

# The Flip Side of Revitalization

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

**M**arie Camacho wept as she watched “City Rising,” a new documentary about California’s housing crisis and its impact on the poor.

Why the tears?

Because like one of the desperate families in the film, Camacho and her 4-year-old son, Julian, face eviction. She must vacate their apartment in Sacramento’s Oak Park by Valentine’s Day so her landlord can renovate it and charge higher rent she cannot afford.

“I was a little teary,” Camacho, 31, said recently, after she and 125 other people watched the hour-long documentary at Sacramento’s Crest Theater (the film is also available to watch online at [kcet.org](http://kcet.org)). “I felt emotional when the lady with all those kids was evicted (in Santa Ana), with nowhere to go. I am going through the same situation.”

City Rising was produced by KCET, an educational TV station in Los Angeles, in partnership with The California Endowment. It spotlights the history of gentrification, suggesting it began in the 19th century, when Americans believed they had a divine right to expand across North America under “manifest destiny.”

Just as Native Americans were displaced in the 1850s, poor families today are being forced to abandon their neighborhoods, as old dwellings are replaced by new buildings with sky-high rents.

While examining discriminatory laws and practices that helped shape gentrification, “City Rising” follows impacted families in various cities, from Sacramento to Los Angeles.

The film contrasts gleaming new buildings — such as mighty skyscrapers in downtown Long Beach — with dilapidated nearby neighborhoods begging for investments.

In Sacramento, “City Rising” interviews former Mayor Kevin Johnson, who proudly says he had a hand in launching the \$557 million Golden 1 Center and Oak Park’s ongoing rejuvenation.

**“IF I CAN’T FIND AN AFFORDABLE PLACE, I MAY HAVE TO LIVE IN A CAR. I DON’T WANT MY SON TO BE HOMELESS.”**

Marie Camacho, Oak Park renter

But Tanya Faison of Black Lives Matter Sacramento was filmed saying the Oak Park improvements forced black families to leave the neighborhood.

Camacho, a Sacramento native, may soon move, too.

After the screening at the Crest, Camacho told her story to the moviegoers. She was on a post-movie panel that included Darryl Rutherford, executive director of the Sacramento Housing Alliance, who said luxury-apartment developers should be required to set aside some of their units for people of modest means.

According to experts, Sacramento County needs 62,000 new affordable homes to meet current



Marie Camacho at Oak Park’s main intersection, ground zero for the sector’s ongoing revitalization. Her Oak Park landlord is seeking to evict her, so he can renovate and collect higher rent.  
Photo by Edgar Sanchez

housing demands. At present, the county has an estimated 3,600 homeless.

Camacho volunteers for the nonprofit Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment ([acceaction.org](http://acceaction.org)). An excellent tenant, she is taking no chances. She recently sent Julian to live with relatives in Mexico.

“If I can’t find an affordable place, I may have to live in a car,” Camacho said. “I don’t want my son to be homeless.”

## BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.



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To watch City Rising,  
visit **KCET.org**, click on  
“Shows” at the top, then  
go to City Rising.

# Marijuana Revenues to Repair Damage from War on Drugs

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

African Americans comprise only 15 percent of Sacramento's population, yet they accounted for nearly half of the city's marijuana arrests from 2012-2016.

Of 3,323 people arrested on marijuana offenses during that period, 43 percent were black, the Sacramento Police Department said last summer, after conducting a special analysis at City Council request.

The revelation confirmed what local activists who pushed for the study had maintained: minorities in California's capital, as in other cities, have been disproportionately impacted by America's war on drugs.

Now that recreational marijuana is legal in California, Jim Keddy and Malaki Seku-Amen are in a coalition seeking drug war reparations from the city of Sacramento and the state. Just as tobacco taxes fund health programs in California, the advocates want marijuana taxes to enhance social services in local minority communities.

"People of color, particularly African Americans, paid a heavy price," said Seku-Amen, CEO of the California Urban Partnership, referring to the racist policies behind the drug war, which intensified under President Nixon.

"The typical story is that someone black was trying to escape economic bondage by dealing in marijuana," he said. "After his arrest, he faced physical bondage in jail or prison ... even though whites sell more weed and smoke more weed."

The lengthy incarceration of African Americans devastated families, Seku-Amen said, costing them home ownership, a college education and other achievements.

"Families experienced incredible trauma," added Seku-Amen, a Harvard-educated economic justice advocate.

**"PEOPLE OF COLOR, PARTICULARLY AFRICAN AMERICANS, PAID A HEAVY PRICE."**

**Malaki Seku-Amen**  
CEO, California Urban Partnership

An "equity incubator" would help repair the damage, the coalition told city officials. Under that system, some marijuana-dealing licenses would be set aside for minorities along with city-provided business loans.

In response, the City Council recently approved a \$1 million Cannabis Opportunity, Reinvestment and Equity Program that for two years will help an unspecified number of minorities enter the legal marijuana trade — without city loans. The program is good, yet more is needed, said Seku-Amen, noting he and Keddy remain in talks with the city and state.

How much the city will collect in taxes from cannabis retailers is unknown — but it will be in the millions annually. The state will collect more.



Flanking the words "social justice," Jim Keddy (left) and Malaki Seku-Amen appear confident that Sacramento will use its new marijuana sales tax for "drug war reparations" to African Americans and poor people. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

The nonprofit California Urban Partnership (CUP) receives financial support from The California Endowment. Keddy, a former Endowment vice president, is executive director of Youth Forward, a Sacramento nonprofit with a contractual relationship with CUP.

As "policy organizations," CUP and Youth Forward are not pursuing reparation grants for themselves, Keddy emphasized. Such funds would be for nonprofits providing direct services to the needy, including the formerly incarcerated.

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Youth Forward's policy on potential uses of pot taxation is summarized in "Young People & Marijuana Use," a statement at [www.youth-forward.org](http://www.youth-forward.org). For more about the California Urban Partnership, visit [californiaurbanpartnership.org](http://californiaurbanpartnership.org).

**The HUB**  
Building Healthy Communities  
[www.SacBHC.org](http://www.SacBHC.org)





# General Plans Will Include Provisions to Promote Equity

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Every so often, Sacramento city and county amend their respective general plans – the guidelines for future development.

This year, both will do so again – but with a new twist.

For the first time, the city and county will craft an environmental justice (EJ) component for their general plans in order to comply with Senate Bill 1000, elements of which went into effect on Jan. 1.

It requires that every California jurisdiction revising more than two elements of its general plan must:

- Identify its disadvantaged communities, which often bear environmental inequities;
- Create policies to reduce health risks in those communities, through such steps as improving air quality, and promoting food access, healthier homes, and physical activity, and;
- Provide equitable access to all residents during the public decision-making process. This means underserved and marginalized voices will be heard, not ignored, at public hearings.

Recognizing EJ's power, The California Endowment supports increased input by the underprivileged in the updates. It recently hired Jackie Cole, an environmental justice consultant, to educate Sacramentans about SB 1000 so they can pursue EJ for their neighborhoods.

Cole is the principal of Valenzuela Garcia Consulting, soon to become Veritable Good Consulting.

"Environmental justice means we have to make sure all community members have a voice that's strong enough to be heard by decision makers," Cole said recently. "It's our turn to shape how our communities are going to change."

Cole and California Environmental Justice Alliance will host the first of 10 public workshops on Feb. 17. Guests will learn SB 1000's requirements and its opportunities, and be better prepared to speak at the city/county public meetings, if they choose to.

**"ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEANS WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE A VOICE THAT'S STRONG ENOUGH TO BE HEARD BY DECISION MAKERS."**

**Jackie Cole**  
Environmental Justice Consultant

Officials from both jurisdictions have welcomed Cole's efforts.

"We need (the) collaboration and local knowledge of residents in our EJ communities," said John T. Lundgren, a senior planner in Sacramento County's Office of Planning and Environmental Review.

The county is preparing a new EJ element for inclusion in its general plan, which hasn't undergone a full update since 2011. Four EJ communities have been identified within the county's unincorporated area: North Highlands/Foothill Farms, North Vineyard, South Sacramento, and West Arden-Arcade. The EJ element will be added in two phases and is



Better transportation, housing and food access are top priorities for marginalized local communities, says Jackie Cole, environmental justice consultant. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

expected to be completed next year.

The City of Sacramento plans to include EJ as part of its two-year general plan update process, which will begin in mid-2018, said Remi Mendoza, an associate planner with the city's Community Development Department. The plan hasn't been updated since 2015.

*The first of 10 workshops titled "SB 1000: Planning for Environmental Justice" will be held at 1 p.m. Feb. 17 at Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, 3333 Third Ave., Sacramento.*

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For updates on SB 1000  
workshops, e-mail  
[jackie@vgconsulting.org](mailto:jackie@vgconsulting.org)

## Listening to Parolees

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Fighting back tears, a parolee spoke at a recent public forum: He said he felt discarded when he went from prison to freedom in Sacramento, where he had never been before.

Paroled to this city after more than a decade behind bars, the man said no one awaited him when he arrived here. He had an address for a local place with a bed, but he had no clue how to get there by bus — and things got no better afterward.

The man made these emotional remarks at a recent public forum hosted by the Sacramento Community Reinvestment Coalition, or SCRC, which is financially supported by The California Endowment. The broad-based SCRC is hearing people's concerns about the criminal justice system, before asking the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors to reinvest in the formerly incarcerated and their families in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

"Those who hold solutions are often those closest to the pain," said Ryan McClinton, community organizer for Sacramento ACT, on why the Sacramento Community Reinvestment Coalition wants to hear from victims of the criminal justice system.

After three forums, SCRC has identified three key issues that demand action in the county's \$4 billion-plus upcoming budget. They are:

- Better "wraparound services" for parolees under the jurisdiction of the Sacramento County Probation Department,

- More mental health/therapy services for parolees and their families, and
- More liveable-wage jobs/job training in disadvantaged communities.

By reducing the number of California prison inmates, Propositions 47 and 57 and other reform measures generate

**"THOSE WHO HOLD SOLUTIONS ARE OFTEN THOSE CLOSEST TO THE PAIN."**

**Ryan McClinton**  
Sacramento ACT

millions for Sacramento County, which controls local jails, McClinton said.

"The county has money ... to address systemic problems," he said, but it isn't spending enough to "keep people out of prison."

The county's Probation Department has good programs, McClinton said, including one in which young inmates take college classes while in juvenile detention, then enroll in community colleges upon release. But in some areas, he said, the department underperforms.

"We do our best to provide wraparound services for inmates returning from prison, but we agree there's more work to be done," said Lee Seale, the county's chief probation officer.



Ryan McClinton, community organizer for Sacramento ACT wants to hear from victims of the criminal justice system. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Seale cautioned that some parolees may be under federal or state jurisdiction and would not be served by the county. He also said the county has recently made "important investments" to enhance parolee services.

**The next SCRC forum will be at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 17, at Liberty Towers Church, 5132 Elkhorn Blvd., Sacramento.**

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# #LifeDataMatters measures success in and outside the classroom

BY ANNE STOKES

Grade point averages. Standardized testing results. Student-to-teacher ratios.

Statistical data measures students' educational attainment and schools' efforts to teach them. While a quality education has the potential to change the trajectory of one's life, the social and emotional aspects of young people's lives are equally important to their success. Such was the impetus behind #LifeDataMatters.

"As much as we put into academics ... we also need to be aware of who they are as human beings," said Marcus Strother, Sacramento City Unified School District coordinator of youth development. "As long as we are addressing the whole child, we can build them into being great human beings."

Students in SCUSD's Men's and Women's Leadership Academies (MWLA) are producing a docuseries called #LifeDataMatters to transform their educational system and make their voices heard. Strother said he hopes viewers will gain an understanding of the importance of addressing young people's social and emotional needs.

The MWLA program helps young people develop secure social and emotional foundations upon which to build academic success. The goal is to empower students to be scholars of advocacy for self, culture and community through a social justice model.

"We're definitely trying to build them academically, working with their study skills, tutoring in or outside of the classroom, but we're also looking at how to build their identity, their cultural awareness, how to help them become community advocates," Strother says.

The first of four films documents the MWLA youth council's experiences in Washington,

D.C., and premiered at the Crocker Art Museum in October. After the film is released online on March 3, future episodes will feature the work behind WLA's Girl Inspired conference, the upcoming Boys and Girls of Color Summit and the youth council's travels to Peru.

**"AS MUCH AS WE PUT INTO ACADEMICS ... WE ALSO NEED TO BE AWARE OF WHO THEY ARE AS HUMAN BEINGS."**

**Marcus Strother**  
SCUSD coordinator of youth development

"Many times young people will tell us, 'Adults don't listen to us. They don't believe that we can offer real input,'" Strother said. "[MWLA] allows them to be in a space where they feel like they get to be heard and that their authentic voice will be a good contribution to what it is we are trying to do."

Strother said The California Endowment is their strongest supporter, not just in terms of funding through their Building Healthy Communities initiative, but they've also supported the program with ideas and resources, including helping develop a stronger online presence, allowing students to better tell their stories.

"So long as we can tell our narrative right and get people to understand the work we're trying to do, everything else falls into place," Strother said.

**Starting March 3, check out the MWLA series at [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and search #LifeDataMatters.**



Students in the Men's and Women's Leadership Academies are producing a docuseries that looks at the importance of young people's social and emotional needs. Photo courtesy of SCUSD

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**#LifeDataMatters**

# Creating a Union for Renters

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Getting a landlord who cares about the well-being of tenants can be difficult — but Jovana Fajardo made it look easy.

Even if that landlord happened to be her father, his actions speak to Fajardo's persuasive talents as Sacramento director of the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE).

Two years ago, Fajardo asked her Dad, who owns rental properties in Contra Costa County, to become a member of her statewide nonprofit, which advocates for tenants' rights.

"He signed up to be a member and since then has been going to ACCE's meetings in Bay Point," Fajardo said recently.

"My father understands that what we're fighting for is fair," she added. "He hasn't raised his rents in years ... to keep good tenants in their homes."

To fight unscrupulous landlords, Fajardo is forming a Sacramento tenants' union that will advocate for tenants' rights and pressure landlords/owners to respond to unfair practices, including illegal evictions.

About 600 Sacramentans have joined the union, which is being created with the support of organized labor.

Besides attending legal-rights clinics co-sponsored by Legal Services of Northern California, members visit apartment complexes in South Sacramento and other

neighborhoods, asking residents to join ACCE's housing campaign.

Such a union was critically needed, Fajardo said.

Local landlords can collect ever-increasing rents, while, in some cases, allowing apartments to become unfit for human habitation. The city had among the nation's highest rent hikes last year, with one-bedroom apartments costing an average of more than \$1,100 a month.

**"THE MORE YOU TALK TO PEOPLE, THE MORE YOU REALIZE THIS IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE."**

**Ava Nadal**  
ACCE state representative

Mom-and-pop landlords who care about tenants are being replaced by "ruthless corporate landlords" who care only about profits, Fajardo complained, adding that tenants need protection.

ACCE leader Ava Nadal said the movement is a noble cause.

"The more you talk to people, the more you realize this is a human rights issue," Nadal, an ACCE state representative from Sacramento, told a meeting of local ACCE members. "People are suffering, and we care!"



Jovana Fajardo, Sacramento director of ACCE, says a tenants' union will protect renters from unfair practices and illegal evictions. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

ACCE is part of the Housing 4 Sacramento Coalition which includes, SEIU 1015; SEIU 100; SEIU 1021; SEIU UHWW; Sacramento Housing Alliance; Democratic Socialists of America, Sacramento; Sacramento Central Labor Council; and Tenants Together, all of which are collectively tackling local housing issues. The California Endowment has supported ACCE's work regarding housing and tenant education.

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# Sacramento County to Offer New, More Convenient Voting

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Americans enjoy a profusion of rights, from freedom of expression to the right to vote.

But many don't exercise the latter right — which may be the most precious.

In the November 2016 presidential election, nearly 25 percent of California's registered voters did not cast ballots — and thousands didn't even register. The non-voters were from all races.

In this year of midterm elections, Sacramento County will make it easier to vote, both in the June 5 primary and the Nov. 6 general election. Four other counties will also streamline the process under the 2016 Voter's Choice Act, designed to modernize voting in the Golden State.

Starting the week of May 8, all registered voters in Sacramento County will be mailed a ballot, which can be returned by mail or to any of 52 Vote-By-Mail Ballot Drop Boxes or at Vote Centers, which will be open in advance of Election Day.

Sixteen Vote Centers will open May 26; another 62 will open June 2. Those who prefer voting in person will choose the center where they want to vote.

If the new system succeeds — a higher turnout is key — other counties will adopt it beginning in 2020.

Whether the new system is a winner may depend on voter education in the "test" counties.

**"THE RIGHT TO VOTE MEANS THE POWER TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD."**

**Mai Vang**  
HIP community organizer

Locally, some of the voter outreach is being done by Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP), a Sacramento nonprofit with a history of getting people to vote, with the support of The California Endowment.

"The right to vote means the power to make your voice heard," Mai Vang, a HIP community organizer, said recently. "Regardless of who we are, our voice matters and we can't" allow others to choose our elected officials and policies for us.

She and HIP Executive Director Cha Vang (no relation) were born in Thai refugee camps after their families fled



Hmong Innovating Politics Community Organizer Mai Vang (left) and Executive Director Cha Vang are educating voters regarding election changes under the Voter's Choice Act. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Laos, their shattered homeland. Laos suffered a "secret war" staged by the CIA, with the help of Hmong fighters, against Vietnamese and Laotian communists during the Vietnam War.

Though HIP has no contract with the Sacramento County Department of Voter Registration and Elections, it is voluntarily educating Hmong voters and others on the upcoming elections. Sacramento County is home to an estimated 31,000 Hmong.

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For more information about  
changes in Sacramento  
County elections:  
[www.elections.saccounty.net](http://www.elections.saccounty.net)

# Comic book tells the 'real' story of South Sacramento

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Comic books are powerful learning tools.

For proof, check out "How Did We Get Here?", a new comic chronicling the history of South Sacramento, an underserved neighborhood where people fight for equality and justice every day.

A year in the making, it was published last month by 916 Ink, a South Sac nonprofit that promotes writing among youth, some of whom contributed to the 32-page graphic novel. With funding from The California Endowment, the comic is free, with a 1,000-copy first edition on thick, quality paper.

"When I was asked to be part of this giant undertaking, it did seem a little intimidating," said Sacramento professional illustrator Robert Love, who illustrated the book with beautiful characters in bright colors. "But ... if you feel intimidated, you're not able to put in your best effort."

Instead, he was guided by a team of collaborators. Major research, writing and coordinating contributions were made by Sacramento City College's Sociology Department, including by Professor Nicholas Miller and student Olivia Baxter, the comic's principal writer.

Though fictional, the multi-racial characters in "HDWGH?" face problems all too real for South Sacramentans.

At the beginning, a studious lady named Kathleen explains that around 1910, South Sac began hosting the State Fair. Once the

Fair moved to Cal Expo in the late 1960s, she says, the neighborhood began an economic decline that continues today. Kathleen is visiting Ella, a young patient in the ER of UC Davis Medical Center, at the fair's old site. Ella has pneumonia caused by the mold-infested apartment where she lives with her single father, Marcos, who has discovered that the Med Center no longer accepts Medi-Cal patients, except in its ER.

**"IT'S A HISTORY LESSON IN A NEW, ENGAGING FORMAT."**

**Ian Hadley**  
Executive Director, 916Ink



After Ella's release, she and Marcos face other issues common to underprivileged communities. Father and daughter eventually become activists who fight for a better South Sac.

Along the way, the book showcases history-making Sacramentans, such as Nathaniel Colley, Sacramento's first black attorney, and spotlights the city's ethnic groups, ranging from Japanese Americans to refugees from war-torn Afghanistan and Syria.



Sacramento illustrator Robert Love holds a copy of "How Did We Get Here?", which tells the history of South Sacramento. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Illustrator Love was recruited by 916 Ink's founding director, Katie McCleary, who left the nonprofit last fall to pursue other interests. Ian Hadley, who is descended from a line of literature professors, was appointed new executive director by the nonprofit's board.

"Everyone who has seen 'How Did We Get Here?' has become a fan," said Hadley, formerly with the Child Abuse Prevention Council of North Highlands. "It's a history lesson in a new, engaging format."

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To request a free copy of  
"How Did We Get Here?"  
Call 916-826-7323





# Health Program Will Extend Care to More County Immigrants

BY RODNEY OROSCO

For Anna K., being enrolled in Sacramento's County's Healthy Partners Program is a relief.

"I am calm now because I know where to call in case I have a question or need to get an appointment," the Sacramento resident and Russian native said.

The Healthy Partners Program provides primary health care to Sacramento County's undocumented residents, including Anna.

Before Healthy Partners, Anna's story was similar to many people who lack health insurance — she would take all her aches and pains to the local emergency room and sit and wait ... and sit and wait. Or, she would ignore the pain.

Now covered, Anna discovered that a regular visit to the doctor can be a life-changing experience. During a recent checkup, her doctor found a condition that if left unchecked may have lead to serious health issues and a trip to the emergency room.

"The Healthy Partners program is so successful because it finally gives people a place for stable medical care," Sacramento Covered Project Manager Jasmin Correa said. "With this program, people are not dependent on the ER for health care anymore."

Correa, who helps Sacramento residents navigate health insurance programs like Medi-Cal and Covered California, is "happy to see our clients get service." Sacramento Covered receives grant support from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative.

During its February meeting, the Sacramento

County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to expand the Healthy Partners program from 3,000 to 4,000 patients and end an age cap that prevented residents 65 and older from participating. The program now serves residents ages 19 and up.

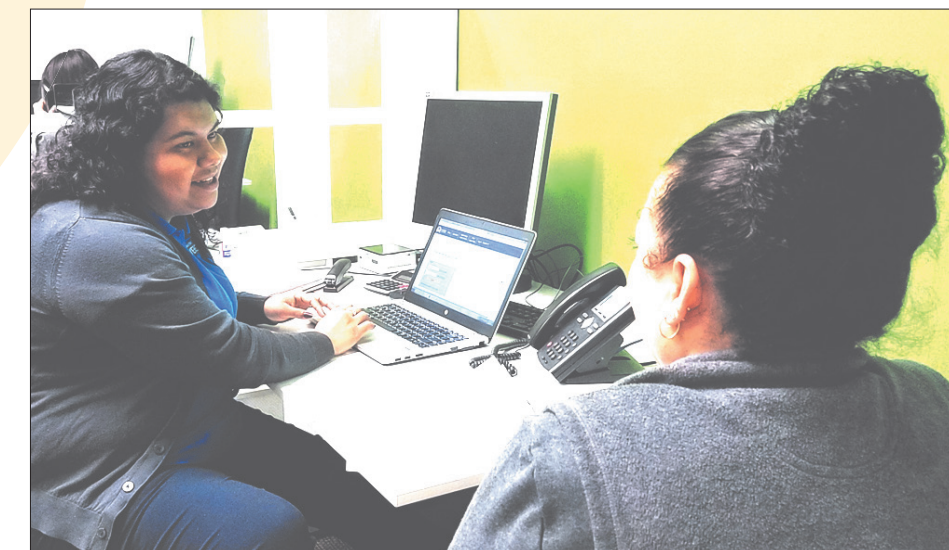
The decision to remove the age limit and extend program enrollment was greeted with joy by those at the Supervisor's meeting. "When the vote to extend the program was passed, there was a round of applause at the meeting," Correa said.

**MY DOCTOR IS SO CARING. I'M REALLY HAPPY WITH THE CARE FROM HEALTHY PARTNERS.**

**Romalda O.**  
Healthy Partners patient

In order to receive care under the program, residents must not qualify for any other health benefit program and they must be enrolled in restricted Medi-Cal, which is for residents without legal immigration status who have incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, Correa said.

While Correa was happy to see the enrollment cap be increased to 4,000, she is certain the limit will be quickly reached. Healthy Partners is now



Sacramento Covered Health Navigator Edith Cortez helps a client sign up for health coverage. Courtesy photo.

calling back the 300 people who had been on a waitlist to enroll.

"The program has such a positive impact on the community, it will just keep growing," Correa said.

For patient Romalda O., the impact of the program was clear. "I used to avoid going to the doctor, and now thanks to Healthy Partners I can see a doctor every six months," she said. "My doctor is so caring. I'm really happy with the care from Healthy Partners."

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**at 916-414-8333**  
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# District's Task Force Hopes to Boost Grad Rates

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Jorge Aguilar said he takes it "very personally" when students drop out of the Sacramento City Unified School District.

As the district's new superintendent, Aguilar is trying to steer 47,900 K-12 pupils toward success. He arrived in July with a mandate to increase the district's 80.5 percent high school graduation rate, which was .5 percent below the Sacramento County average and 2.5 percent below the state's in 2015-16.

Until the district shows it cares about every student, some youth "will feel that dropping out is a viable and good option for them, which of course, it isn't," Aguilar said recently.

To boost the graduation rate, Aguilar is implementing reforms that will make education more exciting. He's also established a Graduation Task Force, which has developed more than 50 preliminary recommendations for student success.

But changes take time, Aguilar said, so he remains worried about potential dropouts.

One student he doesn't worry about is Malissia Bordeaux.

The Kennedy High School senior with a 3.8 GPA is the student representative on Aguilar's Task Force, which has 20 other members ranging from social workers to community activists.

"Unless students see incentives in schooling — things that will benefit them — they won't develop a drive to be successful," said Bordeaux, 18, who plans to enroll at UC Davis after graduating in June.

Coming from neighborhoods that are often impoverished, Bordeaux said students may see no value in diplomas, so they drop out.

"Minority students, the main ones dropping out, see incentives in other places, because of the ways they were raised or the ways their lives have been shaped," she said. "Our lives aren't equitable, just as our school systems aren't equitable."

**"UNLESS STUDENTS SEE INCENTIVES IN SCHOOLING — THINGS THAT WILL BENEFIT THEM — THEY WON'T DEVELOP A DRIVE TO BE SUCCESSFUL."**

**Malissia Bordeaux.**  
Student representative on SCUSD's Graduation Task Force

Bordeaux, currently a state Capitol intern, cited another problem: Many students believe the district views them as "statistics," not human beings. She said Aguilar is changing that perception by demonstrating he cares about every student.

Before coming here, Aguilar was an associate superintendent for Fresno Unified, where he created a system that dramatically increased the graduation rate. He also worked at the newest University of California campus in Merced.



Malissia Bordeaux, a senior at John F. Kennedy High, is the student representative on a Graduation Task Force exploring ways to reduce the dropout rate in Sacramento schools. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

As in Fresno, he is using data and tracking systems that detect when a student lags and requires immediate intervention. Students also need supportive teachers and parents, Aguilar said.

The California Endowment is giving funds to SCUSD to strengthen and expand the Men's and Women's Leadership Academies, which are designed to keep students in school and develop their leadership skills. Funds also go to the district's centralized resource center to better support LGBTQ students.

## BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.



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Find more information of  
SCUSD's Graduation  
Task Force at  
[www.scusd.edu/  
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# Teens present plans to improve city through Y-PLAN

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Not every student attains a 4.0 GPA at a medical prep high school, but then not every student is like Caitlin Tapales.

The 15-year-old sophomore at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School takes rigorous classes such as Chemistry and Medical English 10. While she hopes to be a forensic pathologist one day, one program at her school is giving her and her classmates a chance to make a difference in their community today.

Y-PLAN (Youth - Plan, Learn, Act, Now) is a program that encourages community work and civic engagement by asking students to identify local problems then formulate solutions. It was founded at UC Berkeley and brought to Sacramento with The California Endowment's support.

Tapales and 60 of her classmates divided into Y-PLAN teams, each brainstorming to find a problem. She and fellow team members Isabel Maldonado, Alexa Davis and Shayal Prakash realized that despite being hooked on social media, Sacramento youth were largely unaware of things that can help them and their city.

Under @helpingusteens, the quartet launched a social media campaign on Twitter and Instagram to increase teens' awareness about opportunities including Sacramento job fairs, internships and voluntary park cleanups. The platforms also feature motivational quotes.

Reaction has been absolutely positive, Tapales said.

The Y-PLAN is administered by the Center for Cities and Schools, a division of UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design. Successful in various cities, some of them overseas, the program arrived in Sacramento in 2015.

In the end, "the students see the value in what they have done and want to do it again, or find other ways to stay involved in the community," said Myrna Ortiz Villar, who coordinates Y-PLAN Sacramento, including at Hiram Johnson High's medical academy.

**"THIS HAS BEEN THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY FOR ME AND EVERYONE ELSE IN Y-PLAN."**

**Caitlin Tapales**  
High school sophomore and Y-PLAN participant

"Y-PLAN gives students the opportunity to be agents of change within their communities," said Bre Rizzo, who along with Marsha Stanley, teaches Medical English 10 at Health Professions High School.

Last week during a student presentation of Y-PLAN projects at City Hall, Mayor



Caitlin Tapales, a sophomore at Health Professions High School, presented a plan to improve youth engagement at City Hall on May 16. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Darrell Steinberg personally thanked about 80 participants from both academies.

"I am so pleased and proud that as young people, you are choosing to spend real time and effort in ... community-based problem solving," Steinberg said. "What you have been doing is going to serve you well as you become young adults into your futures."

Tapales said of the experience: "Hearing the mayor was really memorable and beneficial. This has been the greatest opportunity for me and everyone else in Y-PLAN."

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[www.y-plan.berkeley.edu](http://www.y-plan.berkeley.edu)**

# Groups Work to Get More Ethnic Studies Classes in Schools

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Dominique Williams has a passion for Ethnic Studies.

Of the multiple subjects she teaches at McClatchy High, Ethnic Studies is her favorite curricula — one that fosters pride among her racially diverse pupils.

“In Ethnic Studies, my students know we’re not going to study the same old same old,” Williams said recently. “We’re going to study something that matters to them. They see themselves inside the curriculum.”

By 2020, Ethnic Studies will be required for graduation from McClatchy and other high schools in the Sacramento City Unified School District. The requirement, approved by district trustees in mid-2015, was a victory for its proponents: the district’s Student Advisory Council and Ethnic Studies Now – Sacramento, a coalition of parents, teachers and community activists.

This year another coalition was born, calling itself Ethnic Studies Now – Elk Grove (ESNEG). At a recent meeting of the Elk Grove School Board, ESNEG called for a mandatory Ethnic Studies graduation requirement for Elk Grove Unified students.

“Staff have indicated they are serious about [our] initiative, so we hope to see positive developments,” said Megan Sapigao, ESNEG’s spokesperson.

Although existing law directs the California Department of Education to create a model curriculum, and encourages California

school districts to offer Ethnic Studies, the course is not required for graduation.

**“THEY SEE THEMSELVES  
INSIDE THE CURRICULUM.”**

**Dominique Williams**  
Ethnic Studies teacher, McClatchy High

In Sacramento City Unified School District, about 1,500 ninth graders took a one-semester Ethnic Studies course at nine high schools this year. The course, part of a pilot program, uses “Our Stories In Our Voices,” the first 9th grade Ethnic Studies textbook in the country by Sacramento State professors Dale Allender and Gregory Yee Mark. Allender and Mark have also taken the lead in providing training for Ethnic Studies teachers in the region, with the help of a \$2.6 million grant from the United States Department of Education, awarded this past October.

“Ethnic Studies education is crucial for helping students orient positively to themselves and to others in the world,” said Allender, an assistant professor in Sacramento State University’s Teaching Credentials Department.

ESE, he added, can yield increased grades, higher test scores and graduation rates, and a decrease in truancy and dropout rates, as cited by myriad studies.



Dominique Williams teaches Ethnic Studies at McClatchy High. By 2020, a course in that subject will be required for high school graduation in the Sacramento City Unified School District. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

“In a city as diverse as Sacramento, all students can benefit from a greater understanding of the various historical perspectives and experiences that exist within our community,” said Jessie Ryan, president of the SCUSD School Board.

Hmong Innovating Politics, a Sacramento nonprofit, is involved with both Ethnic Studies Now coalitions. The California Endowment supports HIP’s efforts to strengthen both groups in regional school districts.

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**Find the coalitions on  
Facebook: Ethnic Studies  
Now - Sacramento and  
Ethnic Studies Now  
- Elk Grove.**



# Inspiring Positive Change Among Inmates

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

It's not often that correctional administrators and ex-offenders share lunch together. But that's exactly what happened when 60 people gathered recently in Sacramento — far from prison walls. The occasion was a luncheon honoring Robin Casarjian and her niece, Bethany — two distinguished counselors from Boston who have transformed thousands of inmates' lives with their work.

Robin Casarjian's book, "Houses of Healing," is a guide for how to vanquish destructive behavior and become a role model, in prison and outside of it. The book also served as the main blueprint for Self-Awareness and Recovery (SAR), a program that inmates Daniel Silva and Henry Ortiz founded at Mule Creek State Prison in 2005 to guide fellow prisoners to productivity.

Both men — now free — have seen their nonprofit expand to other prisons and to schools, such as Sacramento's Burbank High, where at-risk youth are lectured on destructive behaviors. All possible because of Casarjian's work.

"Robin, thank you for planting the seed that gave birth to SAR," Ortiz said at the luncheon.

Taking the mic, Casarjian praised SAR's founders and other former inmates turned SAR facilitators, who visit prisons to deliver healing lessons.

"They are making such a positive difference in the prisons," Casarjian said, also commending the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) for allowing ex-inmates to go back to prison to do good.

"In a lot of state prison systems, they wouldn't think of letting them in," Casarjian said.

Ortiz said that he read "Houses" while serving time for manslaughter with a gang enhancement. It transformed him.

"Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous classes didn't resonate with me," he said, stating that "Houses" was more profound and laid the foundation for SAR's healing circles where participants describe their trauma. These traumas often begin while growing up in violent, drug-addicted, alcoholic families.

**"I HAVE WITNESSED OFFENDERS HAVING REVELATIONS TO START ON THE ROAD TO REHABILITATION."**

**David Maldonado**  
Community resources manager  
California Medical Facility, CDCR

Casarjian wrote "Houses" and an accompanying curriculum with the intent to distribute free copies to prisons. For that, she created the Lionheart Foundation. She also co-authored a book and curriculum for at-risk youth, "Power Source: Taking Charge of Your Life," with her niece Bethany Casarjian, a psychologist. Their writings circulate in California prisons/juvenile halls.



Bethany Casarjian and Robin Casarjian speak at the recent SAR luncheon where they were recognized for their contributions to the inmate communities. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

Besides parolees, lunch guests included probation officers and officials from CDCR, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department and the Sacramento Police Department. The event was sponsored by SAR and The California Endowment.

SAR's facilitators "do an amazing job," said guest David Maldonado, community resources manager at CDCR's California Medical Facility, Vacaville.

"I have sat in on a few classes," he said. "I have witnessed offenders having revelations to start on the road to rehabilitation."

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# Health Advocates Seek More Primary Care for Medi-Cal Patients

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

After more than three years of public outcry, Medi-Cal patients will finally be able to access primary care at UC Davis Medical Center.

Unfortunately, only 1,000 patients have been accepted, due to an apparent decision by the insurance company UnitedHealthcare.

UCD officials disagree with the insurer's recent move to stop assigning new Medi-Cal enrollees to UC Davis primary care physicians.

"UC Davis Health has a contract with UnitedHealthcare to assign up to 3,000 Medi-Cal beneficiaries to UC Davis Health primary care providers," UCD spokesman Charles Casey said recently. "We object to UnitedHealthcare's actions."

According to Casey, about 1,000 UnitedHealthcare Medi-Cal members were assigned to UC Davis Health before the insurer suspended accepting new patients on June 1.

Negotiations between UnitedHealthcare and UCD are ongoing.

In a statement, UnitedHealthcare did not address why it stopped enrolling new Medi-Cal patients. Instead, the statement said in part, "With (our) recent entrance into (Sacramento), individuals with Medi-Cal have more health plan options." UnitedHealthcare became a new health plan option for Sacramento County Medi-Cal enrollees in October 2017.

The health safety net for low-income Sacramentans suffered a significant cut in January 2015, when the Medical Center began denying primary care to Medi-Cal patients, blaming low Medi-Cal reimbursements. It continued to provide care for Medi-Cal patients with special conditions if their insurance plans authorized continuity of care; and, as required by law, it continued to serve all Medi-Cal patients arriving in its emergency room.

## "A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE UPSET."

**Kim Williams**  
Director, Sacramento Building Healthy Communities initiative

Losing their UCD primary care doctors traumatized many Medi-Cal patients. They scrambled to find new ones at other health care systems — not always successfully. Sacramento County has 442,000 patients in the state-run Medi-Cal.

Last year, UCD officials began meeting with the Health Equity Action Team, or HEAT, a coalition of grantees of The California Endowment and other interested partners. HEAT's demand that UCD restore full Medi-Cal services has driven the monthly sessions.



UC Davis Medical Center in South Sacramento is accepting Medi-Cal patients for primary care, but only 1,000 of them, due to an apparent decision by UnitedHealthcare. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

At a recent meeting, HEAT received encouraging news: up to 3,000 Medi-Cal patients would get primary care doctors at UCD through UnitedHealthcare.

"We felt that 3,000 wasn't enough ... but it was a starting point," said Kim Williams, a HEAT leader and director of The California Endowment's Sacramento Building Healthy Communities initiative.

Then came anger.

"A lot of people were upset" on learning of UnitedHealthcare's alleged rollback, she said.

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# The Next Changemakers

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

A new generation of leaders is being trained to mobilize Sacramentans to fight for equal rights, better public schools and other noble causes in the 21st century. Training occurs on Wednesdays at the new Summer Youth Leadership Academy in South Sacramento.

That's where 14 students, all ages 14 to 17, are learning to be changemakers — advocates for social good — through the eight-week program that ends August 10.

"The program is helping me transform into the person I want to be," Ethan Lee, 17, said recently. "I want to be a successful person, and help people at the bottom."

He wants to make sure everyone can achieve their dreams. After graduating from West Campus High next year, Lee plans to pursue a college degree in architecture.

The academy, sponsored by The California Endowment and hosted by Sacramento Building Healthy Communities - The HUB, is co-directed by Shakeya Bell and Araiye "Ray" Thomas-Haysbert.

"This academy is crucial because it gives youth the tools to create change," said Bell. "It provides a proactive outlet to a community, who don't have many resources or outlets to cater to the trauma and injustice these youth face on a daily basis. It helps them realize that they matter, and more importantly that their voice matters."

A program leaflet outlines the curriculum, which includes studying the meaning of social justice, examining the various levels of government, creating change via social media, and discussing movements that created epic change.

Guest speakers also impart key lessons, like one delivered this month by Isaac Gonzalez, youth media program manager for Access Sacramento, a broadcasting and media production nonprofit.

**"THE PROGRAM IS  
HELPING ME TRANSFORM  
INTO THE PERSON I  
WANT TO BE."**

**Ethan Lee  
17, participant in the Summer  
Youth Leadership Academy**

In his presentation, Gonzalez said elected officials don't care about non-voters.

As a result, he said, Sacramento has two types of communities: The beautiful ones with parks, nice sidewalks and thriving businesses, where residents vote religiously, and depressed neighborhoods, where most residents don't vote.

Gonzalez added: "You can march and protest," but the best way to effect change is to confront elected officials, who shape city policies, and



Ethan Lee is 17, a soon-to-be senior at Sacramento's West Campus High, and enrolled in the Summer Youth Leadership Academy. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

tell them: "I'm a registered voter. So are all my friends."

Lee will vote for the first time in 2020. He can't wait.

The students have broken into groups this summer to work on special projects. Lee's is analyzing how some minorities in Sacramento overcame racial stereotypes to become successful, admired professionals. He is conducting interviews, to determine how they did it.

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# Students work to restore driver's ed courses

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Jamazenya Akens is a bright young person, en route to adulthood. Yet, despite her confidence in the future, she feels stuck in the slow lane of life.

She will be graduating from Hiram Johnson High School next June and would like to see driver's ed courses offered to students. Driver's education courses haven't been offered at the school since 2008. Although not required for post-secondary education, Akens believes this course would offer important real-world skills students need.

"I haven't learned to drive, and it's frustrating trying to get places by bus," said Akens, 17, who plans to join the Air Force. "Public transportation is unreliable ... It's hard for me to go out."

In June, she and 24 other members of Hiram Johnson's Law Academy — which promotes criminal justice careers — shined a spotlight on the students' desire to restore Driver's Ed, so teen drivers will be safer.

This spring, one of the academy's instructors was Windy Ly of Pro-Youth and Families, a nonprofit that encourages youth advocacy.

She told the students about the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a nonprofit that empowers community members to decide how to spend public monies. Ly, who had been trained to facilitate participatory budgeting, decided to have the students create their own mock PBP.

The question became: Should Hiram Johnson designate funds to correct campus problems, and if so, which ones?

First, they identified problems. Then, they surveyed 243 fellow students about their campus concerns.

Back at the academy, 11 potential projects were narrowed down to five. They included:

- Install new wrestling mats in Hiram Johnson's gym;
- Replace the school's aging water fountains; and
- Restore Driver's Education, through a partnership with a private driving school and without Hiram Johnson hiring any new faculty.

**"I HAVEN'T LEARNED TO DRIVE, AND IT'S FRUSTRATING TRYING TO GET PLACES BY BUS."**

**Jamazenya Akens**  
Hiram Johnson High School student

One part of the proposal would have 30 students complete a rules-of-the road online course at Hiram Johnson this fall, at a cost of \$20 per pupil, before obtaining driving permits and going behind the wheel. The students suggested that Hiram Johnson pay those fees, totaling \$600.



Windy Ly of Pro-Youth and Families and Jamazenya Akens, a student at Hiram Johnson High recently collaborated on a participatory budgeting exercise which identified restoring the school's driver's education class as a major concern for students. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

In early June, 94 students, school employees and community members attended a Participatory Budget Expo to hear summaries of each potential project. Afterwards, guests voted for their favorites. More than 50 percent supported Driver's Ed as Hiram Johnson's top need.

Although the plan is nonbinding and wasn't formally presented to the district, Ly said that School Principal Garrett Kirkland has enthusiastically supported giving students a voice in school expenditures. PBP and Pro-Youth and Families are supported by The California Endowment.

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# From the Ground Up

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Rubie Simonsen found her calling as a child, in her grandmother's lush gardens.

The little girl spent countless hours playing among miniature roses in front of her grandma's home, and by herbs in the backyard. Before long, the rambunctious youngster had a strong bond with dirt and the beautiful things that grow on it.

It was only natural, then, that in 2016 Simonsen began her studies to become a farmer.

After graduating from that program two years ago, Simonsen, 27, is now teaching 10 adults to be ecologically-sensitive farmers at a new academy in Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood that calls itself 252 Evolver. Consisting of 10 evening workshops spread over five weeks, the program is sponsored by The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative.

Training for future farmers needs to be in a big city to make farming more accessible in urban areas, Simonsen said.

Besides making the academy tuition-free, The Endowment pays for the trainees' books and other equipment.

Ranging in age from 25 to 55, each arrived with a connection to gardening or farming, or had an interest in a "regenerative future," according to Simonsen.

Stephanie Robinson likes the academy. She's converting her 1/4-acre lot in suburban Carmichael into a sustainable herb/vegetable farm and needed guidance in how to turn it into a business.

"Since part of this course is giving back to this community, I know I'm surrounded by other folks who want to do good in the world," said Robinson, a clinical herbalist and the Communications/Engagement Manager for the Sacramento Tree Foundation. "We're building a support network to lean on."

**"SOME ARE LOOKING AT LEASING PROPERTY FROM SCHOOL DISTRICTS OR TAKING OVER VACANT LOTS."**

**Rubie Simonsen**  
Facilitator for 252 Evolver, which aims to rootaspiring ag entrepreneurs through a five-week intensive focused on regenerative farming and building resilient communities

The program has a potent lineup of guest speakers. Among the first was Dominic Allamano, who spoke to students on a recent Monday evening about how most people today are not active participants in the food systems, and now are simply "consumers."

He told the trainees they have a chance to change that.

After graduating in mid-September, each class member will leave with a self-



Rubie Simonsen is teaching a group of 10 urban farmers how to respect the land with the 252 Evolver. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

developed plan for operating a farm-based business for a year.

"Some are looking at leasing property from school districts or taking over vacant lots" for their enterprises, Simonsen said, adding that all graduates also will do one-year, part-time internships at area farms. Their \$15-an-hour wage will be paid by The Endowment.

While profits can be elusive for new farmers, the graduates will enjoy other benefits, such as becoming stewards of the land, Simonsen said.

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# District and Advocates Work to Reduce Suspensions of Black Students

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

The number is stunning: One of every five African American males in the Sacramento City Unified School District was suspended in 2016-17, according to a report released this summer.

In their report titled “The Capitol of Suspensions,” researchers from San Diego State University and the University of California, Los Angeles, analyzed numbers provided by schools to the state Department of Education.

The findings showed black male students in SCUSD had a 20.7 percent suspension rate, a rate substantially higher than their peers’ rates, which may have unfairly put many black youth on track to failure.

A full understanding of why that occurred will only be possible when the discipline structure is “broken down to the smallest details” and systemically examined, said Darryl White, chair of Sacramento’s Black Parallel School Board (BPSB), a nonprofit that promotes black student achievement and holds SCUSD accountable.

“Once the dysfunction is isolated, the system can be restructured by eliminating the weaknesses and keeping the strengths,” to keep students in the classroom and away from the prison pipeline, the retired educator said.

Jorge Aguilar, superintendent of SCUSD, was 11 months into his new job when he received the June report.

“The Board of Education and I are concerned by these numbers. We are working to create a system where all students are being steered toward achieving their full academic potential,

not being suspended,” said Superintendent Aguilar. “Our goal will be to make sure that students receive appropriate and ongoing supports to reduce suspensions and ensure that student achievement levels of those students previously suspended are reflected through increased grade level proficiency rates.”

**“ONCE THE  
DYSFUNCTION IS  
ISOLATED, THE  
SYSTEM CAN BE  
RESTRUCTURED.”**

**Darryl White**  
Chair, Sacramento Black Parallel School Board

Creation of a data-and-tracking system that detects when a student is in trouble and needs intervention was a priority for Aguilar, who used a similar system to dramatically increase the graduation rate in Fresno Unified, where he worked previously.

After reading the report, Aguilar commissioned a cross-departmental workgroup to review and propose procedures and policies, including those dealing with suspensions, “as part of our larger focus on improving outcomes” for all 43,000 district students, Aguilar said.

The district has stated that the 20.7 percent rate reported in the study included suspensions



From left, Carl Pinkston and Darryl White of Black Parallel School Board say the nonprofit will work with Sacramento City Unified School District to improve school discipline policies. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

from the district’s independent charter schools. In those schools, which are not controlled by the district, the suspension rate for black males was 26.4 percent.

White said one reason for the higher suspension rate in independent charters may be that they lack veteran staff. Too often, he said, charter school teachers are not trained in “culturally responsive instruction.”

BPSB, which is supported by The California Endowment, will continue to work with Aguilar to develop solutions to suspension rate disparities, White said.

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**“The Capitol of Suspensions”**

Read the report at  
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# Organizers Urge Community-led Cultural Awareness Training for Police

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

It happened six months ago. But for some Sacramentans, the grief over the slaying of Stephon Clark continues unabated, as if he died yesterday, community activists say.

Clark, 22, an African American, was shot in the backyard of his grandparents' Meadowview home the night of March 18, by police responding to a 911 call that a man had jumped a residential fence after smashing car windows.

Believing Clark pointed a gun at them as they approached, two officers — one of them black — fired 20 rounds at him, killing him. Clark, it turned out, was carrying only an iPhone.

Daniel Hahn, then seven months in as the first black chief of the Sacramento Police Department (SPD), was already tackling bias among his rank and file when Clark was shot.

Three weeks after the incident, Hahn told McClatchy newspapers he was working with academics to develop implicit bias training for his force. The goal of this training: to reduce or eliminate discriminatory behavior by making officers aware of subconscious stereotypes that even progressive people may have against minorities.

While such training is good, it is not enough, according to concerned activists, including Ryan McClinton, who said they have asked Hahn to "adjust" the training to include cultural and Restorative Justice classes that would be taught by community members.

Those ready to teach such classes, to perhaps change the policing culture, include local

lawyers, doctors and faith leaders, said McClinton, a community organizer for Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT).

"We've been told by SPD that it is willing" to incorporate community-led training into the bias instruction, McClinton said this month. "Now, it's just a matter of scheduling."

According to McClinton, the Rev. Ben McBride of Oakland, who has taught Procedural Justice to that city's police and who has provided training/consultation to other police agencies nationwide, also wants to train SPD employees.

**"IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING IS ONLY ONE STEP. MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE."**

**Ryan McClinton**  
Community organizer, Sacramento Area Congregations Together

On another front, McClinton noted that police "see the worst parts of humanity" as they respond to murders, rapes and other horrific crimes daily. He believes patrol officers should occasionally rotate to non-traumatic in-house jobs, before returning to patrol, to help them



"Implicit bias training is only one step" in changing Sacramento's policing culture, said Ryan McClinton, a community organizer for Sacramento Area Congregations Together. "More needs to be done." Photo by Edgar Sanchez

de-stress. "Re-assignment should be paired with 6 months of mental health and trauma informed therapy for those officers," McClinton said.

The Sacramento County District Attorney's Office continues to investigate the Clark shooting. No charges have been filed against either officer. Meanwhile, McClinton said, many African Americans fear the police.

Sacramento ACT is a multi-faith organization that seeks "a more just and fair community" for all, with the support of The California Endowment.

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# 'Parallel' School Board Reflects on 10 years of Advocacy for Black Students

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

During a recent school board meeting in Sacramento, 40 parents, educators, and local activists discussed various issues in a former classroom, including schools' relationships with school resource officers.

One parent expressed the frustration many parents feel about the disproportionate suspension rates for African American students, particularly boys, in local schools.

"Things that used to be a beef between two students are now a crime," the parent claimed.

This conversation was not before the regular school board, but at the monthly meeting of the Black Parallel School Board (BPSB), a volunteer organization that promotes black student achievement.

On Saturday, Nov. 3, the BPSB will celebrate its 10th anniversary of doing good for African American youth with a noon luncheon at 4625 44th St., Sacramento.

"It doesn't seem like it's been 10 years," said Faye Wilson Kennedy, a founding BPSB member and its current vice chair, recalling BPSB's beginnings in 2008.

Then as now, the BPSB was critically needed, said Kennedy, a retired early childhood educator who was with the Sacramento Area Black Caucus before BPSB was created.

"Parents would come to the Caucus with issues about their children's education," she said. "We would try to assist them. We decided we needed an entity that would work on education issues."

From the get-go, the BPSB has monitored the Sacramento City Unified School

District (SCUSD), along the way building a collaborative relationship with the district and earning the support of The California Endowment.

**"WE DECIDED WE NEEDED AN ENTITY THAT WOULD WORK ON EDUCATION ISSUES."**

**Darryl White**  
Founding BPSB member and current Vice Chair

"BPSB is one of the district's most committed stakeholders," SCUSD spokesman Alex Barrios said. "We look forward to continuing to receive BPSB's perspective" to improve academic outcomes for all students.

Luther Burbank High Principal Jim Peterson is an active participant at BPSB meetings. "Twenty-three percent of my school is African American, so I believe it's important to openly communicate with and be in partnership with organizations like BPSB," he said.

BPSB board members said the group has created representation for black voices and elevated the conversation around inequities in our school system — inequities that are starting to be addressed both in the school district and on a larger scale.

On August 31, the California Legislature approved SB 607, a measure that would protect many students from being suspended for willful defiance. Under willful defiance,



Faye Wilson Kennedy, a founding BPSB member and its current vice chair, shows pro-education booklets she distributes to parents. "It's never too early to start talking to your child about college," she said. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

students have been suspended for minor infractions such as refusing to remove a hat.

BPSB was in a coalition that supported SB 607, introduced by Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley). The bill now awaits the Governor's signature.

Locally, the BPSB and the Sac City Unified Board will continue to work together to effect more positive change.

"Things are changing for the better because we are developing a good relationship with the new school administration, with the teachers and the parents," Kennedy said.

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**For more info about BPSB's 10th anniversary celebration:**

Call 916-484-3729 or e-mail [info@blackparallelschoolboard.com](mailto:info@blackparallelschoolboard.com)





# Community Creates a Safe Place to Heal After Clark Shooting

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Maybe it was a coincidence, a numerical happenstance.

But 20 days after police fired 20 shots at Stephon Clark in his grandmother's backyard in Meadowview, special healing circles began in Sacramento.

The therapeutic gatherings — also called Safe Black Space- Community Healing Circles — are taking place to help African Americans overcome the lingering shock of another unarmed black man killed by law enforcement.

The Clark tragedy began with a call that a fence-hopping man was smashing car windows the night of March 18. Two responding Sacramento police officers confronted Clark, 22. Believing he aimed a gun at them, police fired at him, striking him at least seven times. Only an iPhone was found on his slain body.

The incident devastated local African Americans. They needed anguish relief. "People were in pain and trauma, and we had nothing to address that as a community," said Ryan McClinton, a community organizer for Sacramento Area Congregations Together (Sacramento ACT).

Then, something good happened.

Dr. Kristee Haggins, a Sacramento-based member of the Association of Black Psychologists, invited other community leaders to help black people heal.

That led to creation of a local Safe Black Space, where people of African ancestry can discuss their traumas at the free community healing circles, which are held monthly with The California Endowment's support. Besides the doctor, the space creators included Pastor

Joy Johnson, president of the multi-faith SAC ACT; the Reverend Kevin Ross of Unity of Sacramento, a non-denominational ministry, and medical professionals and other volunteers.

Some circle facilitators received training in African-centered healing strategies. Others already had that expertise.

The first circle, on April 7, drew 60 people.

Since then, attendees have displayed myriad emotions at the sessions, according to Teah Hairston, a co-facilitator. Some cry, mourning Clark's death. Some express anger at police. Still others exhibit joy, because they are still alive; they say they haven't been shot by police.

**"A COMMON THEME IS THAT BLACK PEOPLE ARE TIRED. WE'RE BROKEN. WE'RE WEARY, HURT AND SCARED OF POLICE."**

**Teah Hairston**  
Co-facilitator, Emotional Emancipation Circles

"Everything happens" at the circles, said Hairston, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in sociology from the University of Missouri.



African Americans traumatized by the fatal shooting of Stephon Clark by Sacramento police display myriad emotions at healing circles, said Teah Hairston, a circle co-facilitator. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

"My mission is to get people to talk. A common theme is that Black people are tired. We're broken. We're weary, hurt and scared of police."

Mental health experts are always at the circles.

The Sacramento Police Department "recognizes the impact that the March 18 officer-involved shooting has had on our community," department spokesman Sgt. Eddie Macaulay said. "The department continues with our commitment to continually build trust as we move forward to heal as a community."

To make reservations for the next circle, on Oct. 13, visit Eventbrite.

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For more info about Emotional Emancipation Circles, visit:  
**[www.safeblackspace.org](http://www.safeblackspace.org)**



# 'More Days, More Ways' to Vote in the General Election

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Tamie Dramer treasures her right to vote. The Sacramento resident has voted in every presidential election — and in every mid-term and primary contest — since 1988.

"Voting is important for me, because I want my government to represent my values," said Dramer, chair of Organize Sacramento. "If people don't vote, we can't count on our collective values being represented."

Her nonprofit, Organize Sacramento, is part of the Sacramento.VOTE Coalition that is educating Sacramento County voters on the "More Days, More Ways" they can vote in the General Election.

Starting with the June Primary Election, Sacramento and four other California counties made it more convenient to vote under an early voting format created by the 2016 Voter's Choice Act. If the new system succeeds, other counties in the state can opt to adopt it beginning in 2020.

A slogan being used in outreach, "More Days, More Ways" refers to the expanded number of days and ways to vote. For instance, voting by mail began on Oct. 8 — 29 days before Election Day — when the county's 747,000 registered voters began returning Vote-by-Mail ballots that they received.

Every voter chooses how to vote:

- Through the U.S. mail in the pink return envelope, or
- By placing the ballots they received in the mail — postage-free — in any of 53 Ballot Drop Boxes that opened Oct. 9 throughout Sacramento County, or

- Beginning 11 days before Election Day by dropping off the ballots at vote centers — or voting in person with a ballot printed right on site by the County there.

Eleven Vote Centers will open Saturday, Oct. 27, and will remain open 11 days, through Election Day. Another 67 Vote Centers open Nov. 3, marking the first time Vote Centers are open on weekends.

**"VOTING IS IMPORTANT FOR ME, BECAUSE I WANT MY GOVERNMENT TO REPRESENT MY VALUES. IF I PEOPLE DON'T VOTE, WE CAN'T COUNT ON OUR COLLECTIVE VALUES BEING REPRESENTED."**

**Tamie Dramer**  
Chair, Organize Sacramento

"People can go to any Vote Center they choose and cast their ballot," Dramer said, noting that Voter's Choice eliminated assigned polling places.

Another exciting new opportunity for voters through Voter's Choice is eligible voters may also register to vote at any Vote Center and vote the same day.

The California Endowment is supporting efforts to promote the Voter's Choice Act and increase civic engagement through voting.



Organize Sacramento, which is part of the Sacramento.VOTE Coalition, has received support from The California Endowment to educate voters on the Voter's Choice Act, which expands the number of days and ways voters in Sacramento County can vote. Courtesy photo

As part of its get-out-the-vote effort, the coalition is distributing 50,000 "More Ways, More Days" leaflets, printed in both English and Spanish, which will be distributed through local organizations, churches, synagogues and temples, and on public transportation.

Leaflets in Hmong/English are being disseminated by coalition member Hmong Innovating Politics.

Under the Voter's Choice Act changes in the June 5 Primary, the county's voter turnout increased 12 percentage points over 2014's mid-term Primary — an impressive increase for the county's first experience with the new voting system.

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For more information on Voter's Choice Act, visit Sacramento County Elections at  
**[www.elections.saccounty.net](http://www.elections.saccounty.net)**

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# Campaign Aims to Get More Students to Class

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Now that the November 6 election is history, the barrage of political mailers that overwhelmed voters also is over.

But the U.S. Postal Service is still delivering a new type of message to some Sacramento parents: Picture postcards mailed not from a distant tourist spot, but from local schools campaigning to end chronic absenteeism.

Depicting images of boys and girls thriving in class, with “Be Here” printed in a corner, the cards notify parents that their children have missed too many school days.

“It’s important we work together to help (student’s name) be successful,” the cards say on the back.

The postcards are from the Sacramento City Unified School District, which in 2016-17 had a chronic absence rate of 15.1 percent — or 4.3 percent higher than the state average. Chronic absenteeism means missing 10 percent or more of school days.

This is not a new problem for the 47,900-student district.

Now, it is employing new ways to increase attendance, as part of Superintendent Jorge Aguilar’s endeavor to provide immediate help when a student lags academically.

The “Be Here” campaign, supported by The California Endowment, was launched this fall. It was made possible by a \$1.6 million Safe Neighborhoods and Schools grant from Proposition 47, approved by voters in 2014.

The grant allowed the district to hire two attendance employees, including former

social worker Jennifer Kretschman, who leads the “Be Here” initiative.

In an interview, Kretschman described a tragedy: Even the district’s kindergartners suffer chronic absenteeism. In 2016-17, 22 percent of the 4,363 kindergartners missed 10 percent or more of school days.

**“THE BIGGEST THING IS TO TELL CHILDREN, DIRECTLY ... THAT ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT.”**

**Cecelia Colchico**  
Youth Media Team member working on Be Here campaign

Such kindergartners will probably not read at grade level by third grade, and will be four times more likely not to graduate from high school, she said.

The districtwide attendance improvement program is especially focused on 28 high-absenteeism schools, seven of them high schools. Most of the schools are in south Sacramento.



West Campus Senior Cecelia Colchico is part of Sac City Unified’s Youth Media Team. She holds an anti-absenteeism poster she helped design for display at local schools, buses and elsewhere. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

There is often an association between poverty and absenteeism. If a family lacks bus fare, the district offers reduced-rate bus passes.

The “Be Here” postcards were designed by the district’s Youth Media Team. In collaboration with a marketing agency, the seven-member team also crafted pro-attendance radio and movie theater ads, billboard messages and posters for display on local buses/trains and at schools.

“The biggest thing is to tell children, directly ... that attendance is important,” said team member Cecelia Colchico, a West Campus High senior. “Visiting with elementary school kids is something we’ll continue to do.”

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For more information, visit  
**[www.beheresac.com](http://www.beheresac.com)**



# Shoppers double their CalFresh benefits at farmers market

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Every Saturday, from May through October, smart shoppers look for great deals at Oak Park Farmers Market.

They always find them.

But besides low prices on fresh fruits, vegetables and other edibles, they find a friendly vibe that draws them back to the open-air market at Sacramento's McClatchy Park.

"Everyone at Oak Park Farmers Market is respectful" to one another, said Stefana Madrid, a loyal customer from South Sacramento. "I like going there."

The single mother of three receives CalFresh benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps, which have extra purchasing power at Oak Park Farmers Market.

The market — now closed until May — is funded and operated by NeighborWorks Sacramento Home Ownership Center, with the support of The California Endowment.

The market is managed by Joany Titherington, a long-time Oak Park resident and leader who proudly brings California's nutritious bounty to Oak Park.

"From the beginning, we wanted to make sure that families of all incomes and backgrounds would have access to healthy, locally grown food," said Sharon Eghigian, Director of Community Impact/Resource Development for the nonprofit NeighborWorks.

From an original six vendors, the market now has about 30, mostly from farms in Yolo, Placer and Sacramento counties. They sell their goods — including organic produce — to an ever-expanding number of customers,

including CalFresh recipients, who can double their benefits there.

To get this deal, CalFresh participants visit the market's information booth, where electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards are swiped through a state-authorized payment terminal similar to a credit-card approval machine.

**"FROM THE BEGINNING, WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT FAMILIES OF ALL INCOMES AND BACKGROUNDS WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY, LOCALLY GROWN FOOD."**

**Sharon Eghigian**  
Director of Community Impact/Resource Development, NeighborWorks Sacramento

A CalFresh customer spending \$20 in benefits receives \$40 in wooden tokens, which can be used to purchase any EBT eligible products, including produce, bread, cheese, eggs and nuts.

The dollar-for-dollar match is sponsored by Rabobank and the Ann Land and Bertha Henschel Memorial Fund (City of Sacramento) Commission.

Over the nine years of the Oak Park Farmers Market, the EBT program has continued to grow as families receiving benefits learn about the Market and the EBT match. About 25 new EBT families visit the Market each month, Eghigian said, and they are very excited to be



Shoppers at the Oak Park Farmers Market use their CalFresh benefits by swiping their EBT card at the Farmers Market booth. They are then given wooden tokens, which they can redeem with vendors. Photo by Melissa Uroff

able to double their dollars to purchase healthy food for their families.

"The match really helps my family out," said Madrid, a caregiver in a senior retirement facility.

By eliminating paper vouchers long associated with Food Stamps, EBT cards have brought more dignity to CalFresh transactions, Titherington noted, speaking from experience.

"My mom was a single parent of six, and there were times when we were on public aid," she said. "I remember the (mean) looks, the comments that people made when we had to pull out the paper Food Stamps at supermarkets."

With EBT, "Nobody knows what kind of card you're using, unless they're looking over your shoulder," Madrid agreed.

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Get updates about the market  
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BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# A Voice in Community Planning

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Choices made by city planners affect the health of people in those cities.

Consider, for example, that people's life spans have been linked to their ZIP code.

"If you live in Oak Park, your life expectancy is much lower than if you live in Curtis Park," said Jackie Cole, an environmental justice consultant. "We're trying to close that gap."

Cole considers herself a liaison between local government decision makers and residents in disadvantaged communities.

This year, she took on her biggest mission — ensuring that marginalized communities in Sacramento have a voice in shaping brighter futures for themselves during the general plan update process.

The City of Sacramento and Sacramento County began updating their respective general plans earlier this year. General Plans, referred to as GPs, set guidelines for future growth and address things like land use, housing, conservation, open space, noise and safety. Cole is assisting in the process as part of The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Initiative.

Her hiring was critical. Both city and county announced that for the first time, they would craft environmental justice (EJ) components, which are required by Senate Bill 1000 whenever jurisdictions revise multiple elements of their GPs.

Victimized by "inappropriate land use," disadvantaged communities "bear a disproportionate burden of pollution and

environmental hazards," according to a summary of SB 1000.

"Environmental justice means we have to make sure all community members have a voice that's strong enough to be heard by decision makers," Cole said in January. "It's our turn to shape how our communities are going to change."

**"IT'S OUR TURN TO  
SHAPE HOW OUR  
COMMUNITIES ARE  
GOING TO CHANGE."**

**Jackie Cole**  
Environmental justice consultant

Parts of SB 1000 took effect Jan. 1, including a provision that cities and counties listen to low-income communities during GP revisions.

"Decisions made in GP updates are a matter of life and death for the communities we serve," said Veronica Beaty of Sacramento Housing Alliance.

Cole has investigated the priorities of underserved communities, knowing that ongoing talks between local government and residents regarding GPs will intensify in 2019, as the city gets started on its two-year update process. "For BHC, the priorities are healthy food access, youth engagement and community development," she said.

Her firm, Veritable Good Consulting, will communicate the yet-to-be-set dates of



The General Plans of Sacramento City and Sacramento County are being updated. Input from local residents is crucial, according to Veronica Beaty of Sacramento Housing Alliance, at left, and Jackie Cole, environmental justice consultant. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

upcoming GP meetings in the city and county. Interested parties should self-subscribe to Sacramento County's email update list for meeting notifications at <http://www.per.saccounty.net/PlansandProjectsIn-Progress/Pages/Environmental-Justice-Element.aspx>

Sacramento County completed Phase 1 of its EJ Element Update in May. Phase 2 will involve much more "robust public outreach and conversations" with the county's EJ communities, including North Vineyard, North Highlands, West Arden-Arcade and South Sacramento, said Todd Smith, principal planner for the county's Office of Planning and Environmental Review.

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For more info on the  
EJ campaign, e-mail  
[jackie@vgconsulting.org](mailto:jackie@vgconsulting.org)



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BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# City Department Expands to Focus on Youth

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

On January 1, 2018, the City of Sacramento reorganized its parks department with a new focus on youth and a new name: the Department of Youth, Parks, & Community Enrichment.

The change resulted from conversations involving the Sacramento City Council, the City Manager's Office and pro-youth advocates, including Councilman Jay Schenirer, who sought not only a new department focused on youth but increased investments in the city's youngest residents, including more internships.

"We should value our young people" by giving them opportunities to succeed, Schenirer said early last year, after teenagers spoke to the council in support of creating a centralized youth department.

The council instead created a Youth Division within its Department of Parks & Recreation, which had run most of the city's youth programs. The council also established five new full-time positions, to support citywide youth programs.

Last January, one of those jobs, Youth Division Manager, was filled by longtime city parks employee Kim Mohler.

"With the finite resources that were available ... it made more sense to expand a youth division rather than create a new department," Mohler said recently. "Council decided it could do more by putting any additional resources directly into youth programming rather than create a new infrastructure."

Simply put, Sacramento "got more bang for the buck," said Lindee Lane, who arrived from

Oakland this summer to become the city's Youth Development Policy Manager, also a new post. Lane works in the City Manager's Office, ensuring that city youth programs, including those outside the Youth Division, align with a new youth program policy framework unveiled last December. The non-Youth Division programs include recreational programs run by the Police Department and an internship effort administered by the Mayor's Office in partnership with local employers.

**"ANY RESOURCES THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO YOUTH, ESPECIALLY YOUTH WHO ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDER-REPRESENTED [ARE GREAT]."**

**Nayzak Wali-Ali**  
Sacramento Youth Commission member

The Youth Division has its own employment readiness programs, with 520 young people in internships and paid employment yearly, Mohler said. One program, Landscape and Learning, teaches gardening skills and maintenance to youngsters who clean city parks. They also learn conflict-resolution tactics and how to be good employees.



From left, Kim Mohler, Youth Division Manager, Nayzak Wali-Ali, a Sacramento Youth Commissioner, and Lindee Lane, Youth Development Policy Manager. Photo by Edgar Sanchez

"Landscape and Learning employs 220 youth every year, and it's a first job for almost all those kids," Mohler said.

The mere idea of a youth department "definitely excited" Nayzak Wali-Ali, 18, a member of the Sacramento Youth Commission, an advisory group.

"Any resources that can be given to youth, especially youth who are overlooked and under-represented [are great]," said the Sacramento native who now studies political science at UC Davis.

The California Endowment supports Sacramento's pro-youth efforts.

**BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

ZIP CODE  
95219  
Life Expectancy

73

ZIP CODE  
92657  
Life Expectancy

88

Your **ZIP code** shouldn't predict how long you'll live – but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long – and how well – we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.  
Health Happens with Prevention.

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For more information, visit  
**[www.cityofsacramento.org](http://www.cityofsacramento.org)**  
and click on YPCE under the "Living Here" section of the sitemap at the bottom of the page.

The  
**HUB**  
Building Healthy Communities  
[www.SacBHC.org](http://www.SacBHC.org)