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WDC honored with Seattle Foundation leadership award to connect youth offenders with new opportunities

SEATTLE— Thanks to a leadership award from the Seattle Foundation, 50 youth of color who are involved in the criminal justice system will benefit from internships, business mentors and career exploration to put them on a path to a promising future.

The Minority Business and Youth Alliance, a partnership led by the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County and the King County Juvenile Court, is the recipient of the Seattle Foundation's 2008 Anne V. Farrell Leadership Grant.

The \$150,000 award will allow the successful pilot project, which currently serves just 12 youth per year, to expand to 50 youth, diversify its menu of services and start on a path to long-term sustainability.

"We are honored to receive this award, and grateful for the opportunity to connect these vulnerable young people with work opportunities and with business people who care about them and want to improve their lives," said Kris Stadelman, CEO of the Workforce Development Council.

The WDC leads the Alliance along with Juvenile Court Services of the King County Superior Court. The court recruits and enrolls youth of color who are 15 to 18 years old, at risk of re-offending, and living in White Center, the Rainier Valley or Skyway. The court's employment specialist assesses all youth and matches them with work experiences, service opportunities, mentors and career awareness events.

Key partners in the alliance are **Tabor 100** (www.tabor100.org) and the **King County Office of Business Relations and Economic Development** (www.kingcounty.gov/exec/bred), which reach out to minority business people and entrepreneurs to develop internships, recruit mentors and find career awareness and community service opportunities. The **4 C's (Clergy, Community, and Children/Youth Coalition) Mentor Program** (www.the4Ccoalition.org) facilitates the project's business/youth mentoring component, ensuring positive and productive relationships.

Research shows that young people who are exposed to work early on have a much higher likelihood of finishing school and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

The **Anne V. Farrell Leadership Grant** is made annually by The Seattle Foundation to recognize an organization or group of organizations addressing a pressing community need in an innovative, replicable way. The topic of the grant changes each year to reflect the needs of the community; the 2008 grant sought initiatives that increase integration across institutions serving young adults 16-24 involved in the justice system.

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The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (www.seakingwdc.org) is a private, nonprofit organization that oversees employment-related programs for youth, the adult workforce and employers in King County, with the goal of a strong economy and self-sufficiency for every resident.