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## **YouthBuild Just A Start Graduates Earn Industry-Recognized Solar Installation Credentials** *Solar Training Pilot Program Bridges the Gap in the Clean Energy Workforce*

**Cambridge, MA – Monday, November 25, 2024** – YouthBuild Just A Start proudly celebrated the inaugural cohort of its Solar Panel Installation Training and Certification Pilot Program on Thursday, November 21, honoring nine graduates who successfully completed the program and earned industry-recognized credentials. This achievement marks an important step in addressing the growing demand for skilled workers in the solar energy sector while empowering young adults to build sustainable careers.

The Solar Panel Installation Training and Certification Pilot Program was created specifically for young adults who have already gained construction and related skills training through graduation from a Massachusetts YouthBuild program. This approach streamlines the certification process, directly addressing the green jobs skills gap. By combining education, hands-on technical training, and partnerships with industry leaders like UNIRAC, Solar Landscape, Grid Alternatives, and the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), the program positions its graduates for success in one of the fastest-growing job markets. This milestone also follows [passage](#) of a bipartisan climate bill in the Massachusetts legislature, further highlighting the strength of the solar industry in the Commonwealth and the ability of opportunity youth to fill the related skills gap.

“This program gave our graduates an amazing chance to build on their construction skills and get ready for meaningful careers in clean energy,” said **Derek Wood, YouthBuild Just A Start Vocational Instructor**. “Watching their hard work and determination has been inspiring, and now they’re ready to make a real difference in their communities and the solar industry.”

YouthBuild Just A Start was one of only three sites nationwide selected by [YouthBuild Global](#)—the headquarters for the YouthBuild movement—to pilot this program, a recognition of its longstanding success and ability to support advanced technical training. Hosted at the new Economic Mobility Hub at Rindge Commons in Cambridge, the month-long program provided hands-on instruction to alumni from [YouthBuild Just A Start](#), [YouthBuild Brockton](#), and [YouthBuild Quincy](#). Participants trained on a state-of-the-art mock roof (Solar Laboratory) equipped with solar panels and racking and mounting hardware, mastering installation techniques, safety protocols, and earning certifications such as the [UNIRAC Master Installer Program](#) (MIP) and the [Solar Landscape STEP-UP](#) Solar Panel Installation Training credential.

“The YouthBuild graduates from Cambridge, Brockton, and Quincy demonstrated remarkable commitment and growth throughout this program,” said **Nate Bae Kupel, Managing Director of Youth Programs at Just A Start**. “We’re thrilled to celebrate their accomplishments and look forward to seeing them lead the way in the green energy workforce.”



This initiative is part of YouthBuild Just A Start's broader mission to empower young people through education, job training, and leadership development, enabling them to create brighter futures for themselves and their communities.



Graduates of the YouthBuild Just A Start Solar Training Pilot Program celebrate alongside program leaders, solar industry partners, and YouthBuild Global President and CEO John Valverde.

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### **About Just A Start**

Just A Start believes that access to stable housing and sustainable careers are the essential building blocks of equitable communities. For more than 50 years, we have focused on meeting the fundamental needs of individuals and families who have been systematically denied opportunities to realize their full potential. Our programs include affordable housing, education and job training, and comprehensive support services, spanning Cambridge and beyond. We have developed and currently maintain 600 affordable apartments. To keep community members housed, we also offer financial and technical assistance to prevent evictions, and support low- and moderate-income homeowners. Finally, we prepare individuals of all ages and circumstances with the skills and knowledge they need to secure fulfilling careers, leveraging their talents to achieve economic mobility and strengthen the region's workforce. **YouthBuild Just A Start** is a full-time, comprehensive youth workforce development program for ages 16-24 in the Boston Metro North region. As a proud member of the global YouthBuild movement, the program supports young people as they reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become community leaders. For more information, please visit [www.justastart.org/youth-programs](http://www.justastart.org/youth-programs).



### **About YouthBuild**

With love and respect, YouthBuild partners with opportunity youth to build the skillsets and mindsets that lead to lifelong learning, livelihood, and leadership. At more than 320 YouthBuild programs around the world, young people who are out of school and out of work reclaim their education, gain job skills, and become leaders in their communities through service and civic engagement. To date, YouthBuild has partnered with more than 210,000 young people to dedicate over 52 million hours of service benefitting urban, rural, and tribal communities. YouthBuild Global — the headquarters for the YouthBuild movement — unifies and partners with this expansive network of YouthBuild programs. From training, technical assistance, capacity building, and innovative program enhancements to leadership development, sustainability, and advocacy, YouthBuild Global serves as a convener, collaborator, and catalyst for the entire YouthBuild movement. YouthBuild strives to create a world where all young people are seen for their potential and power to transform themselves and their communities.

For more information about YouthBuild Global and the YouthBuild movement, visit [YouthBuild.org](https://www.youthbuild.org).