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**Students from Philadelphia to Join Hundreds of Low-Income Youth in Nation's  
Capitol  
To Raise Their Voices and Offer Solutions to Ending Poverty in America**

Philadelphia, March 28, 2008 – Thirty-three students from Philadelphia are joining nearly 500 low-income young leaders for the first-of-its-kind “Our America” youth town hall on April 1 in Washington, D.C. Representing the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School program, the young leaders are part of a national movement to ensure their voices are part of the national political debate on ending poverty in America and on related key issues affecting low-income young people, including public education, family, crime and the economy. At this event, youth also will present their “Declaration of Inter-dependence,” a youth-written document detailing comprehensive policy recommendations on key issues.

The “Our America” gathering is being sponsored by YouthBuild USA and Think.MTV.com and is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Hosted by MTV news correspondents Sway Calloway and Kim Stolz, the event will feature testimonies from young adult leaders – including YouthBuild Philadelphia Class of 2007 alumna Shardell Martin – about their lives growing up in low-income communities and a discussion about needed policy changes. Attendees will also hear from Poem-cees, a D.C. poetry and hip-hop performance group. More than 40 national organizations in 25 states are co-sponsoring the event.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity for our students to participate in an unprecedented national conversation among low-income young people,” said Brian Leffler, director of program development at YouthBuild Philadelphia. “The conversation is a step toward change, not only in their lives, but on a national level.”

Participants in “Our America” include young people who have dropped out of high school and experienced homelessness, teen pregnancy and incarceration, but are rising above such difficult challenges. On April 2, the day after the town hall gathering, young leaders from YouthBuild, including two YouthBuild Philadelphia student leaders, Carreather Atcherson and Tyrone Roberts, will spend the day meeting with members of Congress, talking about how YouthBuild helped them transform their lives and rebuild their communities.

“This is a unique gathering in which hundreds of low-income young people are sharing their experiences and solutions for ending poverty in America,” said Dorothy Stoneman, president and founder of YouthBuild USA, a national non-profit organization in which low-income youth work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while rebuilding affordable housing for poor people. “Our goal is to mobilize a national community of low-income young people who will take action to transform America’s most pressing problems.”

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**YouthBuild** is a youth and community development program that addresses core issues facing low-income communities including: housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16-24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people and participating in leadership development activities in their communities. For more information, visit [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org).

**YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School** is a not-for-profit organization that provides out-of-school youth in Philadelphia the broadest range of tools, supports and opportunities available to become self-sufficient, responsible and productive citizens. YouthBuild Philadelphia offers an innovative program, which blends a rigorous academic curriculum with 900 hours of community service (per student) and on-the-job training in construction, technology or nursing.

Students at YouthBuild Philadelphia can earn their high school diplomas and make successful transitions to full-time jobs and post-secondary educational programs. For more information, visit [www.youthbuildphilly.org](http://www.youthbuildphilly.org).

**Think.MTV.com** is an online community where the biggest names in pop culture, as well as top non-profits and civic organizations, can join forces with young people to address pressing social issues. For more information, visit [www.think.mtv.com](http://www.think.mtv.com).

Co-sponsoring organizations for the “Our America” town hall include:

Afterschool Alliance	Learning Work Connection
Alternatives Schools Network	MENTOR/National Mentoring
America Forward	Partnership
America's Promise	National Association of Street Schools
Association for Career and Technical Education	National Collaborative for Youth
American Youth Policy Forum	National Youth Employment Coalition
Campaign for Youth	Organized Youth for Educational
Chi Upsilon Sigma National Latin Sorority	Alternatives
Citizens Schools	Public Allies
	Rebuilding Together
	Risk Metrics Group

City Year  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Communities in Schools  
Community Action Partnership  
Diploma Plus  
First Focus  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education  
Network  
I Have a Dream Foundation  
Jobs for America's Graduates  
Jobs for the Future

Sar Levitan Center, JHU  
Share Our Strengths  
The Big Picture Company  
The Center for Community Change  
The Corps Network  
The Young Peoples Project  
Wave Inc.  
Year UP  
Youth Advocate Program  
Youth Service America