DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Rutgers Transitional Education and Employment Management (T.E.E.M.) Gateway
Rutgers University
NJAES - Office of Continuing Professional Education

"When youths turn to crime and violence, they will only plunge further into the downward spiral... unless the community intercedes," says Newark, New Jersey Mayor Cory Booker. "Young ex-offenders are at the greatest risk for recidivism and have the greatest need for mentoring and support." The diverse population of urban youth in New Jersey is adversely affected by gang violence, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile offenses and high rates of recidivism. High dropout rates and the many costs associated with a decision to leave school prior to graduation can spell dismal futures for many. In a bold move to turn things around, Bookers initiated a 100-Day Plan for the City of Newark. The plan called for a "Re-entry Resource Assessment" to identify the impact and resources needed to provide positive community-based activities to support court involved juveniles as they re-enter the community. Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education at-risk youth development division of education has taken a leading role, to bring together diverse resources, and to work with the city, public schools and many other partners to turn recidivism rates, prevent the forces that produce crime in the first place and help build more productive futures of the youth of Newark.

Rutgers Transitional Education and Employment Management (T.E.E.M.) Gateway is a lead partner in the operation of an innovative Youth Education and Employment Success (Ye2s) Center. The Center is expanding educational, vocational and employment opportunities for at risk youth through collaboration with the City of Newark, Newark public schools, Communities in Schools of New Jersey, Juvenile Justice Commission, The Nicholson Foundation, Rutgers University, and numerous community-based organizations.

The T.E.E.M. gateway is a "one-stop center" that provides education and employment assistance, juvenile mentoring, and support services to youth offenders. The T.E.E.M. Gateway Support Center provides classes, Job readiness/coaching; Individualized case management; Family services; Life coaching; Educational, vocational, and employment placement assistance; and Referral monitoring services.

Larger scale services provided by T.E.E.M. GATEWAY include: Facilitation and coordination of youth-related conferences, workshops and professional development; Volunteer Management; Non-Profit Capacity Building; GIS Mapping; Interactive/wireless survey technology for groups. Rutgers T.E.E.M. Gateway program provides basic transitional tools and skills to help clients avoid recidivism by continuing their education and becoming productive contributors to New Jersey's workforce. The programs challenge clients to explore their personal and career goals in a constructive framework. By building on client strengths, the program instills the desire and incen-

tive to continue the educational process and work toward long-term educational goals and employment placement.

The Center is strategically located and organized to ensure a safe environment, with optimal delivery of youth services. In its first year, 60 students graduated from the Performance Learning Center's high-school level alternative education program that accommodates students with work schedules during early morning and daytime hours. After this success, a second Performance Learning Center was created to meet complementary scheduling needs of other talented students. Hours run from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Not only is the negative stigma attached to alternative education students diminishing with student success, but new convenient educational options have been created that focus on career readiness, college prep, and financial literacy/management.

The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club of Ironbound recently opened a Boys and Girls Club at the Ye2s Center for further multifaceted education and wraparound support of young students. They also operate the child care center at the (Ye2s) Center to provide care to the children of students parents.

Because of strong, diverse partner groups, there is an array of programming available to Newark youth through Rutgers and the Center. Opportunities include year-round service through the Rutgers T.E.E.M. Gateway AmeriCorps Program, which provides a living allowance as well as an educational award upon completion to be applied directly to the cost of higher education; and mentoring, tutoring and counseling options with the Communities In Schools Mentoring Success Center, Essex County College and the Bridge program.

Among the new programs Rutgers T.E.E.M. Gateway has developed in partnership with the City of Newark are the Newark Green Rangers. Through it, youth gain exposure to careers in agriculture and landscaping, environmental arts, entrepreneurship, farmstand operations, and other "green" fields, with support from Rutgers University-New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and a number of local partners. The Environmental Arts Team of the Newark Green Rangers created five city murals during the summer of 2009 in Newark, the first of their kind, designed and painted by youth with local artists as their guides.

Several assessment instruments were created to triangulate results for youth, farmers and communities. Youth demonstrate increased workforce readiness skills at the close of the selling season and earn a share of the profits based upon stand sales and hours worked. Suppliers report satisfaction with the program and look forward to broadened relationships. Development of a "Youth Farmstand Management" course is being explored as a means for undergraduates to learn about farmstand and farmers' market operations, positive youth development and experiential education.

Rutgers T.E.E.M Gateway has drawn on the resources and support of the Office of Continuing Professional Education in the development of these and a number of other programs and initiatives especially as Rutgers becomes a training facilitator and provider for AmeriCorps programs statewide. The YE2S Center is undergoing replication efforts elsewhere. Staff is coordinating at the city, state and national levels as part of several initiatives of the City of Newark, the NJ High School Graduation Campaign, and the National League of Cities.