

LOCAL

19 graduate from YouthBuild program

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STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN — It was a day of celebration at the Human Resources Agency of New Britain on Thursday as 19 young adults graduated from this year's YouthBuild program.

"This program has enabled these individuals to get their education, get the skills, get the credentials, that enables them to acquire good jobs to take care of themselves and their families," said Alex Johnson, President and CEO of Capital Workforce Partners.

In collaboration with the HRA, Capital Workforce Partners runs New Britain's YouthBuild Program.

YouthBuild provides practical training to 17- to

24-year-olds who may need direction. Throughout their training, YouthBuild participants help build affordable housing for low-income people, learning construction and trade skills along the way. YouthBuild also helps struggling youths finish high school or complete their GED.

Connecticut Department of Labor Deputy Commissioner Kurt Westby had words for the graduates.

"In my view, everyone deserves a shot," Westby said. "A shot at life, a shot at a good job where you can bring your family up, have a good life, enjoy the weekends."

Westby spoke of the importance of job security and the financial security



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Rocco Tricarico, executive director of the HRA of New Britain, speaks to a room of YouthBuild participants and their families.

of having a pension when nearing retirement.

Mayor Erin Stewart also attended Thursday's cel-

ebration to congratulate YouthBuild graduates.

"I want you to take the skills that you've learned, I

want you everything that you've been through, and I want you to stay here. I want you to stay in New Britain," Stewart told the graduates while commending the work they've accomplished.

YouthBuild graduate Janelys Salazar shared her story at the ceremony.

"A lot of people around me said that I would never make it," Salazar said.

Salazar dropped out of high school and never graduated. With the help of YouthBuild, Salazar completed her GED and is now getting ready to go to college.

"They (YouthBuild associates, supporters) all reminded us that we can still make it, and we can still make something of our lives.

They were there to push us forward."

YouthBuild graduates

The following individuals graduated from New Britain's YouthBuild program Thursday: Draven Arnold; Omar Arroyo; Kevil Blaz; Edwin Bayon; Amanda Calderon; Janetmary Crucetts; Jonathan Garcia; Andrews Gonzalez; Shamoy Hall; Jonathon Harris; Jazmin Henry; Joshua Ortiz; Liset Roman; Joseph Ryzak; Janelys Salazar; Jameal Stewart; Kaskla Vargas; D'Shawn Williams and Omar Williams.

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