

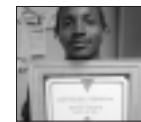
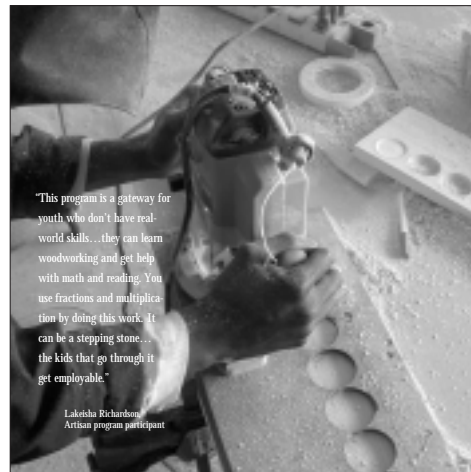
# SHOP TALK :

## Entrepreneurship And Youth Development

*“Reingold is a real partner in our mission. We count on Reingold’s talent, intellect, and experience, and they always deliver.”*

*Vincent Gray,  
Executive Director*

**Situation:** The story plays out in urban areas nationwide: at-risk young people, ill-equipped for a demanding job market, are left behind with limited prospects for work or careers. In Washington, DC, more than 30 percent of children live in poverty. Forty percent of DC public high school students don’t make it past the tenth grade. Even in boom years, youth unemployment topped 35 percent—more than 50 percent in some neighborhoods.



*“I like the learning parts of the program, it helped me with math on my GED. I wanna teach other people now and this helped me see that.”*

*Will Shafiq, Artisan program participant*

**Program Goals**

The Covenant House Washington Artisans Program has three primary goals:

- Equip youth with marketable woodworking skills, experience, and knowledge that will give them viable employment.
- Improve educational attainment by demonstrating the relationship between education and tangible opportunities and
- Contribute to the physical, community and economic development of socially and economically challenged areas of the District of Columbia.

**The Need**

The Covenant House Washington serves youth who have grown up in a world where the odds seem forever stacked against them. More than 30 percent of the District of Columbia’s children live in poverty. More than 60 percent of all families with children are headed by a single parent. Many of our youth already have children of their own. Many are homeless or living in untenable conditions.

Many live in neighborhoods where drug dealers can be heroes at least they have money and can take care of their families. These youngsters are products of a school system that—for a decade—has never graduated more than 60 percent of the students who three years earlier had begun the 10th grade. Many drop out of school because they see no connection between the curriculum and the real world where they must live and work.

Even as the U.S. economy sizzled in the late 1990s, the District’s youth unemployment rate topped 35 percent—50 percent in some of the hardest-hit areas. All this happens at a time when vocational/technical education programs have been phased out in many places, including the District of Columbia. By simultaneously devaluing the trades as a calling and removing the opportunities for youth to pursue this path, we’ve effectively shut the door to high-skill, high-income careers. Covenant House seeks to change that. At least for some.

Monograph

**Client Approach:** Washington’s Covenant House, an international non-profit organization that offers a haven of services and support to at-risk young people, envisioned an intensive youth enterprise program to bridge life on the streets to life in the working world.

**Enter Reingold:** We conducted a feasibility study to select an enterprise responding to emerging market demands; fitting the skills and aptitudes of the youth served; and also likely to build economic vitality. Reingold helped develop grant proposals and business and marketing plans to ensure that the venture would be capitalized, marketed, and launched. We then created an evaluation program model to assess progress over time and an annual report showing quantifiable value to funders.

**Solution:** Today, the Covenant House Washington Artisans program equips youth with marketable woodworking skills, knowledge, and experience.

Give someone a chance, a future, a new idea of the possible that demolishes the old, and a triumph over almost unimaginable odds can emerge. And a life is changed.