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## Youth Automotive Training Center Graduation Celebrates 25 Years of Giving Kids a Second Chance

Deerfield Beach, Fla. – He had dropped out of school, was running with the wrong crowd, had a baby on the way and no prospects for a job. That was when Joel Garcia decided to listen to the advice of a few friends and turned to the Youth Automotive Training Center (YATC) for help, hope and a new direction in life.

“They told me that if I was accepted into the program and did what was asked of me, then I’d be okay,” Garcia said. “I heard that the people at YATC really cared and really wanted to help.”

Out of approximately 130 applicants, Garcia, now 22 years old, was accepted to the nine-month program. He recently graduated with the Class of 2009 on May 28 at a ceremony attended by friends, family members and longtime YATC supporters and Miami Dolphins’ greats Dan Marino, Earl Morrall and Jason Taylor.

“The program and the encouragement of the staff gave me the opportunity to make something of my life,” Garcia said. “YATC was the only place that gave me a chance.”

A firm believer in making a real difference in someone else’s life, automotive legend Jim Moran founded YATC in 1984 for kids just like Garcia. Since then, YATC has provided second chances for close to 500 students. Currently celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, YATC continues to be guided by Moran’s philosophy of preparing young people for brighter futures.

During the graduation ceremony, Garcia and several other students were recognized for their outstanding achievements. He was presented with the Turnabout Award for showing the most personal improvement, including completing his GED through an academic program available to all



*Miami Dolphins football greats Dan Marino, Jason Taylor and Earl Morrall with Youth Automotive Training Center (YATC) Executive Director Terry Routley and YATC graduates (from left) who received special honors Joel Diaz (Jump Start Award), Renaldo Barrett (Outstanding Attendance Award) and Joel Garcia (Turnabout Award).*

students at the center. In addition, Garcia earned a scholarship to continue studying auto body repair and service at Atlantic Technical Center in Coconut Creek.

“This class impressed me from the beginning with their desire to learn and grow,” said Terry Routley, executive director of YATC. “A lot of them were very serious about changing the direction of their lives, changing the way they had been thinking and living. I am excited to see what they all do next.”



*The 2009 graduating class of the Youth Automotive Training Center.*

Other students honored for their exceptional commitment to the program included Renaldo Barrett, 21, who received the Outstanding Attendance Award and feels that YATC showed him “there is nothing I can’t do.” Classmate Joel Diaz, 20, was given the Jump Start Award for applying what he learned at YATC to his future plans, which include additional training for a career in the automotive industry.



*Jan Moran (left), chairman and president of The Jim Moran Foundation; Jan Amis Jessup, Youth Automotive Training Center (YATC) Advisory Board member and recipient of the 2009 Jim Moran Award; and Larry McGinnes, president of the YATC Board of Directors.*

In a special presentation, longtime friend of YATC Jan Amis Jessup received the prestigious Jim Moran Award for her ongoing support and dedication to the program. An advisory board member and weekly tutor at the center, she also established a scholarship in honor of her late husband, Professor Joe Lee Jessup, called “New Beginnings” to assist YATC graduates in continuing their education and training.

### **About the Youth Automotive Training Center**

Established by Jim Moran in 1984, the mission of the Youth Automotive Training Center is to train and educate at-risk youth in basic automotive repair skills, academic remediation, job readiness and life management skills. The goal of this program is to prepare young adults who are at a disadvantage in their lives to become self-sufficient, productive, law-abiding citizens. Students are referred to YATC in a variety of ways, including through the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Children and Families, as well as YATC graduates, local clergy and word of mouth.

For more information about the Youth Automotive Training Center visit [www.yatc.org](http://www.yatc.org), or contact Hillary Gurman, community relations manager, at (954) 428-0909 or [yatcgurm@bellsouth.net](mailto:yatcgurm@bellsouth.net). YATC is located at 399 SW Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Deerfield Beach, Florida.