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## NEWS RELEASE

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**For immediate release**

### **REnEW participants give back while gaining new skills**

*Unique trades training provides link back to the community while advancing energy efficiency*

**Kelowna, B.C.— September 16, 2016:** With the completion of this year’s four-week Residential Energy Efficiency Works (REnEW) program, made possible by FortisBC, 10 motivated men and women are now poised to fill positions in the construction industry and a local service agency has benefitted with a construction project worth more than \$30 thousand.

The REenEW program is designed to give people who have faced barriers to employment, such as poverty and addiction, the skills and safety certifications needed for entry-level construction positions. Each year, a new group of REenEW participants complete a project for a local non-profit to get hands-on trades training and learn about energy-efficient retrofits.

“Training and skill development like this provides an essential link back to the community and for many of the participants, REenEW is an important step on a long journey to wellness,” said Gaelene Askeland, executive director of the John Howard Society of the Central and South Okanagan, the organization that administers REenEW in Kelowna. “It’s inspiring to see participants leave with a sense of accomplishment and the confidence needed to move forward with their lives.”

During the four-week program, participants received instruction from UK Trades, a Kelowna construction company, and will leave the program with construction safety certifications such as WHMIS, First Aid and Fall Protection.

The Bridge Youth & Family Services, who provides addiction and family counselling services in Kelowna, was the recipient of this year’s hands-on project. REenEW participants built an accessibility ramp and deck for the Bridge's front entrance. They also replaced several windows, doors, faucets, and showerheads to improve air tightness and energy efficiency.

“This program contributes to the community in many positive ways in addition to helping us meet our goal of advancing energy-efficient construction,” said Danielle Wensink, director, conservation and energy management, FortisBC. “We appreciate the effort put in by the John Howard Society and the hard work and motivation of the participants — this is really at the core of the program’s success.”

With the formal training now complete, participants will be shown paths to further their education and can receive ongoing employment support through the John Howard Society for up three months.

Select participants will also have the opportunity for additional work experience with a local builder through a paid skills enhancement program, also sponsored by FortisBC.

Since the Residential Energy Efficiency Works (REnEW) program began in 2010, it has increased the employability of close to 130 people in the region and helped local builders have access to safety-trained employees. REEnEW is funded by FortisBC and the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines and delivered in partnership through The John Howard Society of The Central and South Okanagan and UK Trades. For more about this program, visit [fortisbc.com/renew](http://fortisbc.com/renew).

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*The John Howard Society of The Central and South Okanagan offers a range of innovative programs and services including affordable and supportive housing, employment programs, outreach programs, restorative justice, and even a social enterprise café. Programs are made possible as a result of the combined drive and effort of staff and volunteers, interagency collaboration, partnerships with funders, support by the community, and by the amazing and resilient people we serve. For more information and to get involved, visit [johnhowardbc.ca](http://johnhowardbc.ca).*

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