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## Building homes, futures

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Larry Deklinski/Staff Photo Joshua Yost speaks to family, friends and guests at a YouthBuild graduation ceremony Thursday evening at the Northumberland County Career and Arts Center, Shamokin. Yost and eleven others graduated from the national program designed to earn a GED while rehabilitating affordable housing. The program is for young adults, ages 18 to 24, who have dropped out of school and lack the necessary education and skills to participate in the labor market.

SHAMOKIN - A graduation ceremony for YouthBuild was held Thursday evening for twelve individuals at the Northumberland County Career and Arts Center. The program is for young adults, ages 18 and 24, who have dropped out of school and lack the necessary education and skills to participate in the labor market.

Each graduate was required to spend six months in the training program. Half of the time was spent in the classroom participating in GED preparation and other academic skills training, while the remainder was spent learning construction skills and rehabilitating homes in Coal Township and New Columbia.

Graduates also completed group and individual service-learning projects to find additional ways to serve their local communities.

Completing the requirements were Sean Beers, Sammantha Bell, David Britton, Crystal Hogan, Michael Holroyd, Jesse Shaffer, Ryan Shurock, Clinton Snyder, Shayla Snyder, Nicholas Stahl, Kurtis Whitmer and Joshua Yost.

Individual awards were also presented by YouthBuild staff.



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Image Gallery for Building homes, futures



"For the past six months, it has been awesome to see people trying to help us get a fresh start in life," said Beers.

"We learned to support each other, and from that, it helped us accomplish our individual goals."

The program began in Harlem in the late 1970s and has grown to serve more than 92,000 youths and refurbish more than 19,000 housing units in 45 states. There are currently 273 YouthBuild programs operating across the country. Thursday's graduating class of Youth Build was the first in Central PA.

"Its never too late to graduate," said Beers.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor provided \$120 million for the program.

YouthBuild partners are Central PA Workforce Corporation (CPWDC), Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc., Home Builders Institute, Housing Authority of Northumberland County and Union-Snyder Habitat for Humanity.

"For the past six months, the graduates have been in the class room, have showed up on time to work, and cared for each other like a family," said Kate Lomax, representative for CPWDC.

The program is currently recruiting for the next YouthBuild class. Interested young adults may contact YouthBuild staff at 644-6575, ext. 109.

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