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For Immediate Release

Our Piece of the Pie Broadens Mission

Leading Youth Development Agency Expands Charge to help Urban Youth Beyond Hartford

Hartford, CT....Our Piece of the Pie®, Inc (OPP ®), a leading youth development agency located in Hartford, announced today that it is broadening its focus to help urban youth become successful adults in communities beyond Hartford.

While continuing to provide important educational and employment services to youth in Hartford, OPP has changed its mission statement from “Helping Hartford youth become successful adults” to “Helping Urban Youth become successful adults.”

OPP’s cornerstone program Pathways to Success, which currently serves more than 950 young people in Hartford, matches youth with a Youth Development Specialist (YDS) who serves as a mentor and life coach and helps them establish a concrete plan for their educational and employment future. Within Pathways to Success, young people have access to programs that lead to the long-term goals of a college degree or vocational certification and/or employment in the career of their choice.

In August of 2009, OPP and Hartford Public Schools formed a partnership to open Opportunity High School (OHS). By combining the youth development strategy of Pathways to Success with the rigors of Hartford Public School curriculum, OHS is helping students who are over-aged and under-credited become reengaged and earn their high school diploma.

Financial support from several prestigious organizations, including the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, will enable OPP to establish similar partnerships and disseminate information on this model to communities beyond Hartford. This will allow OPP to strengthen its practice in Hartford while using its work to help spark changes in other communities.

“While we hope to share our Pathways to Success model with communities beyond Hartford, our commitment to helping Hartford youth is stronger than ever,” said Bob Rath President/CEO of OPP.

“There is a pressing need to address what has become a crippling high school dropout crisis in this country,” Rath said. “When taking into account social services, lost tax revenue, health care and incarceration costs, the economy loses \$500-thousand over the lifetime of each dropout.”

“In Connecticut, for example, 75% of people who are incarcerated are high school dropouts,” said Rath. “That is a cost of \$25-thousand dollars per inmate for taxpayers each year.”

OPP has established a core advisory group to help facilitate this change in education strategy. The group includes Hartford Public Schools Superintendent Steven J. Adamowski, State Commissioner of Education Mark McQuillan, Commissioner of Higher Education Michael Meotti, and Alex Johnston CEO of ConnCAN. Over the next few months, the group plans to form a broader network of stakeholders dedicated to building a strong recuperative education strategy statewide.

“This group of experienced educators and administrators will help us maximize our youth development strategy for communities in need,” Rath said.

OPP, a nationally recognized and fully accredited youth development agency, is focused on assisting youth, ages 14 to 24, become successful and financially independent adults. The organization helps young people overcome challenges and adversity to maximize their potential and lead productive lives

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