The Dropout Prevention Coalition Mentors at Youthbuild!

Several members of the Dropout Prevention Coalition recently joined leaders at the Wilmington Housing Authority to provide hands-on mentoring to area students through the Youthbuild program.

Youthbuild ([http://www.wha.net/Housing_Programs/Resident_Services/YouthBuild.htm](http://www.wha.net/Housing_Programs/Resident_Services/YouthBuild.htm)) is a program sponsored by the Housing Authority to work with individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 who have dropped out of school. The goal of the program is to help former students earn their GEDs and acquire skills needed to gain employment. Typically, hands-on training is provided in the field of construction. This year, DPC members teamed with the Housing Authority and volunteer experts from the community to encourage students to explore other areas of interest as well.

On May 18, mentors from the Dropout Prevention Coalition discussed with Youthbuild participants about achieving their goals. Paired with one or two students, the mentors assisted the students in making a visual map to plan for their immediate future and set long-term goals.

On June 1, the group re-convened to bring participating students to meet their future! Many had expressed interest in starting their own businesses, so the day began with a presentation by Fran Scarlett, Regional Director of the Small Business & Technology Development Center at UNCW ([http://www.sbtdc.org/offices/uncw/](http://www.sbtdc.org/offices/uncw/)). Dr. Scarlett explained that the Center provides classes, consulting and support to aspiring entrepreneurs free of charge, and she gave each participant a booklet containing information on how to start a small business.

From there, students had an opportunity to meet people who are doing what they want to do in the future. The students’ career interests and our volunteer experts were:

- Daycare: Courtney Harris, Licensed In home Daycare
- Comedy: Tim Sherrill at Nutt Comedy Club. Nutt St Comedy Room [www.nuttstreet.com](http://www.nuttstreet.com)

Our Youthbuild students were happy to meet the experts and appreciative of the time and information shared. Some students even received offers of additional assistance and possible future employment! Please give these local professionals your thanks if you see them.

All of the students are now completing their GED’s and signing up for additional classes at Cape Fear Community College or internships at regional businesses. We hope one of our students will be preforming at open mike night at Nutt’s comedy club on Thursday night very soon. Our mentors are very proud of them! A completion ceremony for Youthbuild participants will be held on July 13 at The Watson School of Education at UNCW. We are very excited since for most of these students it will be the closest event they have had to a graduation.
This year, 13 Dropout Prevention Coalition members participated in the Youthbuild program including retired educators, prospective school board member, UNCW advisor, graduate and undergraduate students, concerned citizens and education professors. We all found it rewarding and informative to work directly with students who have dropped out, and the Coalition hopes to expand on this successful program next year. If you would like to get involved as a mentor or volunteer expert, please contact Claudia Buer at buerbabe1@yahoo.com, or Dr. Janna Robertson at robertsonj@uncw.edu.

Youthbuild Mentors from the Dropout Prevention Coalition:

- Karen Beatty
- Claudia Buer
- Matney Casey
- Susan Coleman
- Chris Furr
- Monet Hardison
- Deborah Houston
- Mark Phelps
- Delores Rhodes
- Jason Rinka
- Janna Robertson
- Amanda Smith
- Eric Smith

![Youthbuild Mentors](image1)

![Youthbuild Mentors](image2)