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**YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED RECEIVES \$20,000 AWARD
Summer employment program benefits teens, families, communities**

(CLEVELAND, OHIO) YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED (YOU) received the 2009 Anisfield-Wolf Memorial Award today from **The Center for Community Solutions** and **The Cleveland Foundation**. The \$20,000 award is presented annually to recognize outstanding service by a nonprofit organization serving Greater Clevelanders.

Robert E. Eckardt, Dr. PH, senior vice president for programs and evaluation of The Cleveland Foundation, presented the award to **Neville Arjani**, chair of YOU's Board of Trustees and chief actuary and principal, Findley Davies, Inc.

"Last year, the country—and Greater Cleveland—experienced record numbers of unemployment. Boosted by federal stimulus funding, YOU found employment for 3,412 teens at 400 worksites; 200 were placed with 56 employers in the private sector," Eckardt said. "YOU took on a big responsibility, acted quickly and efficiently in managing unique funds, worked collaboratively and effectively with other nonprofits and businesses, and demonstrated outstanding results. In fact, 89 percent of the youth who started a summer job completed their assignments, including many 14- and 15-year-olds who had no prior job experience."

According to **Carol Rivchun**, YOU president, "Summer employment provides both tangible and intangible benefits. First, young people gain a paycheck, which often goes to supplement family income, especially in times of high unemployment among parents. In addition, through summer employment teens gain self-esteem, an appreciation of what the workplace requires, and a stepping-stone to their next job. Just as important, they have a safe and constructive way to spend their time during the months away from school."

The intangible benefit of summer employment is attested to by the youth themselves. During an evaluation of the 2009 program by **Kent State University**, 40 percent of the young people believed that, if

they had not had the opportunity for summer employment, they would have been more likely to get into trouble or cause it in their community. Therefore, communities benefit when young people have summer jobs.

The KSU evaluation also found that 25 percent of the teens showed in pre-tests that they had problems related to daily life and psychosocial skills necessary to function successfully at school, at work, and in the community. By the end of the summer, these youth made statistically significant improvements as a result of their experiences with YOU.

Robin Cottingham, Board Chair of Community Solutions, commented, "Providing employment and occasions for young people to interact in a positive way with responsible adults is a key to helping them develop into successful, independent adults. We congratulate YOU for taking the lead in making the most of the unique opportunity offered through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to benefit thousands of youth and their families."

YOU was established in 1982. For information, call 216-566-5445 or visit www.youthopportunities.org.

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The Center for Community Solutions is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization focused on policy and system reform. It provides strategic leadership to improve health, social, and economic conditions. Established in 1913, it is a United Way agency.

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