



from the executive director

With the help of our dedicated Board of Commissioners, staff, and community partners, Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission continues to address symptomatic issues of poverty.

This year, we are celebrating 43 years of helping low-income individuals become self-sufficient. During this time, some of our programs – like our Health Services Clinic – have changed, offering more services and programs. In this edition of Change, read “Protecting Your Health” and learn about the medical services and programs available at our Clinic. From health-based educational programs to cancer screening, from physical exams to Hepatitis immunization, and from pregnancy testing to prenatal care – the Clinic helps low-income, uninsured and underinsured Fresno County residents care for their reproductive health.

We’ve also seen the development of new partnerships – in particular, a partnership with some very unlikely people in an unconventional place. In “Help From Behind Prison Walls” discover how a convicted murderer, his fellow inmates, and his correctional officer are helping runaway and homeless youth. The inmate, Mr. Brian Fowlie, shows us how anyone and everyone is capable

of helping others in need and how a simple act of kindness can affect dozens of lives. I want to thank Mr. Fowlie, the men at Vacaville Prison, and Mr. Fowlie’s correctional officer for caring about our youth.

Throughout the years, we have created new programs to address social issues; EOC has developed a program in which incarcerated youth learn building maintenance and repair techniques. The goal of the program: to curb recidivism by providing these youth with the tools necessary to succeed. The article, “Incarcerated Youth: Building Character and Confidence One Project at a Time,” tells us more about this hands-on program and the youth it is helping.

The year is young! We look forward to establishing new partnerships, developing services, and expanding existing programs in 2008. To all of you who continue to work with EOC to make our community a better place, I thank you.

Warm regards,

Roger Palomino
Executive Director

Incarcerated Youth: Building Character and Confidence One Project at a Time



“Paint the lid,” “hand me the jitterbug,” and “hold the smart end of the tape.” These are just some of the terms Jon Fernandez uses with his students, young inmates at Elkhorn Correctional Facility, participating in EOC’s Incarcerated Youth Program - Building Maintenance & Repair Training Project. Fresno County’s Probation Department operates the correctional facility.

Four days a week, two and a half hours a day, Jon teaches these young men trade skills; among them electrical, carpentry and framing, construction, welding and metal cutting, and landscape and maintenance. He also focuses on safety practices and OSHA requirements. “Our goal is to help curb recidivism by giving these teens something else to focus on when they get out into the real world,” says the second-year instructor. “I constantly tell these young men that, when they get back into the ‘real world’, everything is going to be the same way

it was before they were incarcerated. To succeed, they need to be the change. They need to be what’s different.”

Participants practice their techniques by building a one-room studio. Here, they learn how to install a door, window, electrical outlet, lighting fixture, toilet and sink, and how to sheet rock and paint. Once they’ve completed the project, the students must disassemble the structure so the next class can have the same hands-on experience.

The young inmates also work on projects around Elkhorn Correctional Facility. One of their biggest undertakings to date has been the restoration of an assault simulation course. The students were responsible for framing the structure, erecting new walls, running electrical wiring, installing doors, and painting.

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“I am extremely proud of all of my students, I know deep down inside, they are proud of themselves too.”

The popular training program started in March of 2006 and has an unprecedented success rate. As a result of the training, 80 cadets who successfully completed the training became employed after they were released from Elkhorn.

EOC coordinates and provides job or apprenticeship opportunities to the students who have demonstrated their abilities and competency of job-specific entry-level skills. Youth released from Elkhorn can also receive additional training through our Local Conservation Corps (LCC). Upon completion, LCC provides participants with continued training and employment within YouthBuild, a youth and community development program administered by LCC.

Steve Sanchez*, former gang member and Building Maintenance & Repair Training Project graduate, credits the program for helping him begin a new life that has allowed him to become successful. After being released from Elkhorn, Steve was hired through the YouthBuild Program; a month later he enrolled in classes at Fresno City College. “I am extremely proud of all of my students,” exclaims Jon. “And, I know deep down inside, they are proud of themselves too.”

*Name has been changed to protect identity of minor.



2008 Recognition Roundup

EOC Employees Honored During the Annual Recognition Luncheon

Hard work does not go unnoticed! Each year, EOC celebrates employees’ hard work and dedication during our Annual Recognition Luncheon – a festivity that commemorates employees’ milestones such as years of service and perfect or exemplary attendance; as well as Community Action All Stars, individuals who perform above and beyond their duty.

Almost 200 employees were honored at this year’s Old West-themed event held at the Fresno Convention Center.

Congratulations to this year’s award recipients!

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Feature Story EOC’s Health Services Clinic

Protecting Your Health

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

Protecting Your Health

Learn about EOC's Health Services Clinic and the variety of healthcare services it offers low-income, uninsured, or underinsured Fresno County residents.

Help From Behind Prison Walls

Concerned inmates in a Northern California prison partner up with EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services by supplying toiletries and nonperishable food items for runaway and homeless teens and young families.

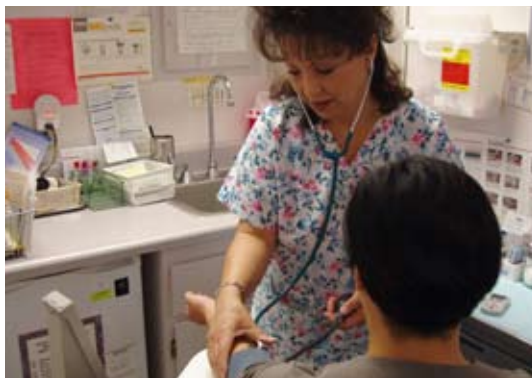
Incarcerated Youth: Building Character and Confidence One Project at a Time

Building Maintenance and Repair Project-Based Training at Elkhorn Correctional Facility fosters personal and professional growth for dozens of incarcerated youth.



Protecting Your Health

Fresno County leads the state in Chlamydia rates and is ranked number two for cases of gonorrhea. According to a preliminary report issued late last year by the California Department of Health, in 2006, 5,300 Chlamydia cases – 581.9 cases per 100,000 – and an estimated 4,100 cases of gonorrhea – 161.5 cases per 100,000 – were validated in Fresno County.



“We have the resources needed to help them make informed decisions.”

EOC's Health Services Clinic is helping reduce these numbers by guiding men, women, and teens in making responsible decisions regarding their reproductive health. Since 1971, the professional and seasoned staff has cared for over 150,000 Fresno County residents, providing them with programs and services that help them better understand their reproductive organs as well as the consequences of unprotected sex. “Unfortunately, some members of our community don't have enough information about sex, STIs, and reproductive cancers,” says Medical Director Dr. David Dowis.

The clinic takes a proactive approach to reproductive care by carrying out educational and outreach programs such as TeenSMART, Teen Connection, and Male Services Program. “We concentrate our efforts on teens and men because it's not likely they will come in and see us on their own. Men and youth visit health providers for preventive health care less often than women and have few opportunities to obtain basic information about their own reproductive health care,” says Program Director Gilda Arreguin. She adds, “We go out into the community – to the labor camps, schools, and community events – and initiate a relationship with the people there; we talk to them about the clinic and anticipate that the information we provide motivates them to take control of their health.”

Two such programs, TeenSMART and Teen Connection, provide extended counseling services to teens 19 years and younger. While both programs focus on helping individuals make smart decisions about sex-related issues, Teen Connection also focuses on family life skills, career development, male responsibility, and health education.

Baby Think It Over – a popular component of Teen Connection – helps 12 to 14 year-olds explore the physical, emotional, social, and financial responsibilities of parenthood. For one weekend, teens take home an infant simulator. “This ‘baby’ is programmed to cry at random times throughout the day and night. It needs to be fed, diaper changed, even rocked to sleep,” Arreguin explains. “Meanwhile, an internal computer records the teen's interactions with the doll. By the end of the weekend, most teens are ready to be teens again, not parents.”

Another outreach program, the Male Services Program, strives to increase the number of men, 25 and over, who receive reproductive medical attention. It also promotes access to healthcare for migrant and seasonal agricultural workers of childbearing age, specifically those whose primary languages are Laotian, Mixteco, and Spanish. “Information to these populations is very limited,” says Arreguin. “We have the resources – information and staff – needed to help them make informed decisions.”

“By the end of the weekend, most teens are ready to be teens again, not parents.”

The Health Services Clinic also offers other confidential, comprehensive services including physical exams; prenatal care services and referrals; pregnancy testing and counseling; sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment; reproductive organ cancer screenings; birth control methods; tuberculosis testing; limited school/work exams; and Hepatitis B immunizations. The clinic accepts Medi-Cal, Health Net, Blue Cross, and private pay insurances. Staff is also available to help eligible individuals enroll in Family Planning Access Care Treatment, or Family PACT, a state program that gives men, women, and teens access to free family planning services.

“All in all,” says Dr. Dowis, “we want to become a medical home for low-income individuals and families in Fresno County – that is, a place where they can receive friendly, quality service, confidential, and comprehensive medical attention.”



Health Services Clinic is located at 1047 “R” Street, between Fresno and Tulare streets, in downtown Fresno. To schedule an appointment or learn more about our services, please call 559.499.1690.

Help From Behind Prison Walls

Vacaville inmate leads effort to help Fresno County's homeless teens



Louie (L), Sanctuary Custodian, assists correctional officer (R) unload donations.

Serving a prison sentence for a murder he committed in 1988, Brian Fowlie is leading an innovative effort from his Vacaville prison cell to help some of the neediest and often most forgotten children – runaway and homeless youth. Eager to make a difference in the life of these teens, Fowlie and his fellow inmates started a food and hygiene supplies collection for EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services.

Fowlie, in his correspondence with Sanctuary Youth Services staff, writes, “I can't guarantee much, but there are

a handful of guys in here with me who wish to contribute to the welfare of children.” Fowlie and the other inmates use money earned from their prison jobs or money given to them by relatives to purchase selected items from the canteen. These items – such as shampoo, toothpaste, soap and snack foods like graham crackers and peanut butter and jelly packets – are used to create care packages for Sanctuary Outreach to the Streets (SOS), an outreach program that offers youth and young families living on the streets crisis intervention and basic needs assistance. “This has been an absolute blessing for us,” says Sanctuary director Stacie Hines.

“These items allow us to serve more teens, more families living out on the

“I left home when I was 14.”

streets. A mere ‘thank you’ cannot express our gratitude.”

“Those two boys that I left fatherless have been a motivating factor in me finding ways to help kids,” writes Fowlie. “The responsibility I carry for taking someone else's opportunity from them is something I take very seriously and am grateful for every chance I get to make a difference in someone's life.”

Brian's passion to help this isolated group also stems from his childhood. “I left home when I was 14,” explains Brian in his second letter to Sanctuary Youth Services. “I know what it is like to be a kid on the street trying to be a man. I don't know that anything anybody could have told me would have changed the road I set out on. I just don't know. I do know that every kid needs to know they matter, they have value and they are loved, shown that they are loved, not just told they are loved.”

To date, Fowlie and other Vacaville prison inmates have mailed two care packages; he plans on mailing a package every other month which gives him, he says, “two months worth of canteen draws to work and by that time my dorm mates are tired of the collection piling up around my bed area.”

Brian has also gotten his correctional officer, Medene, involved. Earlier this year, Medene drove down from Vacaville and delivered over 150 backpacks to be distributed to young clients. He plans on making another trip to the Valley shelter later this year, where he will bring television sets donated by inmates.

Hines adds, “Youth who benefit from the donated items do not have contact with the inmates, but are aware of how we receive the toiletries and backpacks and are grateful for their generosity.”



Change the life of homeless, runaway, or otherwise displaced youth. To find out how, call Sanctuary Youth Services at 559.498.8543



Two case managers display newly donated backpacks