

To: **Dave Davis:** Special Projects Manager, 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 2007** (October, November and December 2006)

A. Overall status of the program:

The EMPOWER program enrolled 10 new participants this quarter and exited 22(twenty-two); the total number of active EMPOWER participants is 192. 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).

B. Past Quarter Highlights:

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops:** The EMPOWER Workshops were not offered this past quarter.
- 2) **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.
- 3) **Quarterly EMPOWER Partners meeting** was not held this past quarter. Partners agreed that a meeting was not needed.
- 4) **The Opportunity Club:** This is an ongoing activity that provides monthly sessions on current job, educational, community, and leadership opportunities, as well as information regarding life skills for EMPOWER and YOP youth in Merced County. All YOP and EMPOWER participants are encouraged to attend these meetings.

On October 19th, thirty five (35) YOP and EMPOWER participants attended three short presentations on post-secondary options including ROP classes presented by Ellen Foster-Career Educator from Merced County Office of Education; Merced College presented by Natalie Culver-Employer Focused Training; U.C. Merced presented by Josh Franco-UC Student Body President. The evaluations completed by the participants indicated that they appreciated the information given by all three presenters.

On December 14th, fourteen (14) YOP and EMPOWER participants attended the presentation given by Loreen Cardozo from the Merced Union High School District gave a presentation on financial aid and scholarship applications, which included information on the various scholarships available, when and how to sign up for FAFSA, and upcoming workshops and deadlines that student need to meet. The evening concluded with a multi-cultural dinner that was highlighted by a Nigerian woman who spoke about her country and her visit to the United States.

5) Community Service- Coat Drive:

The YOP and EMPOWER staff and participants would like to thank our local businesses and individuals who donated money and/ or purchased coats toward our 3rd annual Coat Drive. With their generosity and community support we met our goal of delivering 134 new coats to students at Don Stowell Elementary on Thursday, November 9, 2006.

It is the intent of the youth programs to continue to adopt a school every year. This is an excellent opportunity for youth to become involved community services.



6) Community Service: Toys for Tots

This marked the 4th year participants in the YOP and EMPOWER youth programs collaborated with Toys-for-Tots as part of their community service project. After three days of wrapping and tagging 732 separate toys, the gifts were ready for distribution. The week before Christmas, staff and participants delivered toys to four schools in two days to benefit 244 children. The Toys for Tots drive is another way that participants can participate in community service.

7) EMPOWER Success Stories- Javier Miramontes



Javier enrolled in the Empower Program on 10/02/06. He was interested in attending Merced Community College and eventually majoring in Journalism. Javier displays his love of journalism with the blogs he writes on 'myspace'.

Javier always dreamed of attending a University of California campus but was unable to attend U.C. Merced because of financial aid issues. He planned to attend Merced Community College in the spring 2007.

Last September, Javier found himself attending all the EMPOWER workshops and completed the enrollment process. Javier shared his dream of attending UC Merced with his advisor who encouraged Javier to visit the UC Student Body President, Josh Franco. Josh in turn referred Javier to a counselor and admissions person on campus. Much to Javier's delight he was accepted as a student of Merced UC and he attended his first class on Jan.12, 2007. Javier expresses his feelings by saying "If it weren't for the *Empower Program*, I would still be in bed sleeping all day, disillusioned, and disappointed about not being accepted to U.C. Merced." He thanks the Empower staff for encouraging him to pursue the financial aid issues and setting him up with the right people at U.C. Merced.

8) EMPOWER Success story- Atenas C. Vallejo



Atenas was enrolled into the EMPOWER Program in February 2006. When she attend the EMPOWER orientation, she was confused about school and did not have a job. Atenas had been in the United States for about 5 months, so her ability to communicate in English was very limited. When Atenas completed the EMPOWER Workshop series she was referred to the the Merced Adult School to increase her English and math skills. A couple months later she enrolled at Merced College and at the same time became employed at Mc Donald's. Her advisor later was able to provide her with paid work experience at the Employment Development Department (EDD) office. After two and a half months; Atenas become a state employee through the Employment Development Department. Atenas was thrilled and expressed her gratitude by saying. "Now that I'm working with the EMPOWER & YOP Programs, I want to give back to the programs. I will help other youths in the same manner as the program has helped me!"

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 dependent upon availability of funds.

E. Next quarter challenges:

F. Technical assistance needed:

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.

To: **Dave Davis:** Special Projects Manager, Department of Workforce Investment
From: **Rebecca Lincoln:** Career Educator, Merced County Office of Education
Re: **Merced County Youth Council Quarterly Report-** Younger Youth Program
Date: **February 2007** (October- November and December 2006)

A. Overall status of the program:

There are presently 236 active participants in the Youth Opportunity Program at the end of the second quarter; thirty-eight YOP participants are dual-enrolled as part of the High Concentration Contract. There were thirteen (13) new enrollments and 29 exits; resulting in ninety-four (94%) of basic skills, work readiness, and/or occupational goals attained and seventy-six (76%) of the participants exited earned their high school diploma.

B. Past quarter highlights:

1) Career Industry Day Events in 2006-2007: These ROP sponsored events provide youth with detailed information and exploration of specific career pathways. Career Industry Days include tours of local businesses, guest speaker presentations, and hands-on activities related to various careers within a pathway. Career Industry Days are held from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm at the Merced County Fair Grounds in the Exhibit Building. The EMPOWER advisors are encouraged to invite those participants whose career goals or technical training aligned with these pathways. The following two career days were attended by our participants:

- a) Careers in Business, Marketing and Computer Information Systems, October 19th, 2006
- b) Careers in Arts and Communications, on Thursday, November 14th, 2006

2) The Opportunity Club: This is an ongoing activity that provides monthly sessions on current job, educational, community, and leadership opportunities, as well as information regarding life skills for EMPOWER and YOP youth in Merced County. All YOP and EMPOWER participants are encouraged to attend these meetings.

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5) Community Service-Dos Palos Coat Drive



On Nov 17, 2006, Dos Palos High Youth Opportunity Program participants delivered 35 new coats to students attending Oro Loma Elementary. The YOP participants at Dos Palos High School worked hard at their community service project by selling breakfast burritos to the staff at Dos Palos High School and other fund raisers since last September. All proceeds raised from the various fundraisers went into the purchase of the coats. A total of 12 students were involved in one way or another either shopping, preparing, cooking, or delivering of food to the high school and promoting sales for other fund raisers. The Dos Palos YOP Coat Drive project is another way for our participants to be involved in community service.

6) YOP Success Stories: Daniela Rodriguez



Daniela graduated from Le Grand High School in June, 2006. She was enrolled in YOP since her junior year (2004). The first summer of YOP work experience, she worked at the Golden Valley Health Center and learned many secretarial skills. On her second year of work experience, she asked to be placed at Foot Action at the Merced Mall. When the six week program ended, the manager at Foot Action hired her to work part-time. Daniela is now attending UC Merced while raising her two year old daughter. She is a very hard worker and is a true leader and success story!

YOP Success Story: Mario Garcia



Mario graduated from Le Grand High School in June, 2005. Mario enrolled into YOP his senior year (2004-05). In the summer 2005, he was placed at Wal-Mart for a period of three weeks but Mario needed something more challenging. The last couple of weeks of the summer his mentor placed him at Tire World. This suited Mario better; he learned how to repair tires, change oil, car alignments, etc. When the six week program ended, the business owner hired him as a part-time employee. Mario's persistence and hard work paid off. He is a true success of the YOP Program and deserves to be recognized.

C. Past quarter deficiencies: none

D. Past quarter recruiting/marketing efforts:

There were no recruiting efforts for YOP in the second quarter; all enrollments slots are filled.

E. Next quarter challenges:

F. Technical assistance needed: Available training on WIA Common Measures and Exit strategies.

Don Stowell Elementary “Adopted”

In August, because of the winter weather setting in, we started organizing for our third annual coat drive. Last year, we sponsored Planada Elementary and successfully met our goal of obtaining 97 coats for that school. This year we chose to sponsor Don Stowell Elementary in Merced. We chose to adopt Don Stowell Elementary because we felt that there was a need in that community. After speaking to the Principal, Mr. Varlas, it was evident that this school had a need for coats. We asked the staff of the Youth Opportunity Program and the EMPOWER Program to help with this task by getting their participants involved in this event. This method was very effective and we had a successful response. Many of the students got involved by asking friends and relatives to donate money. Some donated food to our “Food Fair” and others helped by shopping for the coats.

We would not have met our goal if not for the generosity of local businesses and special individuals who donated money and also helped by purchasing coats for some of the students. Also, without the nice discount that a local store offered, we probably would not have been able to get all the coats needed. In total, we were able to donate 134 new coats to the students of Don Stowell Elementary. On Thursday, November 9th the coats were distributed to the children. The coat drive was very successful and we were glad that we were able to put smiles on the faces of these young children. Each year that we have a coat drive, it reminds us of why we have this event. It is not for the publicity or the acknowledgement, it is because we really care about the children that are living in our community. We hope to continue to adopt a school every year. This is an excellent opportunity for youth to become involved in giving back to their communities. If you have ideas on what projects to work on for community service please let us know. We are always open to other community service ideas. If you would like to help with this and other community service activities, please contact Cyndie Bray at (209) 381-5916 or Rebecca Garcia at (209) 381-5918.

**Thank you to all who
made this possible.**

Great Job.



Coat Drive for Adopted School



Students waiting for the other children to come into the cafeteria before we begin to distribute the coats.



Right: Mr. Varlas (Principal, Don Stowell Elementary) walks in some children who are going to get a coat.



Cyndie, (EMPOWER/YOP mentor) waiting with some students as their names are being called out to get their coats.



Staff and participants unloading the coats and jackets at Don Stowell Elementary.



Participants stand ready to hand out coats and jackets to students as their names are being called.



Staff and participants who helped with the distribution of coats



Lee Andersen
Merced County Superintendent of Schools

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Merced County ROP

The Merced County Regional Occupational Program is a workplace learning program that has been in continuous operation since 1973. ROP students learn to work through practical experience. After basic classroom instruction, students are placed at work sites throughout the community and are taught occupational skills by professionals.

Philosophy

Merced County ROP delivers innovative educational programs to high school and adult students in preparation for 21st century careers, higher education and life-long learning.

Merced County Office of Education
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