



New York State Community Action Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RISE to Success

Community Action Helping the Unemployed Find Work

New Rochelle, NY March 19, 2010 – When Francisco Rivera graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 2008, he was anxious, but prepared to enter the workforce and begin his career as a lawyer. Rivera submitted dozens of resumes without a call back for an interview. Like many Americans, Rivera began to experience the harsh reality of our current economic downturn.

“I was in a tough situation,” said Rivera. “I had a ton of mounting bills and I was forced to move in with my family in order to make ends meet.”

Rivera had to temporarily put his dream of becoming a practicing lawyer on hold and look for alternative employment options. “Being without work is depressing,” said Rivera. “I had to borrow money from family and friends just to get by. I felt incomplete.”

Through job creation and quality training, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is restoring hope to individuals like Francisco Rivera, as well as thousands of other unemployed Americans searching for work.

“Without ARRA, my job search might still be continuing,” said Rivera, who is now employed as a Community Advocate with the Westchester Community Opportunity Program (WestCOP), a private not-for-profit Community Action Agency providing multipurpose social service assistance and operating community programs to combat poverty and its adverse effects in Westchester and Putnam counties.

“ARRA has enabled us to do more to help the neediest of residents in the eleven communities we serve in Westchester and Putnam counties,” said WestCOP Executive Director Winston Ross. “ARRA is addressing the needs of those hit hardest by our struggling economy, as well as a population who may have not needed our services in the past.”

WestCOP has received \$2.1 million in ARRA funding which is going towards job creation and training, counseling, and Weatherization. ARRA has allowed WestCOP to add 43 staff, who in-turn are directly helping others in the community through technology support, financial counseling, food assistance, and tuition support through the Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling (CASAC) program, which will place enrolled individuals into paid jobs.

In addition to a wide array of social assistance and outreach supported by ARRA, Westchester and Putnam county residents in need can receive resume writing direction, often the first step towards securing employment.

“The Resume Improvements for Securing Employment (RISE) is a program that I am very proud of,” said Rivera, who created RISE as a means to empower those looking for employment. “It is all in the presentation. Regardless of your background or what type of job you are seeking, the resume is a universal language that can make an impact upon employers,” said Rivera, who is providing help to both Spanish and English speaking individuals looking to create or enhance their resume.

“I am so grateful to be in a position where I am helping young people in my community get into college. I’m providing tax assistance and even helping with job placement,” said Rivera. “There is a lot of hardship out there, but there is also a lot of help.”

For more information on how ARRA is helping local residents in Westchester and Putnam counties, please contact Kristin Lanza, WestCOP Business Manager at (914) 592-5600 or email klanza@westcop.org. Visit WestCOP online at www.westcop.org.

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