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Computer Literacy and Job Placement Services Expanded in West Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA, July 11, 2006 ----- On July 1, 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor announced \$4 million in grants to 55 faith-based and community organizations competitively chosen to help hard-to-serve populations prepare for and succeed in employment opportunities. "This administration appreciates the effectiveness of faith-based and community organizations in helping workers find jobs and build a brighter future for themselves and their families," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "The grassroots projects funded through this \$4 million initiative will reach out to those most in need by providing guidance and support in making use of employment services available through local One-Stop Career Centers." In the Philadelphia region, only one organization was a recipient of this year's grant award. Turning the TIDE, a faith based community technology training center, located in the Cobbs Creek section of Philadelphia will receive \$75,000 to continue the job training and employment services they provide.

This award will allow the continuation of Project ECHO, a collaborative venture with the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation and the Pennsylvania CareerLink System to assist ex-offenders in obtaining sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities. Rev. Jonathan Ford, Executive Director of Turning the TIDE states, "in the last year of operations, we were able to involve over 25 volunteers from various churches, as life skills coaches and mentors working with close to 175 individuals to receive training. In addition, many individuals were able to obtain sustainable employment. This project allows us to engage our community and work together to solve what would otherwise be an intractable problem."

This positive sentiment was reiterated by Ms. Susan Kirby, Director, Ex-Offender Services at the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation, who stated, "the work of Turning the Tide's Project ECHO program demonstrates what a faith based organization working with a strong committed community can do. This is a service which should not only be continued but also be expanded. The numbers of individuals being released from prison each year into Philadelphia continues to grow. These individuals need training, access to jobs and community based supports to ensure an effective transition back into the community. It is just this set of services that Project ECHO has provided for the last two years and will continue to provide through this grant."

Through this new award, Turning the TIDE will engage 50 recently released ex-offenders and provide them with employment opportunities using the PA CareerLink system as well as other job sources, and 35 of these individuals will obtain sustainable, unsubsidized employment. At the same time, Turning the TIDE will work with 25 new community volunteers, from a cross sections of churches, to delivery job related mentoring and life skills training to all program participants.

If you are interested in receiving services, becoming a community volunteer and/or supporting Turning the TIDE, please contact Rev. Jonathan Ford at Turning the TIDE (215-427-6268) or via their website, www.turningthetide.org.

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