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10 graduate from YouthBuild

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Tom Leskin/Staff Photo Graduates of the December 2010 YouthBuild class listen to a speech by guest speaker, Rich Earl, during a ceremony Thursday night in the Northumberland County CareerLink, Shamokin.

[Image Gallery for 10 graduate from YouthBuild](#)



SHAMOKIN - Proving that its never too late to learn new academic, leadership and construction skills, a graduation ceremony for YouthBuild was held for ten individuals at the Northumberland County Career and Arts Center Thursday evening.

The Youthbuild program, aimed at young adults aged 18 to 24 years old, allows those without a high-school diploma the chance to get the necessary training to earn a GED and Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in construction in only six months, working six and a half hours a day twice a week.

During the six-month program, half of the time is spent in the classroom learning subjects such as math, language, history and science, while the remainder is spent learning construction skills and rehabilitating homes in the area. Students are also expected to complete community service on their own time.

What began in Harlem in the late 1970s has grown to serve more than 92,000 young adults and construct more than 19,000 housing units across 45 states. There are currently 273 YouthBuild programs across the country.

The graduates honored Thursday night were, Robert Beury, Shane Dillman, Britney Flynn, Sean Lynch, Aaron Mather, Sara Olszewskie, Sharyl Petrovich, Alan Turner, George Weaver and Brandon Weikel.

During the ceremony, Olszewskie and Turner told the audience how the program changed their lives for the better.

"This was the miracle that I had been waiting for," Turner said. "The YouthBuild program really was a dream come true."

Olszewskie said she plans to attend college to get her associates degree in science.

A former YouthBuild graduate, Joshua Yost, Class of May 2010, also gave a speech during the ceremony, telling students and parents in the audience just how much deciding to enroll in the program impacted his life.

"I want to thank you (YouthBuild program) for letting me do more than just flip a hamburger for the rest of my life," Yost said.

Completing the program, these students can apply for jobs for which they had never before been qualified. Some will enter the military.

While awards were given to the students to showcase their excellence in academics, leadership and community service in addition to the graduation certificates they each received, the students chose one person - someone who works with the program and helped them along the way - to receive an Honorary YouthBuild Award.

The students chose James Watson, who works for the county and on the maintenance team. Watson was unable to attend the ceremony.

The special keynote speaker for the night was life coach Rich Earl, who has served as pastor at Mountainside Assembly of God, Coal Township, since 1998. He urged the students not to take the easy way out of life's situations.

"Talk to anyone and they will tell you the more difficult path is often the right path," Earl said.

The program is currently recruiting to help more young adults gain the training they need.

For more information, call YouthBuild staff at 644-6575, ext. 109.

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