

STEM Projects Grow the State's Technical Pipeline

The Workforce Alliance Youth Council participated in a statewide pilot project to stimulate middle and high school student's interest in STEM-related skills. STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) activities included tours of high tech facilities such as Sonalyst, a media production center, and Unilever, a more conventional manufacturer. Teachers also had week-long externships at businesses and created lesson plans based on their experience. "We hope to build on the success of this pilot." said James Ieronimo, Chair of the Youth Council and Executive Director of United Way of Meriden/Wallingford. "Working with other Workforce Investment Boards, we are reinforcing the importance of STEM skills for educators, as well as parents and students."

[Read more](#)

Incumbent Worker Training Funds Assist 293 Employees

During the past year, Workforce Alliance's support of training for existing workers in the area resulted in skills and wage upgrades for 293 employees. The funding, from federal and state sources with a dollar-for-dollar match by the participating private sector employer (which often exceeded their 50% commitment), reached \$514,101 for our 30-town region. Of that, the state contributed \$102,555, with \$62,432 from the federal government and employers pitching in \$349,114. Training ranged from basic mechanics to computer technology. Despite the proven track record of incumbent worker training, Connecticut invests the least in the entire nation. Connecticut spends \$0.16 per capita, while Rhode Island invests \$16.93 per capita. Iowa tops the nation in retraining its workforce: \$42.48 per capita.

13 Proposals Win Youth Council Funding for 2008-2009

The Workforce Alliance Youth Council funded 13 of 21 proposals submitted for programs to be launched in 2008-2009. After reviewing the 21 proposals (more than double the normal number submitted), the funding panel recommended 13 that offered a good scope of opportunity for nearly 200 young people.. The total amount of funding for these programs, which are targeted to economically disadvantaged, in-or out-of-school youth (ages 14-21) will be nearly \$600,000.

Minimum Wage Increase Helps CTWorks Customers

The recent passage of an increase in minimum wage from the current rate of \$7.65 per hour to \$8.00 per hour on January 1, and to \$8.25 per hour in January 2010, will add over \$700 per year to the wages of a full time worker. While Workforce Alliance always

attempts to place people in higher paying jobs that pay closer to a real living wage, this increase is more than symbolic to the thousands of workers who will benefit. Working families struggling to make ends meet will experience some relief from this small, but important wage increase. Coverage of the legislation's passage included discussions with ex-offenders, many of whom work for minimum wage. [Read more](#)

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**William P. Villano**

**Executive Director**

**Workforce Alliance**

560 Ella T. Grasso Blvd.

New Haven CT., 06519

P: 203.867.4030

F: 203.562.1106

[info@workforcealliance.biz](mailto:info@workforcealliance.biz)

<http://www.workforcealliance.biz>