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PARTNERSHIP FILLS GAPS IN CONSTRUCTION AND CREATES AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Spokane, WA: A partnership between Walker Construction, NEWESD 101 YouthBuild, Next Generation Zone and Transitions is working to provide real life experience to young people entering a construction career.

Current data describes a dearth of new trainees preparing for construction fields, creating a concern that in the near future, projects will be delayed and construction costs will soar if this gap isn't addressed. Tradesman International states, "According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) there are currently 143,000 vacant construction positions nationwide. In fact, a recent survey by the NAHB revealed that 69 percent of its members were experiencing delays in completing projects on time due to a shortage of qualified workers, while other jobs were lost altogether. "

Walker Construction, NEWESD 101 YouthBuild job training program, Next Generation Zone and Transitions are partnering to address this shortage. The Next Generation Zone provides funding for YouthBuild members to earn prevailing wage, while working on the Transitions Home Yard Cottage project with Walker Construction. Students have an opportunity to gain real-world experience and make a difference.

Transitions, a local not for profit whose mission is to end poverty and homelessness in Spokane, is currently building 24 affordable housing cottages in the Audubon/Downriver Neighborhood. These cottages will be forever homes, permanent rental units for people with a low income, who have disabilities and are formerly homeless. Walker Construction was hired as their general contractor. Walker Construction's Jon Barter states, "Bringing YouthBuild into the project lets us help train the youth in our community, by providing real life experiences that will give them the opportunity to change their future as well as broaden labor resources in our current busy construction industry where labor resources have become scarce".

Walker Construction was willing to provide on-site supervision to YouthBuild graduates, creating a real life job site experience. Three YouthBuild graduates have completed their month at the sit - Alex Schultz, Ryan Cooper-Walther and Daniel Oldfield-Detwiler. Daniel was offered a permanent position with Walker Construction. He said, "It was enlightening and every day was a new adventure and a chance to learn. I appreciated the training and information provided by Walker staff. Jared Nicholson spent a lot of time with me and taught me to do the wailing around the walls and concrete work. I am grateful that Walker Construction invested time in me and have offered me a full-time position with their company. As an expectant father, this has been a life-changing opportunity.

YouthBuild is a local NEWESD101 program funded through AmeriCorps and the Department of Labor. They provide job training in construction trades and classes for the completion of a student's GED. All students come from low-income families and are between 18 and 25 years of age and working towards a high school diploma or equivalency. Each year, YouthBuild trains 31 students to work in the construction fields and healthcare arenas. Mandy Edwards, AmeriCorps Programs Manager of the NEWESD101 describes their services: "YouthBuild students are provided an opportunity to achieve their personal goals, complete their education and prepare for careers. It is rewarding to work with these young leaders and empower them to make a difference in Spokane."

In the fall of 2018, 24 families and individuals will be housed at Transitions' Home Yard Cottages. But before that milestone, many more opportunities have occurred for young people who have hopes for a bright future.

Transitions: Since 1995, Transitions has been helping women, children, and families rebuild lives affected by abuse, addiction, mental illness, poverty, and homelessness. Transitions is made up of five programs: Women's Hearth, Miryam's House, Transitional Living Center, EduCare and New Leaf Bakery Café; the Home Yard Cottages will be added as a sixth program this fall. For more information about how you can join our work to end poverty and homelessness for women and children in Spokane, call 509-328-6702 or visit our website at www.help4women.org.

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