

We rep, we serve, we lead

Published on **10 Jun 2013**

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“We Rep, We Serve, We Lead.” This was the theme of this year’s [YouthBuild USA](#) Conference of Young Leaders. I was lucky to represent USGBC at this event that included 115 student leaders chosen from 60+ local YouthBuild programs across the country. Before I arrived, the delegates participated in a series of workshops, discussion forums, and other activities. Their goal was to unleash the positivity around what it means to represent, serve, and lead for themselves as individuals, their communities, and the YouthBuild movement. Part of their leadership story is in green affordable housing. In fact, they had another ribbon cutting for project in Akron, Ohio on May 29 that is [expected to achieve LEED Platinum certification](#)!

During the Conference of Young Leaders, I had a few moments to introduce USGBC. What happened next was completely unexpected. At two times during my brief salutation — while mentioning YouthBuild’s presence at [Greenbuild](#) and sharing USGBC’s vision of green buildings and communities for all, the crowd erupted into roars of support.

Over the next hour, I listened to nomination speeches from a group of remarkable young adults seeking 1 of 8 Young Leader positions. I heard their life stories, which were so different from my own. Many grew up in broken homes, foster care or on the streets. For the first time, they saw a better world and future for themselves ahead. That future includes affordable, healthy, efficient homes and safe communities where people can prosper to their full potential.

“YouthBuild USA’s [Green Initiative](#) supports pathways of opportunity to green careers and environmental leadership, while increasing the production of green affordable housing. We aim to create opportunities for low-income, disengaged youth to become environmental leaders in their professional and personal lives,” says Eva Blake, YouthBuild USA’s Green Initiative Director.

Whereas they once lacked direction or a community of support, they are now building a better world — one home at a time. YouthBuild’s passion and vision of a better world is infectious. Perhaps you’ve heard it manifest in the halls of Greenbuild when dozens of YouthBuild staff and young leaders give the resounding “Youth-BUILD!” chant. Or maybe you’re one of the USGBC Chapter leaders who have firsthand experience with YouthBuild.

We applaud YouthBuild USA and the YouthBuild programs across the country for their leadership in building green where it matters most: in the lives of low-income, disengaged youth.

Do you want to get involved?

Relationships are burgeoning locally with [USGBC Chapters](#) and YouthBuild. Contact your local USGBC Chapter to find out more about how they are working with YouthBuild. If the connection has yet to be made, now is a great opportunity for you to make something happen! [Contact me](#) for details.

[Watch a video introduction to Youthbuild »](#)

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