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NEWS RELEASE

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Picente Announces YouthVision Project

Partnerships Help Youth, Young Adults Overcome Barriers

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr., today announced that Oneida County has created the YouthVision program – a combination of several youth-focused programs in partnership with outstanding community agencies to bring an added focus on helping at-risk youth and young adults overcome barriers to their success.

“The reality of our society, especially in difficult economic times, is that there are a lot of distractions that make it difficult for youth to succeed,” Picente said. “What I want to do with these programs is to help youth who may have made mistakes, who may have taken one wrong turn, realize that they can still reconnect with education, that they can connect with success on the job, and that they can achieve their dreams.”

All programs are offered through the Office of Workforce Development working with local partners to provide educational and support services for youth. “The young people we are targeting in these programs are the young adults who will be the workforce of our region in the coming years,” Picente said. “I see these programs as efforts to invest in our youth. If we help a young man or woman return to school, go to college or turn one away from crime and succeed at work, we are transforming lives and also transforming our community.”

Picente said that a YouthVision pre-application that covers all these programs will be available on the Oneida County Web site, www.ocgov.net on the page for the Office of Workforce Development.

The programs offered are:

Workplace Success: Mohawk Valley Community College has developed a curriculum to address the skills deficits employers have most noted in new workers. In a pilot project, MVCC will work with at-risk youth in Rome to help them graduate from high school, and either enter college or enter the workforce. “The skills and attitudes needed to succeed at work are the same ones needed to make it in the very difficult first semester of college,” said Office of Workforce Development Director David Mathis. “MVCC has used its knowledge of what employers need,

and what the college needs to design a program that we think will result in better-prepared youth.”

ESL for Young Adults: Utica’s refugee population has outstanding potential, but many young adults need language skills even when they are past the age of going to high school. This unique MVCC program targets critical vocational language skills needed to understand how to work in the American workplace, learn how to work in teams and groups, and develop the skills needed for lifelong learning of technical or medical terms. Picente said, “Our refugees face a tremendous challenge in learning the language, and then learning the language of work. This program from MVCC helps young adults get the skills they need to find a job, and to build on their language skills to advance into higher-paying jobs. This is an investment in the greatest resource we have – people.”

Young adult GED program: At a time when too many young people drift away from high school without getting a diploma, The Office of Workforce Development will partner with the BOCES Consortium of Continuing Education to offer a GED program targeting young adults who realize they need a high school diploma, but whose high school class has already graduated. “BOCES has great credentials in adult education, and they have developed a GED program really focusing on the needs of young adults, so that it combines education, life skills, job skills, case management and referrals to help young people get the education they need and deal with life problems that have to be solved so they can get a job and become a success,” Mathis said.

Life Skills for Young Offenders: A pilot program developed by the Oneida County Sheriff’s office to provide life skills training to inmates will be adapted to focus on young offenders in the late teens and early 20s. “People who have made a mistake can still get their lives back,” Picente said. “This program will work with Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency – an outstanding partner that offers a wide range of services – so that young offenders at our county jail can come away with some new approaches to life and some connections to the community network of services that can help them connect with education and employment.”

“The approach of YouthVision is to implement partnerships that will connect young people who may not succeed on their own with the services and supports that can help them connect with employment or education,” Picente said. “All of these efforts are part of County Government’s long-standing role to act as the safety net for people who need assistance, and to make investments that will make our community stronger for years to come.”