



NEW SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STAMFORD YOUTH

Off the streets and into work – a new community program to help disadvantaged youths will officially open in Stamford today.

The Work & Learn Program, run by social services nonprofit Domus, is designed to help young people aged 14 to 25 make the successful transition from high school to skilled jobs, college, or vocational studies.

This break-through initiative is funded by the Trafigura Foundation, the philanthropic division of the global commodities trader and The WorkPlace Inc., which works to help people in Southwestern Connecticut prepare for careers and strengthens the workforce for employers. The Trafigura Foundation has donated \$600,000 and WorkPlace another \$400,000 over three years. Trafigura, a local employer with strong links to the local community, has also committed an additional \$100,000 matching grant towards the program, meaning it would match any additional funds up to \$100,000.

The skills that are taught in this program are determined largely by the participants themselves. These skills are developed through a number of hands-on businesses, including bicycle repair and small engine repair. Contingent on further funding from individual and institutional donors, the center will expand into other business areas including boatbuilding, a nail salon and woodworking. Each participant takes home a paycheck for their efforts so they reap the benefits from the start.

The program, which began earlier this month, targets young people who have experienced social and emotional trauma, or struggled academically, as well as those at risk of homelessness and involvement in criminal activity. It will be housed in a community center, located in the east side of Stamford, considered one of the poorest neighborhoods in the region.

Mitch DePino, director of the Work & Learn Business Center, who attended the ribbon-cutting event, commented: "The Work & Learn Business Center has so far been a huge success, seeing a large take-up of local youth. We hope that, with the help of our partners, the Trafigura Foundation and The WorkPlace, we can continue to make it a greater success, and provide struggling Stamford kids with the right life

skills to stay off the streets and get into work, and ultimately helping them to achieve their goals.”

Graham Sharp, chairman of Trafigura Foundation, commented, “Work & Learn is a proven model with an exceptional history of success. It reflects our philosophy to give individuals the opportunity to develop and reach their fullest potential. The Work & Learn center sets an outstanding example, at local, national and even international levels of how meaningful a joint initiative between the corporate world and civil society can be for less privileged youth and their communities.”

The Stamford Charity Committee oversees Trafigura AG’s charity work in the region. The Trafigura Foundation coordinates the entire company’s charitable support and philanthropy in the communities in which they operate – Connecticut being just one.

Joseph Carbone, president and CEO of The WorkPlace, Inc. commented, “The WorkPlace is pleased to be a part of such a significant project that will positively impact the lives of so many youth in Stamford. We are committed to developing a well-educated, well-trained, and self-sufficient workforce that can compete in the changing global marketplace, starting with youth.”

Connecticut has seen reduced funding for trades education, while job opportunities for teens have plummeted in recent years. In light of this, Domus hopes the success of its initiative can be a model for other Stamford nonprofits to create similar hands-on business opportunities for more young people.

Domus, a nonprofit organization, already helps over 800 children and their families experience academic and life success through educational, residential, and community programs. Domus runs a number of programs supporting some of the poorest young people in the area.