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## **New York Times** Article Misses Benefits of Job Training Benefits

A recent *New York Times* article: "After Job Training, Still Scrambling for a Job" paints an inaccurate picture of the benefits of job training, and I'd like to illustrate why.

STRIVE International, a workforce development non-profit organization, was overjoyed to place 49% of its 2009 New York trainees in jobs during one of the worst recessions in memory. Among our graduates who pursued STRIVE's vocational skills training, 58% have secured employment and are earning an average wage that is 56% above the minimum wage.

In the world of the chronically unemployed, these statistics represent a substantial victory over the cycle of failure and rejection that perpetuates poverty. Our pool of clients is drawn from the hard core unemployed: 30% have been convicted of a felony, 66% are male, and 62% are African-American. Most have no prior employment history. The majority receive some form of public assistance.

When the costs to society of sustaining the unemployed are considered, a more accurate picture of the benefits of job training emerges. On average, a year of incarceration costs taxpayers roughly \$50,000 per inmate in New York State. A year of TANF cash benefits for a family of 3 is approximately \$6,000 - \$8,000. When factoring in Medicaid, Food Stamps and housing subsidies, governmental outlays for a family of three can exceed \$25,000 per year. STRIVE's program converts these individuals into economic contributors who will earn starting salaries between \$19,000 and \$24,000 per year along with medical benefits. Not only will these individuals develop credentials in the workplace and become taxpayers themselves, they will cease to engage in activities that negatively impact our society, while also providing financial security to their families and modeling responsible behavior to their children.

We agree that skills training must be closely aligned with available jobs. Hence, STRIVE's Skill training regimens are drawn from the Department of Labor's research on growth industries and close collaboration with local companies. Our program is flexible enough to quickly adapt to the requirements of the job market. These are the keys to success that those of us in the workforce development profession follow.

An evaluation of job training programs must consider the specific challenges of the population served and the costs to society of not providing vocational training. Further, no program can be evaluated only one year out - STRIVE follows its graduates for a minimum of 2 years and we continue to serve them after that period when they reach out to us for help.

A blanket rejection of job training ignores the many examples of success and hope provided by the Workforce Development Community.