

A NEW COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN YOUTH

Pathways to Adulthood

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

Turning Passion into Action



Paving the Way...

Community Foundation as Investor in Promising Concepts

On the path of life, the steps we take toward adulthood are arguably among our biggest, bumpiest, most intimidating, and most thrilling.

- How can we as a community ease the transition for youth?
- What road maps and test drives can we offer?
- Youth in San Luis Obispo County have a lot of opportunities, but they've also been missing a lot.

**They need jobs.
They crave more
meaningful
interaction with
adults.
They want to
participate.**

Present this challenge to a collaborative group of schools, youth, nonprofit organizations, and businesses, and good ideas start to flow. Add money to test the ideas in practice, and solutions take shape.

The San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation has created this fertile environment for collective creativity through an innovative new “proactive partnership” grantmaking approach supported with generous funding from the James Irvine Foundation.

YOUTH CAREER EXPLORATION AND MENTORING PROJECT (YCEMP)

The transition to adulthood looms largest for older teens as they approach the end of high school. YCEMP provides a rich opportunity for youth at this stage of life to engage with, observe and learn from adults in a variety of settings, including a rotation of career site visits, a classroom-based employability skills course, and one-on-one mentor match-ups. Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Luis Obispo County oversees YCEMP in collaboration with school partners (currently two public continuation high schools and a charter home study program) and a local Boys and Girls Club, whose staff teach the employability skills course at each school. A local transportation company provides discounted service to career site visits at 20 local businesses. YCEMP program graduates number 50 after three program cycles.

THE FIRE STATION AND THE RADIO STATION: TWO YCEMP LIFE-CHANGING MENTORING MOMENTS

Adi and Bianca weren't expecting much when they went to their career site visits on an afternoon last fall. KVEC radio station and host Dave Congalton saw Adi's potential immediately and now she's the talk show's high school correspondent. Bianca had been in the dark about her career interests before being wowed so much by her experience at the fire station that she is now a cadet applicant.

YCEMP AT PACIFIC BEACH CONTINUATION SCHOOL: AN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP AMONG EDUCATION, NONPROFITS, BUSINESS

Pacific Beach is a welcome alternative for many students who thrive best in a small-school setting with a focus on close faculty supervision and emotional support. The school places strong emphasis on career planning, and has welcomed its new partnership with the YCEMP program to enhance students' practical experience engaging with adults in real-world settings. This successful collaboration has opened the school's doors to an array of community resources that make up the program: lead organization Big Brothers Big Sisters, workshop organizer Boys and Girls Club of South SLO County, off-campus driver Ride-On Transportation, and a dozen career site hosts (TekTegrity, SLO City Reclamation, Embassy Suites, and many more). Two other schools have followed Pacific Beach's lead to partner with YCEMP: Del Rio Continuation School in Atascadero, and Family Partnership Charter School in San Luis Obispo.

Blazing New Trails...

Community Foundation as Convener and Partner to Foster Systems Change

This coming-of-age question is one of society's oldest, and one of its most current. It deserves open, continued and collaborative attention by our whole community. Through its new "proactive partnership" grantmaking model, Pathways to Adulthood, the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation has created a fertile context for innovation and systems change in the youth development field, with the following open invitations along the way...

What do our teens need from communities to help pave their way toward adulthood?

DIALOGUE: The SLO County Community Foundation launched the Pathways to Adulthood initiative by gathering with over 50 youth-serving organizations throughout the county and encouraging participation in a cross-sector dialogue about needs and possibilities for youth on their journey toward independence. The big themes? Career focused-mentor relationships with adults, career exploration opportunities, and viable jobs.

PLAN TOGETHER: Inter-organizational, inter-generational collaboration were the basis for pursuit of good ideas along these themes. Two planning groups emerged out of initial dialogue that worked across sectors and with youth to design concrete projects. Foundation staff were actively engaged in both planning efforts, including seed funding and technical assistance.

TEST GOOD IDEAS IN PRACTICE: Two new program models began to take shape on the ground with implementation grant funding through the Pathways to Adulthood program. Teens at Work cultivates the talents, leadership and work ethic of younger teens, while the Youth Exploration and Career Mentoring Program helps older teens build relationships, work-readiness skills and career contacts with adults.

CONTINUE TO INNOVATE FOR LASTING CHANGE: The Foundation's challenge to the community does not stop with investment in two "good ideas." All dialogue participants, planners and implementation partners have been encouraged to see initial projects as springboards for broadening collaboration and best practice across the combined fields of youth development, education, and business. A new Pathways to Adulthood program phase will introduce enhancement grants to support this continued forward momentum.



TEENS AT WORK

A team of young adolescents is taking Atascadero by storm with Teens at Work, a youth-operated business “incubator” that builds leadership and work-readiness skills with coaching from adults. The program operates year-round as a partnership between Atascadero Community LINK (a local Family Resource Center) and the Atascadero Public Schools and has already drawn in more than 50 student participants over its first full year. During this time, students have created at least three successful start-up ventures: a recycling collection service serving 50 local merchants, a membership marketing service for the Charles Paddock Zoo, a bakery, and a gift card design studio. Teens at Work has a goal to become a fully self-sustaining multi-enterprise business within five years.

RECYCLING: TEENS AT WORK’S FIRST AND MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS VENTURE

Large blue bins are a common sight these days outside of 50 North County businesses. Teens at Work teams make daily collection rounds, delivering recycled materials to Atascadero Waste Alternatives. Their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit has earned \$7,000 for the program, not to mention a distinguished countywide environmental award.

Union Bank of California: SETTING THE STANDARD FOR BUSINESS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT WITH TEENS AT WORK

Linda House, Union Bank’s Atascadero Branch Manager, saw the value of Teens at Work early on when she signed the branch up as a recycling customer. Then the bank purchased zoo booster memberships from a gifted pair of Teens at Work sales reps. The bank has gone on to provide personal finance workshops and bank tours for all Teens at Work participants, many of whom end up opening savings accounts. Most recently, Union Bank joined the Community Foundation as the second grant funder of Teens at Work.

Fresh Sense of Direction... Community Foundation as a leader among learning organizations

So what about proactive partnership works? What promise does the approach hold for Foundations as we continue our efforts to inspire conversion of passion into action? We’ve learned a few important initial lessons along the way...

The creative process that Pathways to Adulthood unleashed has been made richer and more productive by our commitment to active Foundation staff guidance at every step of the way, combined with a spirit of flexibility as project ideas have changed and taken new shape.

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A new tradition of public/private sector partnership has grown out of initial meetings, with schools, social service agencies, businesses and nonprofits working hand-in-hand to create new real-world learning experiences for teens on the verge of independence.

The two organizations who have taken a lead in piloting new initiatives have both used the experience to move in new directions of service to their mission. Big Brothers Big Sisters is building on its well-established mentoring program to include a new volunteer option to mentor older youth. Atascadero Community LINK is expanding its scope of family resource services to include summer and after-school programs for early teens.

Collaboration is hard work, but is the magic ingredient that sparks sustainable change in any community. Pathways to Adulthood has the potential to establish a new culture of shared commitment, to offer a united message of “welcome” to our youth as they prepare to take their place as adults in our communities.



Pathways to Adulthood: Paved by Passionate People...

DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS *(bold indicates participants in planning and/or implementation)*

4H, Aspira, Atascadero Unified School District, Atascadero Community LINK, AVID, **Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club of South County, Cal Poly**, California Conservation Corps, California Youth Connection, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Creative Mediation, **Cuesta College, Economic Opportunity Commission**, Family Care Network, Friday Night Live (County Drug and Alcohol Services), Girl Scouts, God's Haven for Children, Junior Achievement, Latino Outreach Council, Oceano Family Resource Center, Paso Robles Police Department, Paso Robles Unified School District, Private Industry Council, Safe System of Care (S.A.F.E.), **Shoreline Goodwill Industries**, SLO Child Abuse Prevention, **SLO County Department of Social Services, SLO County Library, SLO County Office of Education**, SLO County Probation, Transitions-Mental Health Assn., United Way, Women's Shelter, Workforce Investment Board, YMCA

BUSINESS HOSTS AND CLIENTS

Atascadero Fire Department, Atascadero Parks and Rec, Charles Paddock Zoo, City of San Luis Obispo, Curves, El Camino Car Wash, Embassy Suites, First Bank of San Luis Obispo, Frame Works, Heritage Oaks Bank, Hidden Oaks Apts., Jespersen Tire, K-Mart, KVEC Radio, La Mexicana Restaurant, McPhee's Grill, Meridian Insurance, Motel 6, National Guitar, Ride-On Transportation, Rio Seco Winery, SLO City Water Reclamation, SLO City News, SLO County Fire Department, Spice Hunter, South Paw Sign Company, Taffy's, TekTegrity, The Ravine Water Park, The Tribune, 1000 Hills Pet Resort, Union Bank of California, Verdin Marketing, Ink.

PROJECT STAFF

Janice Fong Wolf (Community Foundation), Wendy Wendt (Evaluator), Sharon Young (Facilitator)

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San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation
P.O. Box 1580 SLO, CA 93406
(805) 543-2323 www.sloccf.org