self-sufficient and prepare them to succeed in this field. YWCA Yonkers is excited to be part of initiatives aimed at moving the Hudson Valley’s economy forward”.

Tom Della Torre, Interim Dean of Academic and Community Partnerships at Rockland Community College commented, "Rockland Community College is proud to be a partner in this innovative and tremendously worthwhile new program."

This program will not only promote self-sufficiency for unemployed, low-income, minority women but also fill the increasing need for professional solar energy workers. National Solar Job Census 2011 findings indicate that the solar industry is a strong and growing cluster that is responsible for thousands of jobs across every state in the nation. The use of solar electric on more and more buildings throughout the country has created a demand for professionals trained to market, install and service these clean, renewable alternative energy systems. In the midst of a historic economic and workforce downturn, solar employers remain very optimistic that job growth will continue for years to come.