

## ReSOURCE YouthBuild Changes the Life of a Young Vermonter

Josh Couture was 23 years old when he enrolled at ReSOURCE YouthBuild in Burlington, Vermont in August 2009. He had dropped out of high school after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and, having recently overcome homelessness and drug addiction, was ready to make a change in his life. ReSOURCE YouthBuild provides education, job skills training, and career development services to students between 16 and 24 years old who have not completed high school. Despite riding his bike over 30 minutes each day to get to school, Josh achieved an attendance rate of 98% during his 10 month enrollment. While at ReSOURCE YouthBuild, Josh was elected to his student Policy Council, complet-

ed an Intro to College Studies class at the Community College of Vermont, and represented the program at the 2010 YouthBuild Conference of Young Leaders in Washington DC. In June 2010, Josh graduated from ReSOURCE YouthBuild having earned his GED, PACT certification in Carpentry and Weatherization, and his Americorps Education Award. Upon graduation, Josh began a 2 week job shadow with Vermont Mechanical, Inc., a local HVAC contractor. VT Mechanical is one of ReSOURCE's most important industry partners, having signed a Letter of Commitment for the program's 2009 DOL grant offering job shadowing and placement assistance to program graduates.

During the 2 week job shadow, Josh proved to be reliable, hard-working, and technically skilled, and was rewarded with a full-time job offer. Today, Josh is earning \$14.00 per hour, driving a company truck, and on his way to becoming a foreman. "The YouthBuild staff made me feel welcome and respected and believed in me," said Josh. "They gave me new opportunities to expand my knowledge and skills inside and outside of the classroom. I wanted to show up every day to learn more and be surrounded by people who cared about my future."

For more information about ReSOURCE YouthBuild contact Andrew Jope at [ajope@resourcevt.org](mailto:ajope@resourcevt.org).

## Linking Learning to Life

by Kerry Hill

Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him." - Aldous Huxley

It is often difficult to put a price on experience. This has been a lesson I have not only encountered and learned, but now ironically begun to teach, during the first 5 months of my AmeriCorps experience.

I came to Linking Learning to Life on September 1, 2010 as a fresh college graduate with a dream of "changing the world." I was looking for something new, an experience that I wouldn't find in just any office setting. To this day, I can't imagine a more perfect opportunity. I was immediately thrown into the fast paced non-profit world of grants, programming, curriculum, networking, and most importantly, students. Although overwhelming to say the

least, I began to learn and absorb what was happening around me, the different problems and successes, jobs and potential projects. It took awhile, but after getting my feet firmly planted I really began to thrive.

Ironically, it is this very same feeling that I am now teaching everyday to students in three area high schools. In the TIPS (Training Interns & Partnering for Success) program we build a foundation of business skills through conducting interest inventories, writing resumes and cover letters, learning how to ace an interview, and discussing the basics of professionalism. After that, experience takes over. Students are placed in a 40 hour internship at a local business in a field of their choice. These interests can range from veterinary studies to auto mechanics, culinary arts to city planning. Our goal is to

allow these students to understand that experience really makes all the difference, no matter your age. It is the ability to get out of your comfort zone, challenge yourself, build self confidence and really look deep into yourself to find out what you want to do. It is the real-life understanding and ability to take a passion, a hobby, or a dream and be prepared with the necessary skills to turn it into a job within the next few years.

As I sit grumbling at my financial situation, reapplying for food stamps, or sitting in the monthly two day trainings, I have realized that AmeriCorps and LLL have taught me something far beyond what I had expected. I am, like the students in my TIPS class, gaining experience. However, it is far more than just gaining this experience; it is learning what I, and they, will ultimately do with it one day.