

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: **May 2008** (January, February & March 08)

A. Overall status of the program:

The EMPOWER program enrolled 15 new participants this quarter; this brings the total active to one-hundred and fifty-seven (157) 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). The status on all WIA-Client action reports for goals, activities, exits and follow-ups (phase II) remain up to date.

B. Past Quarter Highlights:

- 1) **EMPOWER Workshops:** The EMPOWER Workshops were provided to youth in the months of January and March this quarter. The following is an accounting of workshops offered and number attended:
 - a) **EMPOWER Orientation:** Conducted on Friday January 11th and March 14, with an average of 25-30 attendees per session;
 - b) **EMPOWER Workshop I: ‘Gettin’ Ready for the Job’** conducted on Friday, January 18th, and March 14th had average of twenty youth in attendance;
 - c) **EMPOWER Workshop II: ‘The Real Game California’** was conducted on January 22, 23, and 25 and on March 17, 19, and 21 with an average attendance of 15 participants in attendance per session;
 - d) **EMPOWER Workshop III: ‘Gettin’ a Job’** was conducted on January 28, 30th and February 1st and on March 31, April 2nd and 4th with an average attendance of 15 participants per session.

- 2) **EMPOWER ZONE** was held on February 8th, where fifteen 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** is available to EMPOWER participants at the Merced County Office of Education Campus in Bldg K to work on résumés, portfolios, and conduct job search. *PLATO* is educational software designed to increase math and reading skills, it is also available for the participants use in the computer lab. Sign-in sheets are used to track the number of participants using the computer lab daily.
- 4) **The Opportunity Club** is an ongoing activity that provides quarterly 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.

A meeting was held on February 21st, 2008; thirty-three participants attended from through-out the county to view the HBO Documentary *Smashed- Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*. The presenter, Cyndie Bray, an EMPOWER Career Educator from Merced Office of Education, asked provoking questions after the video to our participants regarding the dangers of drinking and driving. Pre and post surveys are given to provide feedback for future sessions. Most participants tell us they come away with a different outlook on the dangers of drinking & driving and partying in general.

- 5) **Marketing -Working Professional Curriculum Update:** The EMPOWER staff continues to work on the revisions for the ROP Marketing-Working Professional course outline that is the framework for all EMPOWER workshops, work experience activities, and CDE approved youth credential. In the past quarter, staff met to review the Merced County ROP ESLR's to ensure that they are covered in the course outline. Additional tasks included updating training plans that will be used in the community classroom; development of a EMPOWER & YOP Business Brochure and developing a 4-step lesson plan on financial literacy, to include on activity on budgeting ; all the new developments were presented and brought before the Advisory Committee for approval on April 24, 2008.
- 6) **California Workforce Association Eighth Annual Youth Conference** was held on January 15- 17, 2008 at the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, in Long Beach, CA. YOP & EMPOWER staff attended the three-day conference that was designed to help local Youth Providers, Youth Councils members and policy makers run better programs, connect to other systems, and learn about the latest innovative strategies on youth development. Workshop topics

included “*Moving Youth Beyond Gang Life*”, “*Community Collaboration for Foster Youth*” and training on Youth Common Measures.

- 7) **Los Banos Outreach** was conducted by EMPOWER Staff who attended the Second Annual League of United Latin American Citizens Youth Leadership conference held at Los Banos High School. It was attended by more than 100 students and parents from the Los Baños community, where students received information and guidance about college and careers. The EMPOWER staff manned a resource booth where EMPOWER brochures, fliers and business cards were given to interested student. This was a daylong event including workshops, entertainment and free meals plus a raffle for a computer and iPod for the students. The highlight of the event was when keynote speaker, Judge Marc Garcia invited students to call on him if they needed a reference or would like to know more about his unconventional path in becoming the youngest and first Mexican-American Judge in Merced County.

8) **EMPOWER Success Story: Melissa Diaz**

Melissa Diaz was enrolled in the Empower program on September 14, 2007. When she first came to the Empower program, she was new to the community. She had no job



leads, little work experience and no GED. She was invited her to attend the EMPOWER Workshops, in which she gladly attended. She learned foundations of work readiness, opportunity to update her résumé, and practice interviewing skills. She was then placed at the Los Banos Wal-Mart to complete the 192 work

experience hours. Melissa was able to demonstrate what she had learned from our workshops and quickly adapted to Wal-Mart’s daily routine. Melissa made such an impression through her work skills and work ethics that after her work experience hours, Wal-Mart offered Melissa full-time employment. With her next goal to obtain, Melissa is presently working on her GED through our Plato Lab.

9) EMPOWER Success Story: Denise Perez



Denise Karina Perez; attended Le Grand High School where she graduated in June 2006. Denise learned about the EMPOWER program from her my career planning class teacher, Mr. Romero Govea. He gave her a brochure on the EMPOWER program and encouraged her to sign-up and attend the EMPOWER workshops in the fall of 2006. Denise was so grateful to

attend the workshops where she had the opportunity to created an employment portfolio, practiced job interviewing skills and learned how important to create a first impression with a future employer.

Denise enrolled into the EMPOWER program in January 2007 and then enrolled into Basic Accounting and Computerized Business Technology class. She admits that there were times when she wanted to drop the class, but with the encouragement and motivation that she received from her Advisor, Roberto Rivera, she was able to finish the course. On January 31, 2008, she received a Basic Accounting Certificate of Completion from the Merced County R.O.P. and on February 3rd, 2008, Denise was hired as a full time Administrative Assistant at New Castle Family Health Care Center in Atwater.

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. However, on January 7th, EMPOWER Advisors, Roberto Rivera and Toula Moua conducted a presentation on the EMPOWER programs to Planada and Le Grand High School juniors and seniors. Their presentation included program elements, eligibility; and services. EMPOWER Brochures, flyers and MCOE maps were passed out to students

E. Next quarter challenges: none

F. Technical assistance needed: WIA Common Measures Training is scheduled on August 20, at the Merced County Office of Education Campus.

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.