TO: Youth Council **DATE: 11/09/05**

FROM: WIB Staff

- [ ] **For Action**
- [x] **For Information**
- [ ] **For Discussion**

SUBJECT: EMPOWER Quarterly Report October 2005

PROPOSED MOTION(S): Information Only

DISCUSSION: EMPOWER Report, Jul-Aug-Sept 2005 is attached.

ATTACHMENT(S): EMPOWER Quarterly Report October 2005

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: October 2005 (Jul-Aug-Sept)

A. Overall status of the program:

The EMPOWER program enrolled 20 (twenty) new participants this quarter and exited 28 (twenty-eight); this brings the total number active to 280 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:

a) EMPOWER Orientation: Conducted on the second Friday in the months of July and September; approximately 25-30 participants attended each session;
b) EMPOWER Workshop I: Conducted on the third Friday of July and September; approximately 20 participants attended Workshop I;
c) EMPOWER Workshop II-Job readiness was conducted in the months of July and September; 40 (forty) participants successfully completed an ROP employability portfolio, and practiced interviewing techniques.

2) Bldg K-Computer Lab: EMPOWER participants use the computer lab daily to work on résumés, portfolios, and conduct job search. Ed Souza, an adult schoolteacher, is available for six hours per week in the computer lab to assist EMPOWER participants with PLATO educational software designed to increase math and reading skills. Sign-in sheets are used to track the number of participants using the computer lab daily.

3) Career Industry Days: 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 is the list and dates for the upcoming **Career Industry Days:**

a) Careers in Business, Marketing and Computer Information Systems, Oct 27, 2005

b) Careers in Arts and Communications, on Thursday, November 17th, 2005
c) Careers in Education held on Thursday, January 26, 2006
d) Careers in Agriculture (at the World Ag. Expo in Tulare) on February 15, 2006
e) Careers in Health held on Tuesday, February 28, 2006.

4) **Quarterly EMPOWER** Partners meeting was not held this past quarter. Partners agreed that a meeting was not needed.

5) **Opportunity Club:** is an ongoing activity that provides bi-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. Sessions are conducted in Bldg K at the MCOE campus. All participants are invited and encouraged to attend. A meeting was held on September 26th, 2005; Susan Bubenchik and Julie Price both gave a presentation from "A Woman's Place" of Merced County. They provided brochures and handouts to the group on services, as well as facilitated a lively discussion on questions and concerns from the group.

6) **Working Professional Curriculum Update:** In the 2004-2005 program year, EMPOWER staff revised the ROP Working Professional course outline, which is the framework for all EMPOWER workshops, work experience activities, and the locally approved youth credential. Last month, staff met again to begin work on our 2005-2006 ROP Working Professional Objectives to include ESLR's alignment to the new course outline; create an updated program brochure; training plans for community classroom and create one lesson plan. These new developments will be brought before an Advisory committee for approval on April 6th, 2006.

7) **The REAL GAME CALIFORNIA:** Cyndie Bray, Blanca Rodriguez, Becky Lincoln (EMPOWER Staff) and Brad Eagleton, (YOP Mentor); attended training in Stockton at the San Joaquin County Office of Education for the *Real Game California* pilot curriculum on September 15th, 2005. A team of Career and Workforce Development experts and educators from California created the *Real Game California* prototype. All activities, learning objectives and performance indicators have been aligned with California Academic Content Standards; SCANS; National Career Development Guidelines and ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs.

   Merced County Office of Education was selected as a pilot site to provide the Real Game California to approximately 30 WIA youth program participants. This includes both the in-school youth program (current enrollment 350+ students) and the out-of-school youth program (current enrollment 300+ participants). The Merced team will introduce the pilot curriculum to our participants and provide feedback and completed student, parent and teachers evaluations to the steering committee by January 31, 2006.

8) **TEEN SCENE:** YOP and EMPOWER participants from throughout the county were invited and attended the Second Annual Children's Summit 'TEEN SCENE' event held at Merced College on September 24th. This years Teens Educated and Energized Now

(TEEN) Scene's theme *"about providing access for our youth today"*. The agenda included several break out sessions on topics of interests for youth to include; career assessment; healthy relationships; health 101 to name a few. A session was presented on the EMPOWER program by staff and a session was given on Career Technical Education Opportunities by personal from Merced Office of Education ROP, Career and Alternative Education Department.

Youth also had an opportunity to visit a Resource Fair that provided information from partnering agencies throughout the county. The highlights of the program included a fashion show, where several of YOP and EMPOWER participants modeled clothes from local merchants. A Free Style Hip Hop Dance and Rap Competition provided an arena for Merced County youth to show off their talents. An evening meal was provided and the event ended again with a dance. EMPOWER Staff assisted with the planning and volunteered on the day of the event.

9) Community Service: Coat Drive

Last year, the Merced County Office of Education EMPOWER/ YOP Programs sponsored a coat drive as a community service opportunity for the participants of these two programs. Because we strongly encourage our participants to become involved in community service, we thought this would be an excellent way for them to give back to the communities in which they live. When choosing a school to sponsor, we try to choose a school that is "most in need" and where our efforts will truly benefit. Last year, we chose to sponsor Bellevue Elementary in Atwater. Although, the coat drive was successful, we had minimal support from the participants.

This year, we chose to sponsor Planada Elementary School. The YOP mentors and EMPOWER advisors are working hard with their participants to involve them in the coat drive. The participants will do the work, by finding people to sponsor a child or by fundraising. They will also be involved in the purchasing and distribution of the coats; so that they can visually see who is benefiting from their efforts. We plan to distribute the coats on November 17th, at Planada School.

It is the hope of our program to make this an available community service activity every year. With each passing year, we hope to have the full support of the community and active participation of all the participants.

10) <u>EMPOWER Success Stories:</u>

Juan Olvera was a participant that started with Jobs for California Graduates. When EMPOWER took over, Juan was already enrolled into the General Business Occupations class offered at Central Valley Opportunity Center. It was soon determined that this was not the class that Juan was interested in attending; he was missing classes and was advised that he would be dropped from the program. Eventually, Juan did complete the class and received a certificate. Afterwards, Juan attended an EMPOWER Employability

Workshop where he displayed that he had excellent verbal and communication skills. He completed the workshop and began looking for work.

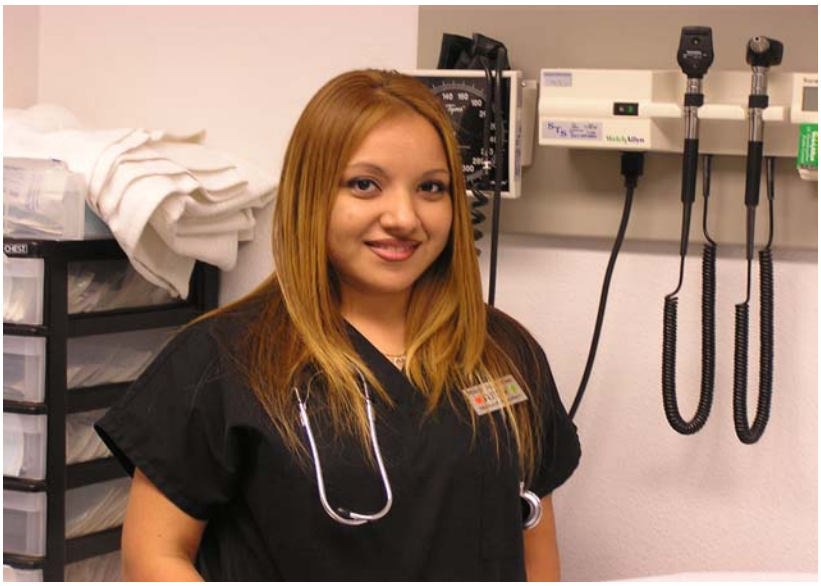
After a couple of meetings with his advisor, Rebecca Garcia, it became apparent to her that Juan was not doing what he loved to do. "He was really interested in working on computers and not working with computers." Rebecca then enrolled Juan into the ROP Computer Repair and Maintenance class. Juan received his A+ Certification in less than 4 months. While enrolled in the CR & M class, Juan also had to opportunity to complete work experience hours. He completed his work experience hours at Merced Adult School as a Computer Technician.

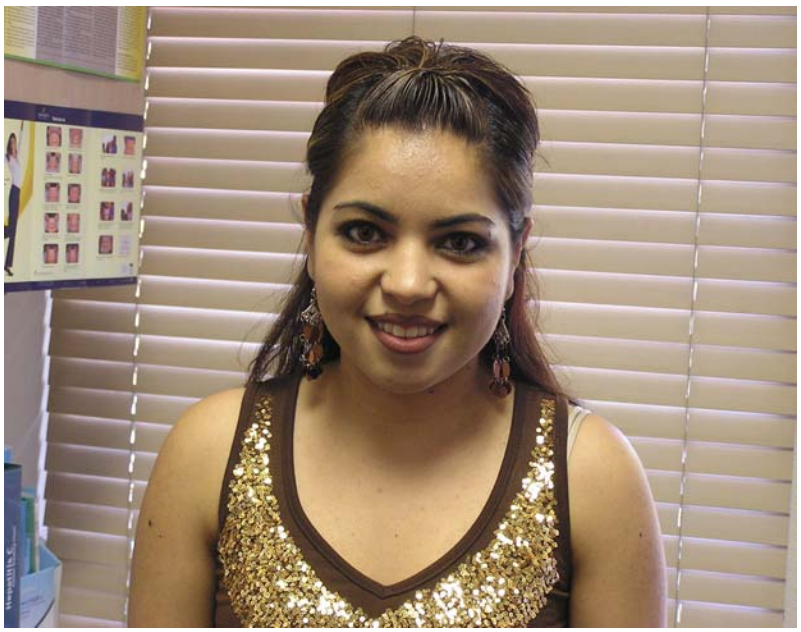
Several months later, Juan gained full-time employment with Cingular Wireless as a Customer Service Representative, but after couple of months, Juan was not working at Cingular anymore and out looking for work again. Ms Garcia was concerned, and tried to contact Juan at home; at that time Juan's mother told Rebecca that he had applied for a job with Merced City School District.

On 10/19/05, Ms. Garcia received an E-mail from Juan to let her know that he was employed as the Computer Lab Coordinator at Hoover Middle School. Rebecca is very happy and excited for him, "Juan, like many participants in our program, had barriers that he had to overcome. I know that Juan will go far in life because he is highly intelligent and determined young man."

Yuridia Fernandez and Sara Fernandez were both enrolled into the EMPOWER Program in May 2004. They both decided to attend the Medical Assistant Program offered through the Merced College Extension on Ashby Road. At that time, there was a waiting list for the Medical Assisting Program, and the girls had to wait until August to start the class. While they waited, both Sara and Yuridia completed the Employability Workshop and participated in The EMPOWER Zone. At The EMPOWER Zone, where the participants have a chance to present their employment portfolios to community members, both girls scored high on all the rubrics.

When both the girls started the Medical Assisting Program in August, they were faced with several barriers. The girls overcame the barriers that they were faced with and continued to move forward towards their goal of becoming Medical Assistants. Yuridia was the first to complete the class. She completed the class hours and her externship in June 2005. Sara fell behind in the class, and did not complete her class hours and externship until July 2005.





Yuridia was the first to successfully obtain full-time employment with Mercy Urgent Care where she started on July 2005. Sara followed right behind her sister by gaining full-time employment with Dr. Munnangi in August 2005. I recently spoke with Sara and Yuridia and they are both very happy at their places of employment. Yuridia has a busy schedule, working full-time and being a single parent of two young boys. Sara is busy as well, working full-time and looking forward to continuing her education.

Mai Kay Lee was enrolled into the Empower program on 10/26/04. When she first came to the Empower program, Mai did not have any work experience or knowledge of work expectations. She was also "Basic Skills Deficient" in reading. We invited her to attended our Portfolio Workshops, which she gladly attended all three. She learned various foundations of work readiness through these workshops. I then placed Mai at Anberry Rehabilitation Hospital as a part of her work experience. Mai was

able to demonstrate what she had learned from our workshops and quickly adapted to Anberry's daily routine. Mai made such an impression through her work skills and work ethics that after her work experience hours ended, Anberry offered Mai part-time employment. During this time, Mai also worked on her reading through our Plato Lab. She was able to help herself achieve a higher level of reading. Mai has expressed her gratitude with the help of the Empower program and with her success.

C. Past Quarter Deficiencies: none

D. Past Quarter recruiting and marketing efforts:

Recruiting efforts for EMPOWER were 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. Participant Enrollments and Follow-ups as of September 30th, 2005:

Total number of active participant enrollments:	**(273 in August)**	**280**
Total number of participants in follow-up:	**(244 in August)**	**94**

F. Next quarter challenges: WIA Common Measures Policy

G. Technical assistance needed: Available training on WIA Common Measures

H. 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.