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**Foster Youth to Receive Job Assistance Through Innovative New Program**

**Cincinnati (May 22, 2007)** Hamilton County foster teens who soon face life on their own will have the opportunity to receive job assistance through Next Step Network, an innovative new collaborative established by members of Leadership Cincinnati Class XXX, Cincinnati Works and several public and private child welfare organizations.

Many foster children who turn 18 often find themselves on their own, long disconnected from their biological families and without roots and a support system. They're especially vulnerable to social problems and struggle when it comes to financially supporting themselves.

The Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, which works with private foster care agencies to support about 750 foster care children at any one time, has about 50 children a year who "age out" of the child welfare system and suddenly find themselves on their own.

"While we do provide independent living skills to our foster teens, too often they are hit with a cold dose of reality when they're suddenly on their own at 18 with little job skills and the prospect of supporting themselves on a minimum-wage job," said Moira Weir, assistant director of Children's Services. "It's tremendous that these groups have banded together to help these kids. It sends a message that this is a caring community that will not let these kids fall through the cracks."

Leadership Cincinnati Class XXX has partnered with Cincinnati Works, Hamilton County Children's Services and the Hamilton County Transition Planning Committee to

create the Next Step Network to provide training, coaching, mentoring and networking so the teens can secure jobs with wages higher than the minimum and health care benefits.

The Leadership Cincinnati team coordinated the Next Step Network kick-off at a Saturday event held recently at Cincinnati Works.

“We were thrilled to have more than 40 young people attend to learn how we can help them stabilize in higher paying jobs and three-fourths of them signed-up to participate in the special job-readiness training being held in June for the foster care youth,” said Beth Smith, president of Cincinnati Works.

The Next Step Network has been created as a unique collaborative involving a wide variety of representatives from the organizations that typically work with young people transitioning out of foster care and private sector community resources to provide a variety of services designed to help support these young adults at a critical time in their lives.

The Cincinnati Works Job Readiness Training will be offered to foster care youth participating in Next Step Network Class I from June 11 through June 15. For more information or to get involved, please call Mark Kroner at Lighthouse Youth Services at 513-487-7130.

### ***About Next Step Network***

Next Step Network is an innovative private-public collaborative established by members of Leadership Cincinnati Class XXX, Cincinnati Works and several public and private child welfare organizations. The new program was created to assist youth aging out of the foster care system with employment, life planning and other services needed to help stabilize their lives. Cincinnati Works provides job readiness training and a variety of counseling and other services to help these young adults get and keep jobs, while the Leadership Cincinnati team and other partners bring additional resources, including networking and mentorship.