

# NEWS



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **GARY AND MARY WEST FOUNDATION GIVES \$400K TO URBAN CORPS YOUTH PROGRAM**

The Gary and Mary West Foundation has awarded Urban Corps of San Diego County a grant in the amount of \$400,000, providing backbone support for the organization's Corps-to-Career department. According to Urban Corps CEO Sam Duran, Corps-to-Career is an essential component of the Urban Corps program, assisting the youth as they transition into the mainstream workforce.

The Corps-to-Career program provides Corpsmembers (at-risk youth ages 18-25) with a variety of opportunities to work with organization staff on completing college applications, resume and cover letter preparation, job interviewing, personal hygiene, stress management, and several other skills necessary to ensure their success in the workforce.

"Corps-to-Career is the final step a Corpsmember takes in his or her launch from Urban Corps to higher education and the mainstream job market," says Duran. "Specifically, Corpsmembers are given an opportunity to develop a 'tool-kit' that facilitates their growth into a positive career.

"Given the success of our overall program, pairing environmental job training with education, the development of the Corps-to-Career department is critical to ensuring that these youth continue to succeed in life. The Gary and Mary West Foundation has given a great gift to the youth of San Diego."

The Corps-to-Career program is designed to track a Corpsmember's progress throughout their participation at Urban Corps. Through innovative software called Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), staff are incorporating new benchmark tracking goals which coordinate progress and point to areas where more improvement is needed. Corps-to-Career staff end up serving as both case managers and educators, helping Corpsmembers succeed in the mainstream workplace and keeping them on track with personal and educational goals.

In addition to funding from the Gary and Mary West Foundation, which will support ETO software, administrative costs, and staff salaries, Corps-to-Career will be enriched by an upcoming partnership with LEAD San Diego in which a team of volunteer professionals will assist the program in developing Corpmembers internships and relationships with future employers .

The Corp-to-Career program will also continue to benefit from Urban Corps' ongoing partnership with the University of San Diego, called Urban Corps' Assessment and Counseling Clinic (UC-ACC). This collaboration provides Urban Corps participants the opportunity to receive both personal and career counseling services from graduate students in USD's Counseling Program. Three senior volunteers dubbed "Grandparents" from Catholic Charities also continue to provide Corpmember educational support and mentoring on a daily basis.

In addition to these important community partnerships, part of what makes the Urban Corps so successful is that it operates largely as a self-sustaining fee-for service organization. The non-profit staff works actively to secure and maintain a handful of public and private contracts which put program participants to work on a variety of environmental and conservation projects in the community. Corpmembers plant trees, paint out graffiti, provide habitat restoration, urban watershed and business district clean-up and maintenance, and collect recyclables at over 200 businesses, offices, and event venues throughout the county.

When they are not at work earning a paycheck and receiving job training, Corpmembers are at the onsite John Muir Charter School where they have the opportunity to gain their high school diploma. This is often a huge step in the lives of these youth, many of whom have dropped out, have families of their own to support, or are international refugees in need of a meaningful transition into American culture and the workforce.

For more information on other Urban Corps programs, visit <http://urbancorpssd.org/>, or contact Development Director Anne Bernstein at 619-235-6884 ext. 3112.

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