

CSBG SPOTLIGHT: Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority, Inc. Trains Irish Youth

by Jovita Tolbert

Out of growing concern for the high unemployment and violence rates among youth in Atlanta, GA, the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority, Inc. (FACAA) established the Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild program in 1993. Through this comprehensive program, youth ages 16-25 gain the skills they need to make positive changes in their lives and in their community. Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild provides education, leadership development, and counseling. In addition, Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild provides construction and renovation skills as the youth build and renovate houses in their communities. Through the YouthBuild program, low-income Atlanta youth acquire the tools needed to obtain apprenticeship, employment, and higher education. Notably, the Community Services Block Grant provides the seed money required to sustain the Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild program.

Interestingly, Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild recently formed an international partnership with Springboard Opportunities Limited in Belfast, Ireland. Parallel to Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild, Springboard Opportunities aims to provide vocational and leadership opportunities for youth from Belfast and Dublin who have suffered high levels of multiple challenges across all aspects of life. Through their partnership with Springboard, FACAA hopes to promote international awareness and an understanding of the challenges that youth face in the United States and across international borders. Moreover, they will encourage cultural diversity reconciliation and non-violent conflict resolution through sharing the historic role that Atlanta played in the Civil War and Civil Rights Movement.

FACAA began hosting eighteen young people, ranging in age from 18-28, on April 30, 2005. These youth will be engaged in a customer service work experience, civic and cultural diversity training activities program until June 25, 2005. To further enrich their experiences, fourteen host families have opened their homes and their hearts to the international visitors.

FACAA has four locations and also provides financial assistance, housing, education, and employment services. For more information on Fulton Atlanta YouthBuild, contact Yvonne Thomas, the FACAA Director of Services Programs, at Yvonne@facao.org or 404.320.0166. For more information on Springboard Opportunities, visit <http://www.springboard-ops.org/>.