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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OAI, INC. AWARDED INITIAL GRANT OF \$675,000 FOR YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM IN CHICAGO SOUTH SUBURBS

Chicago, IL June 23, 2009

On June 15, 2009 the Department of Labor announced that OAI, Inc. was awarded a first year grant of \$675,000 to start its new Chicago Southland YouthBuild program targeting at-risk youth in some of Chicago's poorest south suburban communities. Award amounts for years 2 and 3 of the program will be announced at a later date.

Housed in Riverdale, Illinois, the program will recruit and train at-risk youth living in distressed neighborhoods of south Cook County-- Riverdale, Blue Island, Dixmoor, Dolton, Harvey, Calumet Park, Robbins, and Chicago's 9th and 34th Wards, home to 211,810 predominantly African-Americans and Hispanics. In this YouthBuild program, low-income young people ages 18–24 will work toward their GED while learning job skills by building affordable housing for low-income people. Strong emphasis will be placed on leadership development, community service and environmental literacy.

The core program objectives are: (1) to enable disadvantaged youth to obtain the education and employment skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency, (2) to provide opportunities for meaningful work and service to community, (3) to foster the development of employment and leadership skills and (4) to expand the supply of permanent affordable housing for low-income families.

For this initiative, OAI has partnered with *South Suburban College* (SSC) located in South Holland, Illinois, and *Habitat for Humanity Chicago South Suburbs*, located in Chicago Heights, Illinois to provide YouthBuild students with requisite preparatory instruction for the attainment of a *GED* certificate and the *National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)* certificate in *Core: Introductory Craft Skills*. Over the course of 32 weeks, each student will receive 560 hours of classroom and 448 hours of experiential learning. The hands-on training will be conducted at *Habitat's* work sites in Riverdale and Harvey, Illinois. OAI's curriculum will focus on green building techniques, energy efficiency, conservation and environmental justice; tying the participants to multiple green collar jobs initiatives.

OAI's Chicago Southland YouthBuild will begin recruitment this summer and the training component is targeted to begin in September. OAI anticipates being able to train 20- 30 students per year through 9 months of programming, following the same schedule as the traditional school year.

The YouthBuild program demonstrates OAI's commitment to serving residents of the south suburbs and builds on the recent success of OAI's *Pathways to Apprenticeships in the Construction Trades (PACT)*, also housed in Riverdale. That program successfully trained and placed 51 women and minority residents of partnering south suburban communities in highly competitive construction trades apprenticeship programs and employment.

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