

To: **Alfredo Mendoza:** Staff Services Analyst, Department of Workforce Investment  
From: **Rebecca Lincoln:** Career Educator, Merced County Office of Education  
Re: **Merced County Youth Council Quarterly Report-** EMPOWER Program  
Date: **February 2008** (October, November and December 2007)

**A. Overall status of the program:**

There are presently 147 active participants in EMPOWER at the end of the second quarter; this past quarter the program had sixteen (16) new enrollments and twelve (12) exits. 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. The status on WIA-Client action reports for goals, activities, exits and follow-ups (phase II) remain up to date.

**B. Past Quarter Highlights:**

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops** were not offered this past quarter.
- 2) **EMPOWER ZONE** was held on October 12, twelve EMPOWER participants were judged on the successful completion of a job application, an employability portfolio, and on their individual and panel interviewing skills. Professionals from public, private and community-based organizations interviewed and scored each participant on a scale of 0-100. The event concluded with a recognition ceremony.
- 3) **Bldg K-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 daily.
- 4) **EMPOWER Focus Group** meeting was conducted on October 12<sup>th</sup>, where twelve EMPOWER participants discussed and provided input to the EMPOWER staff on the **EMPOWER** enrollment process. Feedback included ways that EMPOWER staff can improve and make the process easier for incoming participants.

- 5) **The Opportunity Club** was held on September, 20<sup>th</sup>, participants were asked to provide staff with input on the Opportunity Club meetings for the 2007-08 program year regarding times to meet, ideas for upcoming club meetings, and possible field trips. Consensus was that participants would prefer to meet on a quarterly basis; ideas for upcoming meetings include family night, “Smash” revisited, having a career and/or resource fair. Ideas for field trips include Livermore Lab, Yosemite National Park, trips to nearby State colleges and UC campuses. YOP & EMPOWER staff is in the midst of planning these upcoming events.
- 6) **Golden Valley High School** – On Wed Oct 17<sup>th</sup>, EMPOWER staff were asked to provide an overview to over 200 Golden Valley High School seniors on employability preparation for entering the workforce after graduation. The presentation included resume writing tips, proper completion of a job application, interviewing skills, job placement, job retention strategies, and labor market information. Staff also had the opportunity to provide a short promotion on the EMPOWER program.
- 7) **EMPOWER Success Story:**

Ayesha Nunez enrolled into the EMPOWER program on February 12, 2004. Ayesha spent most of her youth in and out of foster care and group homes. When Ayesha was seventeen years old, she graduated from Valley Community School as the Class Valedictorian; that was the day that she first met Congressman Dennis Cardoza. Mr. Cardoza came to Valley Community School to hear Ayesha speak and honor her efforts to graduate while living in the foster care system.

This meeting left a lasting impression on the Congressman’s mind and heart because two years later at a local fundraiser Congressmen Cardoza and Ayesha met again. The Congressman asked if she would be interested in becoming a representative aid at the local office in Merced. Ayesha was thrilled at the offer, but learned that the training would take place in Washington D.C. At that time, due to job responsibilities and school, she was unable to accept the job offer.

Last summer, Ayesha ran into Congressman Cardoza and his new representative aid and she was again asked if she wanted to join the group as an aid working in Washington D.C. for a short time. Again she was thrilled at the offer, but this time accepted the offer!

In October, Ayesha traveled to Washington D.C. to begin her training and soon will return to Merced to begin her new position with Congressman Dennis Cardoza’s local office.

**C. Past Quarter Deficiencies:** none

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

Recruiting efforts for EMPOWER are limited this past quarter. The contract specified that as participants exit the program, new participants will be enrolled in the following quarter after exits. However, on November 2<sup>nd</sup> EMPOWER Staff attended a Career Day at Merced High Union School. A manned resource booth made EMPOWER brochures, fliers and business cards available to high school students.

**E. Next quarter challenges:**

**F. Technical assistance needed:** available training on WIA Common Measures

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

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