



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Funding From The Workforce Development Institute Will Keep Cattaraugus Community Action Serving Area Residents

Catharine Young

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Food for Thought Culinary Arts program provides job training for out-of-school youth and displaced adults

ALBANY – The highly successful Food for Thought Culinary Arts program, operated by Cattaraugus Community Action (CCA), will be able to continue providing a 15-week training program for low-income youth and displaced adults thanks to funding supplied by the Workforce Development Institute (WDI), a program championed by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean).

In May, representatives from CCA contacted Senator Young after they learned that their past funding source, the New York State Department of State's Community Block Grant Discretionary Workforce Development Initiative, was no longer available. While CCA awaits the results of their application to the Regional Economic Development Council, they were going to be unable to continue the program this fall.

Senator Young referred CCA to the Workforce Development Institute's Western New York Regional Office. Following a review of CCA's application, temporary operating funding for the program was approved by WDI.

The Food for Thought program blends classroom based learning with on-the-job training experiences, preparing students to obtain and maintain employment in the culinary arts field. Participants of the program receive their ServSafe Certification, Work Readiness Credential, and a Culinary Arts Certificate upon graduation.

"Cattaraugus Community Action and the Food for Thought Program prepare students to quickly begin a new career, so that they can maintain their economic independence. Getting started in a new profession takes courage and knowledge of the skills desired by those in the field, so helping CCA continue this successful existing program just makes sense. I was pleased I could connect CCA with WDI and that such a positive outcome could be reached so quickly," said Senator Young.

“The Workforce Development Institute provides an incredible partnership for area businesses, ensuring they, and their employees, have the capabilities and training needed for success. I was pleased to advocate for WDI’s funding during the budget process, because I know they provide tremendous service and support for our local job seekers and job creators. By ensuring residents have the training and skills needed to meet the demands of employers in fields with immediate openings, WDI is helping us grow the economy in our community,” Senator Young said.

WDI will be providing bridge funding for CCA, from October to December 2015, allowing them to continue operating their highly-successful Food for Thought Culinary Arts program. CCA sees the potential for the creation of five to ten new jobs over the next three years, as a result of WDI’s support.

Michael LaBerta, WDI’s Western New York Regional Director said, “The Food for Thought program is a unique and comprehensive program that provides a career path to those who may otherwise be unable to pursue training in this field. The success of the program is something that WDI would like to see continue, and our ability to provide gap funding to allow the program to run uninterrupted will assure that the same number of participants can be positively impacted. This type of initiative highlights the flexibility of our funding and our capacity to assist where other entities cannot. Without the support of Senators like Catharine Young, WDI's capability to support this type of program would not be possible.”

Tina Zerbian, Chief Executive Officer for Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc., said, “The Food For Thought Program has successfully trained dozens of students over the past four years thanks to the Community Services Block Grant's Discretionary Workforce funds. It is unfortunate that this revenue source is no longer available, but we credit Senator Young for making us aware of the WDI funds that will allow us to continue to build these essential skill sets with students as we seek additional funding. This program is one of CCA's gemstone programs, and we are delighted and proud to work with WDI as we keep this good work alive.”

The Food for Thought program has been in operation for over four years and has helped numerous out-of-school youth or displaced young adults find work in the culinary arts field. During the program's first and second years, CCA exceeded employment goals for participants by 157 percent and 200 percent, respectively.

In May, Senator Young spoke at a graduation ceremony for Food for Thought program participants. This was the first class held following CCA's receipt of a grant that allowed for their kitchen to be upgraded and improvements made to the food variety. Many of the participants had already landed jobs in the food-service industry as a result of their time in the Food for Thought program.

WDI works to promote job growth and address skills shortages for existing business, as well as providing targeted assistance to workers affected by layoffs to transition to new jobs.

As part of the 2015-16 state budget, Senator Young personally advocated for the restoration of funding that supports the mission of the Workforce Development Institute. The enacted budget restored \$5 million in funding for the program.

Along with the funding for WDI, this year's budget includes support for further development of New York's manufacturing sectors, and \$5 million for the Next Generation Job Linkage Program that works with employers to identify jobs, define needed skills, and provide training.

More information on the Food for Thought Culinary Arts program, and Cattaraugus Community Action, can be found at: <http://www.ccaction.org/>. Additional information on the Workforce Development Institute is available at: www.wdiny.org.