

## RACINE COUNTY'S E3 PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION by Mark Gesner, Racine County Workforce Development Center, Youth Team Leader

Now, the whole country knows about the success of Racine County's "E3" (Employ, Enrich, Engage) Program.

The County's employment and training program, which engaged 240 young people in "green jobs" last summer, received broad exposure on March 6 in Washington DC at the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Conference. Four youth involved in E3 were the featured speakers in a presentation entitled "Developing Youth Programs to Build Social and Economic Capital." One reason the program stood out from other "stimulus" programs from around the country was because Racine used strong community partnerships to leverage the federal funds and garner additional monetary and in-kind local resources.

"Our time at the conference was eye opening," said 20 year old UW-Milwaukee student Grace Caringello from Burlington. "We did not realize how unique our E3 Program and Racine County were until we heard the great reaction from the audience." Ms. Caringello worked with a team this past summer to develop a recycling program for the Burlington School District. At the conference she shared some of the public service announcements that she and her colleagues created.

The uniqueness of E3 was also highlighted by 18 year old Prairie School Senior David Sanchez who created "Job-Link Racine" to employ homeless youth. In Washington DC, Mr. Sanchez described how he was one of the community partners that helped develop the county's program and even collaborated with other youth to create the "E3" name. He also described his experience with the ARRA Scholars Program, a continuing education course held at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside where students from Racine County learned about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and assessed E3's economic, environmental and social impact.

In addition to the conference, the youth also went to Capitol Hill to meet with staff members from Congressman Paul Ryan's and Senator Russ Feingold's offices. As 21-year-old Gateway Technical College (GTC) student Olivia Fields explained, "Meeting with some important people was a great opportunity to have our voices heard." Ms. Fields worked in the summer at a local green business, Pacific Sands, and is currently employed at the 21st Century School.

Of course, not all of the time was spent in meetings. The group also made the most of their few days in the nation's capitol by seeing famous sites ranging from The Library of Congress to The Supreme Court to The Holocaust Museum. "The night tour we took of the monuments was the most memorable for me," said 21 year-old Steven Cotton. "It was pretty crazy to actually see the Lincoln Memorial and stand where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his 'I Have A Dream' speech. It was the place in Washington, DC that I always wanted to see." Mr. Cotton was part of an environmentally-friendly lawn care entrepreneurial business in the summer and currently works at the Racine Family YMCA. He plans to build on what he learned in E3 by enrolling in GTC's new Wind Turbine program and then perhaps working on a Sustainable Management Degree at UW-Parkside.

Our County Executive William McReynolds said it best when he stood up from the audience at the end of the NAWB presentation and noted how the four young people were a terrific representation of Racine County's impressive youth and how very deserving they were of this national acclaim. County Executive McReynolds and County Supervisor Chairperson Peter Hansen were in Washington DC attending the National Association of Counties' 2010 Legislative Conference.

To learn more about the E3 success story and find out about future E3 opportunities, please go to the WDC's website at [www.wdc.racineco.com](http://www.wdc.racineco.com).