



from the executive director

Thousands have lost their livelihood, their home, or sadly, both. Now, more than ever, Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission is working tirelessly to help those Fresno County residents affected by the ailing economy, survive. EOC offers a range of services including nutritional assistance to pregnant women and their children 0 to 5 years of age, no- to low-cost reproductive health care, energy assistance, and employment and training services for job seekers including resume building, job placement, and job search skills workshops.

One program in particular is giving youth and young adults a second chance to succeed in life. While many have turned their backs on Fresno County's gang members, our Local Conservation Corps' California Gang Reduction and Intervention Program – also known as CalGRIP – is helping former gang members, and those with a desire to leave the gang lifestyle, gain job skills while earning a paycheck. This 13-week paid on-the-job training program provides young men and women with the knowledge, experience, and confidence needed to seek jobs in vocational trades. CalGRIP also offers a similar program, though non-paid, to incarcerated youth. Our goal is to prepare these youth with the skills and discipline needed to enter the workforce once they are released. Read "Getting a Grip on Life" to find out more about CalGRIP and its awareness component for students attending Teilman Community Day School.

Many of our programs, such as CalGRIP, would not be possible without the guidance and support of the Agency's Board of Commissioners. These community members volunteer diligently to ensure EOC's future growth and success. Find out who comprises our Board of Commissioners in the article "Welcome Aboard."

In this edition of Change, you will also learn about our Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) and how it too is helping and preparing youth – specifically pregnant or parenting teens and their children – for a brighter future. Case management services offered by the program, which was established 24 years ago in 1985, have helped thousands of teen parents achieve their personal and educational or vocational goals. The program also ensures healthy pregnancy outcomes, aims to reduce incidents of subsequent teenage pregnancies, and provides teen parents with nurturing and positive networking opportunities. In "Parenting 101: Learning the Ropes," discover how AFLP has helped one local teen mom thrive.

Our programs alone cannot meet all of the community's needs, especially the growing needs of western Fresno County residents hit both by the drought and economic downturn. Once again, we are turning to you; help a neighbor in need stay afloat by donating gently used clothes and nonperishable food items to local charities. You can also make a tax-deductible financial contribution to EOC's Crisis Relief Fund online at www.eoccrisisrelieffund.org, by phone at 263.1030, or mail checks or money orders payable to Crisis Relief Fund to EOC Crisis Relief Fund, 1920 Mariposa Mall, Suite 310, Fresno, CA 93721. Monies raised will help pay for food distributed at local food drives and other needs deemed necessary by a community advisory board.

Warm regards,

Roger Palomino
Executive Director

Parenting 101: Learning the Ropes



Frankie Cortez spends the day outside playing with her daughters.

Frankie Cortez is the first to admit – she was a child having a child. Confused and overwhelmed, the then 17 year-old knew she needed the help and guidance necessary to become a great parent and teacher for her child; she also needed the support from a team of people who believed in her.

"My doctor referred me to various programs including EOC's Adolescent Family Life Program," recalls Cortez. "I tried most of them, but stayed with

EOC's program because it offered more one-on-one attention, was convenient – my case manager came to my house – and taught me interactive, hands-on parenting methods. I didn't just sit down and listen to presentations, I was able to roll my sleeves up and practice."

Since its inception in 1985, EOC's Adolescent Family Life Program – or AFLP – has helped over 4,800 pregnant and parenting teens like Frankie Cortez. The program: ensures

positive pregnancy outcomes for mothers and infants; promotes healthy family relationships; assists teens in completing their educational or vocational goals; provides positive interventions to prevent teen pregnancy in high-risk groups; and

"We want these young parents to be **Confident, Independent, and prepared to face the World.**"

helps young parents become emotionally, socially and economically self-sufficient. "We want these young parents to be confident, independent, and prepared to face the world," says AFLP Manager Christy Gorden.

Recently, the program started to focus on increasing male involvement and participation. "Only about 20% of our clients are males," explains Gorden. In 2008, AFLP extended its services to young men incarcerated at Elkhorn Correctional Facility. Case managers meet with the young fathers and provide follow-up services once they're released. "Most of these young men have not had much time to interact with their child. They're going to have to learn how to interact with them and how to positively discipline them. We'll be there to answer any questions they may have," says Gorden.

In addition to its case management services, AFLP offers monthly workshops covering a range of topics including relationships, positive

discipline, gangs, substance abuse, and money management. Throughout the year, the program also hosts events for the young parents and parents-to-be. "What's nice about attending the events is that you see other people who are just like you; we're able to relate to each other," says Cortez. She adds, "It also gives us a chance to teach our children how to interact with other kids their age." Though her time as an AFLP participant is nearing its end, Frankie, now 19 years old, is grateful for all the program has taught her.



AFLP participants must be a young woman up to age 20 years or a young man up to age 21 years; male clients must be actively involved in caring for the child/children be pregnant and/or parenting

Services are provided to eligible clients regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, or physical, developmental, or mental disability, and are offered in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

Learn more about EOC's Adolescent Family Life Program! Call Christy Gorden, program manager, at 263.1395.

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EOC is an integral catalyst of positive change in our community. We are helping people and changing lives through various events and services.

EOC continues to explore new ways to inspire change and make our community a better place. In just the past few months EOC has been responsible for instituting real change.

in this issue

Getting a Grip on Life

They want to save their own lives and change their life around; they are some of Fresno County's most notorious men and women – gang members. Meet a former gang associate who, with the help of the California Gang Reduction and Intervention Program, has transformed his life and has become a productive and contributing member of our community.

Welcome Aboard!

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a passionate, dedicated, and diverse Board of Commissioners to ensure that EOC is meeting the needs of our community. Find out who your area representative is and how they are making a difference.

Parenting 101: Learning the Ropes

Being a parent is tough. Being a teen parent is even tougher. Learn how case managers in EOC's Adolescent Family Life Program are helping pregnant and parenting youth develop parenting skills and build the confidence needed to succeed.

Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission



Getting A Grip on Life

Reflecting on the life he thought he was destined to live and what he has achieved since his time behind bars, 21-year-old Arthur Jacuinde grins and says, "I saw myself going nowhere, doing nothing. And now ... I'm doing all of these great things with my life!"



Arthur (left) with fellow 2009 Corpsmember of the Year award recipients.

The former gang member has worked tirelessly to turn his life around. Institutionalized at the tender age of 17 for assault with a deadly weapon with a gang enhancement, Arthur quickly realized that some aspects of his life needed to change. "Other inmates – gang members – shared their stories with me. They talked about how hard they worked to get out of CYA but would be locked up again almost immediately if they were involved in or linked to a fight once released," he recalls. "I didn't want to go through that cycle. I knew things needed to be different for me."

And different, they were. Arthur enrolled in EOC's Local Conservation Corps' (LCC) YouthBuild program – an employment and training program that helps young adults,

ages 18 – 24 years, work toward their diploma or GED while learning job skills in construction and developing life and leadership skills. After successful completion of YouthBuild, during which he earned his high school diploma from EOC's School of Unlimited Learning (SOUL), and on the advice of his parole agent, Arthur signed up for LCC's California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention Program. The program, better known as CalGRIP, is an initiative by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger that targets state and federal funding toward local anti-gang efforts, including job training, education, and intervention programs.

CalGRIP is made up of three components: a 13-week paid on-the-job training program for 18 – 24 year olds; a non-paid job training program for incarcerated males 14 – 18 years old; and an awareness component, the Another Way Program, offered to high school students attending Teilman Community Day School. Each participant receives support services including case management, counseling, and mentoring by faith-based leaders.

While participants enrolled in the job training program obtain skills in construction, landscaping, network cabling, and welding, students in the Another Way Program are encouraged to take steps toward a positive future as they tour education institutions like Fresno City College and California State University, Fresno. CalGRIP Program Manager Marcelino Salazar explains, "We want students to realize that they are in control of their life; that the decisions they make today will affect their future. Do they want to live out their days behind prison walls or do they want more? something better?"

Since the program's inception in early 2008, CalGRIP has helped more than 80 released offenders and gang members gain job skills and remain gang-free; twenty youth at Elkhorn Correctional Facility have also benefited from the program.

To many, like Arthur, CalGRIP is more than job training; it's a second chance in life. "I feel I can accomplish more," he exclaims. "I now know that hard work and

"I know that hard work and dedication really do pay off."

dedication really do pay off. It's not easy. I just try and do my best everyday."

This is only the beginning for this determined young man. From a pool of 26,000 corpsmembers nationally, Arthur was selected as one of six honored as The Corps Network's 2009 Corpsmember of the Year. He was honored during the Annual Corps Forum in February in Washington, DC. "We are very proud of Arthur," adds Salazar. "He exemplifies success and everything CalGRIP and the Corps stand for."

In January, Arthur successfully completed the 13-week on-the-job training program with CalGRIP. He is now working full-time with the Local Conservation Corps as a Corpsmember and serves as the Corpsmember Council President. Arthur dreams of one day becoming a firefighter. He is currently on the waiting list for the Fire Academy at Fresno City College and says, "Until then I will continue to build my resume and take paramedic classes. I may have fallen off the bandwagon in the past, but I'm back on and not letting go!"



Francisco Vizcarrondo, 2008 Corpsmember of the Year award recipient, helps Arthur clean up demolition site.



Individuals interested in participating in CalGRIP must:

- be a validated gang member, at risk of gang membership, or gang supporter
- be a Fresno County resident
- be between the ages of 14 – 24
- be enrolled in school
- have the desire to leave the gang lifestyle

For more eligibility requirements or information about the program, please contact Marcelino or Veronica at 559.264.1048.

Welcome Aboard!



Top Row (left to right): Moses Stites, Pastor Rufus Fruge, Dr. Lee Farley, Vong Mouanoutoua, Tim Bakman, Rev. Paul McCoy, Jose Ramirez, Jess Saldana, Peter Vang, J. Homer Leija, Randy Kevorkian. Bottom Row (left to right): Charles Garabedian, Jr., Tito Lucero, George Finley, Sr., Jimi Rodgers, Theresa Hernandez, Daniel Renteria

The Executive Director and staff of Fresno County EOC welcome its newest Board Commissioner and the Commission's recently elected officers.

Lori R. Mayfield joined EOC's tripartite Board of Commissioners in January. Eight of the twenty-four members are public elected officials or their designee; another eight members are from the business sector, public agencies, and community groups; and the remaining eight members are elected low-income target area representatives from throughout Fresno County. Ms. Mayfield was appointed to the Commission by the juvenile courts division.

Congratulations are also extended to the newly elected and re-elected officers: Board Chair Moses Stites, First Vice Chair Jess Saldana, Second Vice Chair Pastor Rufus Fruge, and Treasurer Peter Vang.

Board Commissioners serve as community representatives and directors of EOC. They bring forth the needs of the area they represent, and, as a team utilizing the Agency as its main resource, find ways of alleviating these concerns. We thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to the Agency's growth and success.

Elected Representatives

Jose Antonio Ramirez – Target Area A
Juanita Veliz – Target Area B
J. Homer Leija – Target Area C
Jess Saldana – Target Area D
Pastor Rufus Fruge – Target Area E
Daniel Renteria – Target Area F
Eugene Rico – Target Area G
D. Randy Kevorkian – Target Area H

Community Sector Representatives

Charles Garabedian, Jr. – Malaga County Water District
Theresa Hernandez – Foster Grandparents
Tito A. Lucero – Head Start County-Wide Policy Council
Rev. Paul McCoy – NAACP
Vongsavanh Mouanoutoua – Lao Evangelical Church of Fresno
Esther Padilla – CA Transplant Donor Network
Jimi Rodgers – Association of Black Social Workers Vacant Seat

Representatives of Public Officials

Tim Bakman – 14th Senatorial District
Dr. Lee Farley – Community Colleges
Lori R. Mayfield – Juvenile Courts
George A. Finley, Sr. – Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Marina Magdaleno – Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Peter Vang – 30th Assembly District
Moses Stites – 31st Assembly District
Rev. E. Swillis – Fresno Mayor's Appointment



Commissioner Marina Magdaleno with Dennis Bachelor, Energy Coordinator, during an Agency Strategy Committee meeting.