

## **\$3.8 Million to Help in Training for Green Jobs**

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A federal grant is providing a lot of green -- to the tune of \$3.8 million -- to establish training opportunities in the region in green building techniques.

Community Housing Partners, in collaboration with regional partners, has been awarded the training money from the U.S. Department of Labor to teach workers the skills required in emerging energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, according to a news release.

The vocational and work-force training is expected to start in the spring, officials said.

"We're absolutely thrilled. It's a tremendous boost for green job training in our region and it's desperately needed," said Melissa Byrd, CHP's public relations coordinator.

Byrd said incorporating green energy practices and sustainable design is a growing trend in the building industry. The training provided through the grant will help people develop the skills for green building practices.

CHP, which is based in Christiansburg, is a community-development corporation that serves the needs of low-income individuals and families. Its mission is to create affordable, green and sustainable housing opportunities and services, according to its Web site.

CHP is the lead applicant and grant administrator for the collaborative partnership called "Construction, Retrofitting and Energy-Efficiency Assessment Training and Employment Systems."

The partners include Virginia Tech, the NewVA Corridor Technology Council, New River Community College, Wytheville Community College, Virginia Western Community College, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board and the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board.

The funds will allow them to upgrade regional training capacities, develop and implement new curriculum, offer energy conservation certification opportunities, and provide education to upgrade the skills of construction and retrofitting industry workers in order to help them compete in green building occupations, according to the news release.

"A need exists for construction professionals who are able to cut home and business energy costs through energy-efficient building techniques, and the new CREATES program will help meet this need," U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher said in a news release.

John Provo, associate director of the Office of Economic Development at Virginia Tech, said he believes people will receive great training for in-demand jobs.

"When this all pulls off well, hopefully we'll have a great story to share with other parts of the state," Provo said.

CHP will also use part of the grant to provide training services at its New River Center for Energy Research and Training in Christiansburg.

In 1999, it established the center to provide training, certification and research in residential energy conservation techniques. The training was delivered in the agency's weatherization warehouse at 400 Industrial Drive in Christiansburg, in the field, at conferences and at partner agency sites.

Last year, a new 10,000-square-foot training facility at 550 Industrial Drive was purchased, and the center will be an interactive regional classroom for energy conservation techniques, energy-efficient renovation, heating and cooling equipment diagnostics, repair and replacement and industry research in new technologies.

The grant is part of nearly \$100 million being allocated by the U.S. Department of Labor to 25 projects across the nation.