

# Huntington Housing Authority Receives State's Top Award

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HUNTINGTON -- The Huntington Housing Authority was honored with the Outstanding Training Provider Award during the Governor's Award Luncheon on July 26 at the Mountaineer Race Track and Gaming Resort in Chester, W.Va., during the Workforce West Virginia Conference.



The award was accepted by Tim White, coordinator of the Cabell County Youth Empowerment Program.

"What an honor to be selected as the 2007 Outstanding Training Provider for the entire state of West Virginia," White said after receiving the award. "Although the Housing Authority's name is on the plaque, this could not have been possible without the dedication of the staff and the support and partnerships from many agencies and individuals throughout our county and region."

Bill Dotson, executive director of the organization, also credited the staff.

"It's a testimony to the hard work that our staff is doing with these out of school youth," he said. "This is an extremely difficult group to work with. They have a lot of problems and needs. In spite of this, the staff is able to get them where they need to be in today's world."

The organization's graduation rate was also credited by Dotson.

"We graduated over 30 people with GEDs," he said. "That's a bigger number than some small high schools. We're stimulating these young folks to get the knowledge they need to pass these tests. Unfortunately, we can't expand these programs as this administration is cutting funding at a federal level."

Among the programs offered by the Housing Authority are: The Cabell County Youth Empowerment Program, serving youth 16-21 years of age; the YouthBuild Program, serving youth 18-24 years of age; the Huntington School of Fine Woodwork, serving both youth and adults; and the ROSS Program, Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Program, serving adults 25-65 years of age.

Each of these programs offers GED preparation and basic skills training. Funding for these programs is provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The U.S. Department of Labor, the City of Huntington's Community Development Block Grant, the Huntington/Ironton Empowerment Zone, the Region 2 Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Governor's Workforce Investment Division (GWID).

"I spend about 20 percent of my time talking to various organizations trying to offset the cuts in funding our programs have received," White said. "Any time you cut the funding, you decrease the number of people we're able to help."

He says programs like the Cabell County Youth Empowerment Program save the state and federal government money in the long run.

"It can cost around \$30,000 a year to lock up a juvenile offender," he said. "We spend more money now building prisons than we do schools. If we don't train and educate these children, we have a major problem."