

Employment & Human Services

Aging & Adult • Children & Family • Community Services • Workforce Development Board • Workforce Services

From the Director, Joe Valentine

I stood outside my house, evicted and feeling abandoned. My parents had left that morning to look for work; my older sister was dropping my younger sister off at child care and then heading to the clinic for her pregnancy check up. I was left at home alone since no one was available to take me to school, and ended up being put out on the street along with our meager furniture when the Sheriff's deputy came to evict us for failure to pay our mortgage. This experience fortunately was not a real chapter from my own life, but the experience of my role playing persona in the recent immersion simulation that was conducted as part of the Contra Costa Safety Net Summit on April 28 and 29. The product of months of planning by the Contra Costa "Safety Net Task Force", the Safety Net Summit was designed as part of a broader community strategy to respond to the growing crisis in funding for health and social service "safety net" services at a time when the need for these services has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. Public and private non-profit health and human service agencies, as well as their public and private philanthropic funders, have come to the sobering conclusion that the significant cuts we have experienced in government funding for health and human services are unlikely to be restored to their former level for some time to come if ever. We have no choice but to restructure what is left of the safety net and to turn to local community organizations for help. This re-structuring will have to be aimed at creating greater efficiency in the delivery of services, and reducing duplication and eliminating organizational "silos." It will also need to move towards a "hybrid" system that combines formally funded and administered services with creative local approaches utilizing other community assets and local volunteers.



In order to initiate the community dialogue that would begin this restructuring, the

Summit brought together business organizations, local philanthropic organizations, public health and human service agencies, private non-profit human service organizations, and others to identify existing gaps and suggest creative strategies to address them. The first day of the Summit put participants through an intense immersion exercise in which we were randomly assigned roles as either persons and families in need of service, or as health and social service providers, educators, public safety personnel, banks, stores and other community institutions. As a society, we tend to blame the poor as being primarily responsible for their own misfortune and the simulation opened our eyes to realize just how many formidable barriers persons in impoverished economic circumstances face. What's more, they face many of these barriers all at the same time, creating what can feel like an insurmountable crisis. The simulation experience also impressed on us just how urgent the task is to find ways to remove as many of these barriers as we can as we witness the prospect of tens of thousands of children in our county facing the risk factor that casts the deepest of all shadows on healthy development: growing up in poverty. Hours of intense brainstorming on the 2nd day of the Summit led to the beginnings of a possible menu of activities that might strengthen local supports for persons and families in need, lead to greater efficiency in the delivery of those services, and hopefully increase the array of preventative resources that will reduce the need for deep-end safety net services. Some of those ideas, such as the creation of a web-portal that could readily link persons to the array of services that are already available is easily achievable, and EHSD will be working with the Contra Costa Crisis Center and their "211" system to start putting this together. Other ideas, such as "no wrong doors" to services and more emphasis on primary prevention and health promotion will take more time, and a sustained and dedicated effort by many. Engaging additional persons and sectors in this work is a must. Hopefully, part of this work will also include educating the broader community about the realities of being poor in Contra Costa County, and how the great majority of those who are economically impoverished need a little more help in overcoming some of the formidable barriers they face. Fortunately, Contra Costa is blessed with many persons and organizations who are creative, innovative, and community minded. Working together, we can utilize the current crisis in safety net funding to shape a more efficient, responsive, and prevention oriented system of supports for Contra Costa residents.

Workforce Development Board Presents "Building Futures" Video

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County is pleased to announce the launch of [Building Futures](#), a video produced by [Lunchbox International](#) in collaboration with students from the CCYouth@Work [Summer Youth Employment Program](#).



The polished, professional and powerful video communicates the impact of youth employment on both students and employers, helping to strengthen the message that youth employment is a vital step in developing a strong workforce.

[CCYouth@Work](#) was funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds in 2009 and 2010, and the program served hundreds of participants. Unfortunately, ARRA funding will expire before the 2011 summer session begins, so the WDB will need help in sustaining the program.

Please check out the Building Futures video below, and encourage local businesses to become youth employers this summer. For more on how you can either sponsor a student or employ a youth at your business, please visit the [CCYouth@Work](#) page.

[Building Futures in Contra Costa County](#)

Early Head Start Program Expands

The Community Services Bureau received over \$2.5 million dollars for the Early Head Start Expansion through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in August 2010. This much needed funding allowed CSB to serve 170 additional infant/toddler families in the underserved areas of the county. To mark this momentous achievement, the CSB held a series of ribbon cutting ceremonies at four of its centers namely Balboa on April 8th, Ambrose on April 18th, Los Arboles on April 25th and Bayo Vista on April 26th. Speakers and guests included Supervisor Gayle Uilkema, Supervisor John Gioia, Supervisor Federal Glover, Joe Valentine, EHSD Director, Camilla Rand, Interim CSB Director, and Katharine Mason, Interim CSB Division Manager.

Parents were invited to share their stories of how the program has positively impacted their lives. It was a testimony of the importance of affordable child care in helping members of the community thrive as contributing individuals. They also expressed their appreciation to the site supervisors and teaching staff for their immeasurable support and guidance they have provided to the children. Parents were also recognized for their great commitment and dedication in striving to achieve self-sufficiency and independence. After the ceremony, guests were given a tour of the ARRA funded EHS rooms, followed by refreshments and a chance to share stories about the program. Many thanks to all who helped prepare for the events, including the beautiful decorations made by the children.

[Contra Costa County Head Start Program](#)



Graduation Celebrates Elementary Students in North Richmond

On Thursday, May 26th, the Contra Costa County Service Integration Team held its graduation for the students of their “Little Gents” and “Girls Group” program. The graduation service was held at the North Richmond Heritage Community Senior Center for 14 students who successfully completed the school-year long



program. The girls and boys who participated attend elementary schools in the Richmond and San Pablo city districts, such as Verde, Nystrom, Montalvin and Lake Elementary Schools.

The goal of the program is to inspire youth (9-12 years old) and enrich their lives through education, arts and positive self-esteem. Each student is given the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge to support them in being positive role models in their community. The program works in collaboration with the school principals, teachers and parents of each student who attends. The team stands by the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child". The program is overseen by the SIT Coordinator and administered by Masters of Social Work students who attend California State University, East Bay and University of California, Berkeley.

The graduation service was well received by the parents of the participating students, the Contra Costa County Service Integration Team, school administrators and the communities of Richmond and San Pablo. During the ceremony the students presented a poem entitled “Children learn what they live.” They also gave speeches as to what they learned during the “Little Gents” and “Girls Group” program. There was a dedication song entitled “Let them Shine.” Each student displayed their aspiring career goal as the light shined on them. The girls and boys were presented with an award for their unique qualities and their outstanding achievement along with their completion diploma. The “Little Gents” and “Girls Group” does not require mandatory participation and is offered free of charge by the Family Service Center. This year’s commencement was a joy-filled event in which the community was able to celebrate and take pride in each student’s accomplishments.

For more information, please contact Denise Carey in North Richmond (510) 374-7111 or Bay Point (925) 231-2300.

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