

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY

You Can't Spell CARE without CAR.

Five employees of VNA Healthcare, including Denise Meade and Vinette Murray, recently bought cars with matching funds provided through a special Individual Development Account program, funded by the United Way of the Capital Area and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Hartford Making Connections initiative.

These hard working women used to take the bus or get rides to treat patients. Inspired by the desire to treat more patients, they completed a 12-hour money management class, saved \$1,500 of their own money, and received \$4,500 in a 3-to-1 savings match from Co-opportunity to buy their own cars. Now they are more mobile, get more hours, treat more patients, and make more money. Five additional VNA employees are close to purchasing their own cars through the program.



Vinette Murray drives to work in the car she purchased, with help from Co-opportunity.

Getting Things Done.

Program Aims to Put \$8 Million Back in the Community

The Hartford Asset Building Collaborative, led by Co-opportunity's Laura O'Keefe, offers free tax preparation to people with annual incomes of less than \$40,000 at 18 locations throughout Hartford.

By offering free tax preparation, Collaborative tax preparers identify opportunities for filers to take advantage of the earned income tax credit (EITC), and other credits and refunds that they may otherwise not have received.

In 2006, the Collaborative prepared 3,345 tax returns, and claimed the EITC for 1,286 filers, generating an average of \$1,433 per filer. The Collaborative helped area residents capture \$7.8 million in total credits and refunds, which results in an additional \$7.8 million being spent in the local economy.

The 2007 campaign's goal is to return more than \$9 million to the community. Highlights of the campaign include: National EITC Awareness Day on February 1, building on last year's successful introduction of a partnership with the Hartford Federal Credit Union, encouraging saving through "refund splitting," the opening of three new program sites, and making progress in moving filers beyond earning credits to institutionalizing asset building as a year round practice. A new program that will offer tax filers financial coaching will also be introduced.

Getting More Things Done:

- Co-opportunity recently learned it would receive a \$700,000, 36-month HUD grant to train 60 additional youth and build four houses in conjunction with Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity at Garden and Risley Streets, in Hartford.
- Co-opportunity launched its new "Getting Things Done" web site in November (www.co-opportunity.org). It describes all of Co-opportunity's programs, identifies the agency's partners and major funders, and includes an online giving function.
- The agency received a \$10,000 grant from the Hartford Courant Foundation to upgrade the YouthBuild computer lab.

12 Graduates Successfully Complete YouthBuild Program

It rained on September 14, but the outlook for YouthBuild's 12 newest graduates was sunny. Ten men and two women received Certificates of Completion that day, accompanied by proud family members and friends at a YouthBuild graduation ceremony at The Village for Families and Children on Wethersfield Avenue.

"You have not only provided opportunities for yourselves, you have also taken an important step in strengthening your community."

- Bruce Fleahman, Building Director at Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity

Equipped with both hard and soft job skills, eleven of the twelve graduates had jobs at or immediately after graduation. The graduates entered jobs paying \$10 an hour or more at BRD Construction, Roth Hardware, a local Honda dealership, Home Depot, area warehouses, and other places of employment.

Graduates Quinton Harris, Jeffrey Johnson, and Felisha Williams were selected by ServCorps, an organization dedicated to engaging people in community services, to be part of a group of Hartford representatives who traveled to Mississippi for a week to rebuild damaged houses.

Tawanda Farris, one of 12 graduates who completed the YouthBuild program last fall, receives her YouthBuild diploma.



Bank of America Awards \$200,000 Grant to Co-Opportunity



Donna Taglianetti (center) accepts Bank of America's \$200,000 Neighborhood Builder grant from Connecticut Bank of America President Susan Rottner and WFSB Reporter Kara Sundlun.

"Wow! This puts us in very elite company." That's how Tim Cole, Co-opportunity's Director of Development reacted to the news that Co-opportunity had been selected from among 50 Greater Hartford non-profit organizations to receive a \$200,000 Neighborhood Builder grant through Bank of America's Neighborhood Excellence Initiative.

Co-opportunity is one of only six Connecticut non-profits to ever win a Neighborhood Builder grant. The award recognizes Co-opportunity's "commitment to the growth and vitality of Hartford" and its focus "on local neighborhood priorities."

Executive Director Donna Taglianetti noted, "you apply for a grant like this, knowing that the chances of getting it are pretty slim. We are thrilled that Bank of America recognized what we are doing to 'get things done' in Hartford."

The agency will receive \$200,000 in core operating support and rigorous leadership training for a senior executive and an emerging leader. Co-opportunity will receive \$100,000 annually for two years.



20 YEARS

Getting Things Done in Hartford
1987 - 2007

Bank of America awards
Co-opportunity \$200,000 grant

12 graduates successfully
complete YouthBuild program

Partnering with Our Piece
of the Pie to build assets

Better transportation means
better health care

Tax program returns \$8 million
to the community

Please visit www.co-opportunity.org
if you would prefer to receive this
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OPP and Co-opportunity Build Assets Together:



Co-opportunity and Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) have partnered through the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative to create an individual development account (IDA) program for young people age 14 - 23 who have been or who are in foster care.

The program provides one-to-one savings matches of up to \$3,000 over three years for six different types of assets: education, housing, health care, small business investment, transportation, or savings.

The Department of Children and Families refers eligible youth to OPP, who selects participants, provides job placement services, and sub-contracts Co-opportunity to provide financial education and assistance with banking relationships and asset purchases. Together, the two agencies help young people overcome the challenges of growing up in foster care, to acquire assets and achieve personal financial success.

To date, 11 participants have made purchases through the program. Six people have purchased cars, three have bought computers to help them with their education, one has invested in tuition, and 20 year old Katherine Lawrence is leveraging her coursework in fashion design to start her own sewing business. She has created a business plan, produced samples of her work, and used the program funds to develop promotional materials to market her business.