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The West End House is one of 16 agencies funded by Project YES, which will provide summer jobs for youth.



Peer Leaders Isaiah and Todd with Andrea Howard and Attorney General Martha Coakley

AG unveils additional funding for youth jobs program \$100,000 will add 64 positions

With the economic crunch squeezing the number of jobs available for young people, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced yesterday that her office would devote another \$100,000 to employment programs, creating 64 more positions for at-risk youths in programs across Massachusetts.

The funding — which came from settlements of cases against health care and pharmaceutical companies — will boost the \$1.5 million the attorney general's office

already committed to 16 programs through Project YES, or Youth Employment Solutions. The grants were open to municipalities, public school districts, and nonprofit groups that serve low-income or at-risk youth and include physical fitness in their programs.

With yesterday's announcement, the program is now expected to create a total of 225 jobs.

"It's not enough. But it's a good start," Coakley told about 100 teenagers assembled in the gym at the Catholic Charities Teen Center at St. Peter in Dorchester, where she was joined by Suffolk District Attorney Daniel F. Conley and Mayor Thomas M. Menino. The public officials toured the St. Peter facility, where students worked on their math homework and on computers and wrote essays about where they hope to be in 20 years. Some of the young people got jobs there as mentors or counselors in training.

Cutbacks in state and federal funding have left the city of Boston \$1.9 million in the red for its summer jobs program, Menino told the crowd.

Though the city has held level its funding for summer jobs, the mayor — worried about what happens to teens with too much time on their hands — has asked private companies to step up to provide more job opportunities.

The cuts in jobs for young people could increase the potential for inactivity, as well as violence, officials fear.

"We know what happens when you don't have a job," Menino told the youths. "You hang around."

These grants must be spent on programs that encourage physical activity, teach a healthy diet, or offer professional skills and education on work ethics. The 16 programs include the St. Peter Teen Center, the Hyde Square Task Force in Jamaica Plain, the Boys and Girls Club of Holyoke, Worcester Public Schools, the Haverhill Community Violence Prevention Center, and Caring Health Center in Springfield.

Coakley called it an opportunity to get young people jobs and "working in something that is going to get everybody moving," she said. "Let's do two things at once. Let's create jobs that will keep people active, involved, engaged.

"What it's going to do for you is establish responsibility," added Conley, who noted his humble beginnings in the job market as a paperboy, cutting grass, and cleaning fish.

"You keep building your résumé and it helps you achieve your goals."

Last year, federal stimulus money helped fund 7,000 summer jobs for youths in Massachusetts. But the US Senate rejected a plan to extend the funding.