

Because People Matter

New Opportunities for the Youth of Lemon Hill

South Sacramento coalition offers leadership opportunities, hope

By Rachel Iskow, June 2009

At a recent meeting of the South Sacramento Coalition (SSC) for Future Leaders, young people participated side-by-side with adults who represented various organizations dedicated to working with Lemon Hill community youth.

Funded in part by a grant from the Sierra Health Foundation, the coalition is coordinated by Sacramento Mutual Housing Association and includes residents, community organizations, educational institutions and services agencies in Lemon Hill. With the Sierra Health Foundation grant, the group is building youth leadership opportunities.

Two years ago, youth surveyed their peers to identify the top concerns in Lemon Hill. The survey revealed top concerns as the need for increased safety, jobs for

youth and exploring arts and music.

Based on survey results the SSC developed strategies and programs, including a mini-grant program whose funding decisions are made exclusively by youth participants. One program receiving funding is a peer mediation program born out of the Healthy Start program. Here, youth are trained to provide intervention and support for students experiencing harassment with the goal of de-escalating disputes before they turn violent.

Talking with the trained students who proudly describe their work and contributions toward creating a safer community, you can't help but realize you are listening to tomorrow's leaders. You realize the enormous impact of these programs. Young people in Lemon Hill are working to divert their peers from the

criminal justice system and in the process, developing personal pride. You can't help feeling optimistic!

See the answers below to the "Question on the Street" conducted by Lemon Hill youth among their peers.



Sacramento Mutual Housing Association develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development.

For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

What would you tell President Obama? Lemon Hill Neighborhood Teens' Question on the Street.

This question was produced by 15-year-old Alejandra Lopez and 17-year-old Alicia Garcia.

Name: Alexander

Age: 16

Grade: 10

"I would ask him to help raise the economy because a lot of people are suffering."

Name: Izzy

Age: 16

Grade: 10

"EMPLOYMENT! We need more jobs."

Name: Yvonne

Age: 14

Grade: 9

"I would ask him to silence the violence in my neighborhood."

Name: Desire

Age: 16

Grade: 10

"Ask him for grants for our schools and help maintain peace in our neighborhoods."

Name: Seraiya

Age: 16

Grade: 10

"I would tell Obama to help the schools in my community because they are poor and kids aren't getting the education they deserve."

Name: Sarah

Age: 15

Grade: 10

"I would ask him to clean up our parks so more families could have more fun outdoors."