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DWD Sec. Newson Highlights Governor Walker's Vision for Next Generation of Workers During Visit with School-to-Work Leaders

Jobs for America's Graduates program in Sun Prairie prepares youths for future careers

SUN PRAIRIE – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson and Deputy Secretary Jonathan Barry today visited the Prairie Phoenix Academy in Sun Prairie to learn more about the facility's Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program and highlight the success of the program in preparing youths for post-secondary education and the workplace.

"The Jobs for America's Graduates program is designed to help high school students graduate with the skills they need for success, either at a college or university or by entering the workforce," Secretary Newson said. "The work that is being done here is reflective of the kinds of efforts we need in Wisconsin to ensure a skilled workforce now and for generations to come. As part of Governor Walker's Wisconsin Working plan, the newly formed College and Workforce Readiness Council will look at what more our state can do to better prepare today's students for tomorrow's workforce needs."

The JAG program serves youths with significant barriers to high school graduation, employment and/or a post-secondary education. This program provides instruction, mentoring and placement services to assist students in pursuing a fulfilling career after high school. JAG currently operates in 33 states with over 800 programs, including one at Prairie Phoenix Academy that is operated in partnership with the Sun Prairie School District.

Nationally, over 750,000 students have completed the JAG program and received a high school diploma or GED, providing a strong foundation for post-secondary education, employment or the military. The Sun Prairie program has a 100 percent GED/high school graduation rate, and over 90 percent the students have found employment upon graduation. Approximately 100 students have been enrolled at the Prairie Phoenix Academy since 2009.

"Jobs for America's Graduates helps to ensure youths are ready for the workplace," said Marcia Christiansen, CEO of Forward Service Corporation, which operates the JAG program in Wisconsin. "This program has been shown to improve outcomes to students who are enrolled, helping to ensure that they graduate with the skills and competencies they need to be ready for full-time employment or post-secondary education."

Governor Scott Walker's "Wisconsin Working" plan includes a College and Workforce Readiness Council to improve student readiness for college and careers through a variety of measures, including designing shorter and less costly degree programs aimed at filling high-need positions. His plan also calls for DWD to double the number of job fairs it holds in 2012 to at least 100, add staff to help Unemployment Insurance claimants return to work more quickly, and strengthen partnerships with other agencies including Veterans Affairs and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to connect job seekers to available jobs.