

To: **Eve Snelling:** Staff Services Analyst II, Department of Workforce Investment
From: **Rebecca Lincoln:** Career Educator, Merced County Office of Education
Re: **Merced County Youth Council Quarterly Report-** Empower Program
Date: **May 2010** (January, February & March 2010)

A. Overall status of the program:

The EMPOWER program enrolled thirty-eight (38) new and exited four participants this past quarter; this brings the total active to two-hundred and seventy-four (274) EMPOWER participants. The Empower advisors continue to track the number of participants enrolled in structured program activities to ensure that the majority of youth are receiving intensive services (as opposed to case management services). In this past quarter, a monthly average of 75-80 EMPOWER participants placed on work sites through-out Merced County completed up to 192 hours of work experience.

B. Past Quarter Highlights:

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops:** The EMPOWER Workshops were provided to youth in March this past quarter. The following is an accounting of workshops offered and number attended:
 - a) **EMPOWER Orientation:** Conducted on Friday, March 5 with seventy-two (72) in attendance;
 - b) **EMPOWER Workshop I:** ‘*Gettin’ Ready for the Job*’ conducted on Friday, March 12 with forty-five (45) in attendance;
 - c) **EMPOWER Workshop II:** ‘*The Real Game California*’ was conducted March 15, 17 and March 19 with an average attendance of thirty-five (35) per session;
 - d) **EMPOWER Workshop III:** ‘*Gettin’ a Job*’ was conducted on March 22, 24 and 26 with an average attendance of twenty-five (25) participants per session.

- 3) **Wolfe Center- Bldg D-3 Computer Lab:** EMPOWER participants use the computer lab daily to work on résumés, portfolios, and conduct job search. *PLATO* is educational software designed to increase math and reading skills, it is also available to the participants in the computer lab. Sign-in sheets are used to track the number of participants using the computer lab.

- 4) **California Workforce Association 2010 Youth Conference “A Billion Beats”** was held on January 19-21, 2010 at the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, in Long Beach, CA. YOP EMPOWER staff, as well as participants from the YOP, EMPOWER, Cal-Grip and Green Job Corp attended the three-day conference that was designed to bring together a unique group of individuals, including staff from youth serving agencies, educators working with special populations, youth program designers, managers, policy makers, and youth involved in youth development programs.

On Tuesday afternoon, Career Educators from the EMPOWER program facilitated an interactive session titled *Real Game Financial Planning*. The session utilized the Real Game California curriculum to conduct a presentation on expense sheets, budgeting and financial planning. The workshop engaged the audience through a series of worksheets and activities that portray the real life of a fulltime working single person, living on their own. The Real Game California curriculum is used in the EMPOWER Workshop series.

On Wednesday, Alfredo Mendoza, Staff Services Analyst II with Merced County Department of Workforce Investment and MCOE Career Educator, Toula Moua facilitated a session titled *San Joaquin Valley Green Jobs Corp: A Regional Collaboration of Central California*. The presentation was an overview at the regional collaboration of nine (9) California counties, extending from Bakersfield to Stockton, that focus on the green sector. Mr. Mendoza and Ms. Moua each provided insight on how the program is designed to help youth learn job skills available in the green sector, providing them with environmental stewardship, civic responsibility, community service, work experience and education. The workshop ended with a rousing report from a local Green Jobs participant, Mitchell Denton, on the positive impact the Green Jobs Corp experience has on his life.

5) **EMPOWER Community Service:** On March 1, the EMPOWER participants from Los Banos volunteered in the Dos Palos Food Fair, sorting, bagging and distributing food to the needy. The first Monday of each month, Dos Palos has a food give-away serving 180 needy families. The participants all felt this was a great way to give back to the community.



C. **Past Quarter Deficiencies:** none

D. **Past Quarter recruiting and marketing efforts:**

Recruiting efforts for EMPOWER are limited. The contract specified that as participants exit, new participants will be enrolled in the following quarter after exits, upon availability of funds.

E. **Next quarter challenges:** none

F. **Technical assistance needed:**

G. **Number of clients receiving social services and examples of services received.**

Numerous referrals were made to agencies to assist with food, clothing, housing and transportation.