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\$200,000 Grant Increases Funding for Graduation Coaches Marion County High Schools

CAGI Award Adds New Graduation Coach at Manual High School

INDIANAPOLIS — Community Action of Greater Indianapolis Inc. (CAGI) awarded a \$200,000 grant to Common Goal, a Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce initiative that is helping increase graduation rates in Marion County schools.

The money will be used to hire a graduation coach at Manual High School beginning this semester, and support the graduation coaches currently working in the 12 other area public high schools for the 2010-2011 school year.

Impressed with Common Goal's results, CAGI obtained funds from the Federal Community Services Block Grant American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), to ensure schools have graduation coaches to help students stay in school and get their high school diplomas.

"Community Action of Greater Indianapolis chose to support Common Goal for several reasons. First and foremost, the impact that Common Goal has made on the graduation rates of schools in Marion County in a relatively short period of time is impressive," said Edgar N. Tipton Jr., CAGI's executive director.

Since launching Common Goal in 2007, Marion County graduation rates have increased 6 percent points. The organization's goal is to increase graduation rates to 80 percent by 2012, which would mean about 2,000 more students graduating every year.

"CAGI's support of Common Goal will be a tremendous boost toward our efforts of increasing graduation rates in Marion County," said Roland M. Dorson, president of the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. "While we're proud of successes Common Goal has had, we also know we have much work to do, and in order to reach our goal of increasing graduation rates, we need the help and support of community partners."

Graduation Coaches are full-time counselors with expertise in helping students, who are at risk of not graduating from high school. Graduation coaches are advocates for students and work within a team concept with students, school faculty, staff and administrators, parents/guardians and social service providers to develop a plan of action for individual students.

The Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce provided funding to staff coaches at 12 high schools for the 2009-2010 school year. The CAGI grant will allow those coaches to

continue next year, plus it will provide funds to immediately hire a graduation coach at Manual High School, where only 44.4 percent of students graduated in 2009.

“Common Goal is sharing information and collaborating with other school districts outside of Marion County who are interested in implementing this program in their schools,” Tipton added. “We believe that kind of behavior benefits our larger community and should not only be recognized but also rewarded.”

Common Goal in collaboration with school systems developed metrics for the Graduation Coaches, who provide regular update on student progress. Grad coaches also take students on college visits and organize motivational speakers to provide additional encouragement and incentives to students.

The following 13 Marion County high schools will have graduation coaches:

- Arlington High School
- Beech Grove High School
- Emmerich Manual High School
- Franklin Central High School
- George Washington High School
- Howe High School
- John Marshall High School
- Lawrence Central High School
- Lawrence North High School
- North Central High School
- Pike High School
- Speedway High School
- Warren Central High School

Common Goal is working to raise \$3 million in 2010 to continue to fund programs that are helping students stay in school. Major supporters include: Pacers Foundation, Lilly Endowment, Inc., Chase, AT&T, Community Action of Greater Indianapolis, Community Health Network, Ivy Tech Community College, Wal-Mart, St. Vincent Health.

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About Common Goal

Common Goal helps kids stay in school by providing guidance, services and motivation through graduation coaches, interventions, internships and mentors aimed at increasing the Marion County high school graduation rate to 80% by 2012. Everything we're doing is shaped by Indianapolis educators and validated by national research. All of us - educators, community organizations, and business leaders -- are focused on moving key indicators in the right direction, and increasing the number of Marion County graduates. Learn more by visiting www.commongoalindy.org.

About the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 1890 by Colonel Eli Lilly and a group of Indianapolis business leaders, the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce is the voice of the central Indiana business community. Today, with a membership of more than 4,000 businesses, the Indianapolis Chamber is still a voice of progress and improvement, bringing together businesses for a thriving community. For more information on the Chamber, visit www.indychamber.com.