

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE RELEASES COMMUNITY JOBS EVALUATION

Successful program moves hard to employ people from welfare to work

Seattle—Martha Choe, Director of the Washington State Office of Trade and Economic Development announced today the results of an evaluation of the two-year old Community Jobs program. Community Jobs is the first and largest program in the nation to provide hard to employ welfare recipients with paychecks for their work in community and government agencies. Skill development and intensive support services are key components of the program. Community Jobs is part of WorkFirst, the state's welfare reform program, and operates in every county in the state. Joining Ms. Choe Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services Liz Dunbar, Ethel Harris a current CJ participant, and Angelique Sanders a former CJ participant.

"We've seen significant success in moving people off of welfare rolls and into good paying jobs," Ms. Choe said. "We've effectively replaced welfare grants with paychecks for thousands of people." *[See chart attached.]*

The Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI), a non profit public policy institute conducted the independent evaluation. According to Annette Case, program evaluator and workforce development director at the EOI, the wage data alone shows substantial results. "A year after leaving Community Jobs, participants more than double their income over what they received while on welfare." *[See chart attached.]*

Community Jobs began in 1998 in five regions and expanded to include every county in the state in 1999; local private nonprofit partners administer the program. The nine-month program is designed for those welfare recipients who have had major difficulties in securing a job on their own.

Community Jobs participants work in their communities at community, educational, government, and tribal organizations. While in the program, they are paid for working 20 hours a week and receive support services and mentoring to improve their transition into the marketplace.

The evaluation highlighted not only wage improvements for the participants but also the importance of onsite training, educational opportunities, mentoring, and support systems for overall success.

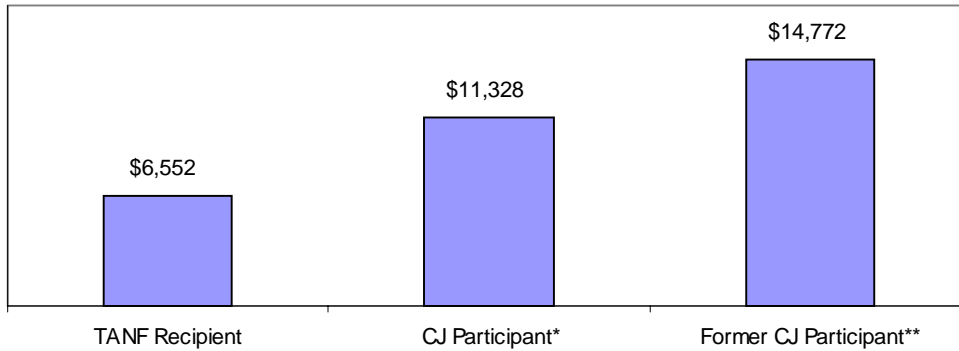
"Community Jobs participants reported greatly improved self-esteem and higher quality of life as direct results of their experiences," said Ms. Case. "They and their families are happier, healthier, and better off economically."

Community Jobs, a partnership between state agencies, community-based organizations and individuals, has the primary goal of achieving long-term economic self-sufficiency for individuals who are moving from welfare to work. More than 3,400 individuals have participated in Community Jobs since its inception in 1998.

“WorkFirst has always meant to replace welfare with decent wages for work done well,” said Liz Dunbar. “By working with our state and community partners, we are doing just that with Community Jobs. We have a lot to take back to our agencies from this evaluation. We can really start to build on the success we have seen here.”

[Note: In conjunction with the release of the evaluation, all 17 Community Jobs contracted agencies are hosting media tours in their areas. For more information contact Annette Case. The Community Jobs outcomes assessment is on the web site of the Economic Opportunity Institute, www.EOonline.org.]

Community Jobs - Average Annual Income Comparison



*includes average CJ wages, average EITC, and an earnings disregard on TANF assistance

**annualized 4th qtr. average wages, average EITC, and an earnings disregard on TANF assistance

CJ Wage Progression Median earned income for each quarter of work Post CJ

