



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Jason Natelle, Communications Specialist
(860) 560-5636 or cell: (860)597-2762

Twelve Graduates Cap Off CRT's 14-week Financial Literacy Institute Program *Long-term Financial Goals and Dreams Now Reality for Dedicated Students*

HARTFORD— Twelve area residents comprising the 2011 graduating class of Community Renewal Team's Financial Literacy Institute received diplomas in a formal Commencement ceremony held Dec. 13 in the Lumsden Center at 555 Windsor Street.

The program is offered by Community Renewal Team (CRT) free of charge to the public each year in the fall as part of their community services. Main focuses in the course include budget creation; saving and investing; rebuilding credit; and dealing with the financial stresses of under- and unemployment. Those interested apply and interview before being selected to the program.

CRT Chief Operations Officer Trish Donovan welcomed the graduates dressed with blue caps and gowns and their families at the ceremony, which was highlighted by remarks from Valedictorian Katiria Rivera and fellow graduate Ernesto Rios. The keynote address was given by Elizabeth Horton-Sheff, Director of Community Services at CRT.

In Rivera's speech to the crowd, she spoke of the courage she gained through her work throughout the program.

"This course has given me this feeling of true confidence in myself to make the kinds of positive decisions necessary for a strong financial future," Rivera said. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to share my knowledge with my family and others that gives us the power of understanding these things in life in a clearer way."

All graduates included: Carmen Acevedo, Barbara Chapman, Verna Clarke, Leslie Douglas, Tania Jackson, Catherine Knight, Christopher Ogren, Ernesto Rios, Katiria Rivera (Valedictorian), Aisha Robinson, Nicholas Ross (Salutatorian) and Carolyn Smith.

CRT Financial Literacy Coordinator Andrea Hardy and Foreclosure and Housing Counselor Terence Durrant coordinated the Institute under the guidance of Horton-Sheff with assistance from other Financial Literacy and cross-program staff.

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Other popular offerings to complement the Institute include the Individual Development Account (IDA) information sessions and the First Time Homebuyer Class.

Students are selected each year for the Institute based on reviews of all applications. Those interested in next year's course must be submitted to CRT by July 15, 2012. For more information or to obtain an application, call Elton Gaines at (860) 560-5149 or email GainesE@crtct.org.

Photo Caption: CRT Housing Counselor Terence Durrant (left) congratulates Financial Literacy Institute Valedictorian Katiria Rivera for her graduation on Dec. 13 at CRT's Lumsden Center.

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Community Renewal Team, Inc. is the designated Community Action Agency for Middlesex and Hartford Counties and is the largest non-profit provider of human services in Connecticut. The agency's mission is Preparing Our Community to Meet Life's Challenges. The mission is achieved each day by helping people and families become self-sufficient while making sure basic needs are met. CRT's programs include Head Start, Meals on Wheels, energy assistance, supportive housing and shelters, and many others, serving people in more than 60 cities and towns in both our core catchment area and throughout Connecticut. www.crtct.org