



County WIB and Youth Council Support Foster Youth Through Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S.

“In California, within two to four years of emancipation, 51 percent of foster youth were unemployed,” says Amy Fonzo, executive director, WIB of Ventura County. Through a grant from the state Employment Development Department, the WIB of Ventura County, through its Youth Council, implemented a pilot project to expand and enhance the current services available to foster youth.

With specialized employment and training services, Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. (Teens Reaching for Employment Now and Developing Self-Sufficiency) successfully changed the lives of many foster youth in Ventura County. “The project was completed in June but, through its implementation, self-sustaining networks were established that continue to work toward the cause,” Fonzo says.

The project targeted foster youth ages 16-21, with a primary focus on emancipating or recently emancipated youth ages 18-19. “T.R.E.N.D.S.S. was designed to increase the employment and earnings of foster youth and help them reach self-sufficiency as adults,” Fonzo says. Services included career counseling, information on local employers and occupations, vocational training, subsidized work experience, job preparation workshops, job placement assistance and follow-up support to ensure long-term success.

“The services, geared for foster youth on the verge of emancipation, prepared the youth for employment through education, training and work experience,” Fonzo says. “If they were 18 or over and no longer in the foster care system, T.R.E.N.D.S.S. career counselors helped them obtain education and skills training to become employed or increase their income.”

Grant funds have also helped Ventura County’s Youth Council and a variety of youth service providers implement a common system for serving foster youth, keeping track of their progress and referring them to resources within their community.

Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S. provided at least 35 foster youth throughout Ventura County with career counseling, information on local employers and occupations, vocational training, subsidized work experience, job preparation workshops, job placement assistance, and follow-up support to ensure long-term success.

Participating partners included: the County of Ventura Children and Family Services Department; Ventura College Foster Youth Program; Ventura County Superintendent of Schools; Independent Living Program; County of Ventura Probation Agency; Interface Children Family Services; and the County’s Business and Employment Services Department.

The WIB of Ventura County promotes workforce development in the county by integrating employment, training, education, and business services for job seekers, youth and employers. These services are provided through the Workforce Investment Network (WIN), a partnership of private and public organizations.

To find out more about this program and other youth services sponsored by the WIB of Ventura County, please call (805) 240-7062 or visit www.wib.ventura.org.

To view a copy of the YCidea on this project, [click here](#) or go to www.nww.org/yci/ycideas.htm.

Eager for Success A Success Story for Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S.



Lisa with Randy Dalton, T.R.E.N.D.S.S. Career Counselor, and Miguel Orozco, director of the Ventura Job & Career Center

When her brother enrolled in Project T.R.E.N.D.S.S., Lisa said, “Hey, what about me? I’m a foster youth and I want to work.” At the time, Lisa was just a few months shy of turning 16 and felt disappointed at the thought of

having to wait until she was 16 to enroll. Two days after her birthday, she called Randy Dalton, her brother’s career counselor, to talk about the prospects of finding a job and having Youth Services help her choose a career.

With a job already in mind, Lisa quickly completed an individualized skills assessment. The results perplexed her because they revealed that she had many capabilities beyond her original career goal of becoming a cosmetologist. A junior at Ventura High School, Lisa was active in a variety of school activities, including cheerleading, water polo and swimming. She knew she had strong communication skills and enjoyed public speaking, but she felt unsure of taking on the additional schooling of a 4-year college or university.

Lisa completed Job Search Workshops in resume writing and interviewing techniques, and job search and labor market research. She used the skills she learned through the workshops in her interview with Miguel Orozco, director of the Ventura College Job & Career Center. Miguel liked Lisa’s positive can-do-attitude and accepted her at the center for a work experience opportunity.

After her experience as a resource center assistant at the Job & Career Center, Lisa said that she felt more confident in her abilities to communicate, guide and work with people. The staff at the center commented on her positive outlook and her ability to effectively communicate information to the public.

Lisa learned in the Job Search Workshops that it is easier to find a job when you have a job, so she began her job search before completing her work experience at the center. She applied for a lifeguard position at the Ventura YMCA. The personnel manager was impressed with her application and, after interviewing Lisa, hired her as a children’s swimming instructor.

Lisa is grateful for the information, resources and skills she gained through T.R.E.N.D.S.S. She has set higher goals for herself in the field of communications and public speaking. “The work experience opportunity was the best part for me because it opened my eyes to the possibilities of my future. Thanks!”