

# The CAO Weekly Report

The week of May 4, 2015



## *Monterey County Administrative Office*

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- Probation Youth Center honors volunteers
- Health Department marks Health Equity Academy graduation
- Library receives comfy chairs donation for young readers



## Probation Youth Center Volunteers Honored



Appreciation Day is a lively event, volunteers enjoyed lunch, a slide show and speakers. Youth Center residents set up for the event and decorated the room. Photo by Linda Hevern.

Staff and residents of the Monterey County Probation Department's Youth Center said a big thank you to volunteers this week. May 6<sup>th</sup> was the Center's 12th Annual Appreciation Day. The event honors all those volunteers and community and collaborative partners who provide services and time to the youth at the Center.

The Monterey County Youth Center is a boy's residential facility and aftercare program designed for Monterey County

Juvenile Court wards. The center offers educational and rehabilitation opportunities through collaboration with other county agencies and departments; those collaborations bring programs aimed at changing the lives of youth who are in the program.

Some 20 agencies and volunteers assist the County at the Youth Center. They include the SPCA of Monterey County (the ‘Take the Lead Program’), Young Fathers, Turning Point, Peacock Acres, Real Choices, Honey’s Children, the Arts Council for Monterey County and California Youth Outreach.

“These agencies and volunteers are vital to the daily operations of the Youth Center program,” says Probation Chief Marcia Parsons. “They provide the residents with exposure to all types of pro-social behaviors and activities - their commitment to our youth is extremely appreciated!”



On hand for the volunteer event: (l-r) Assistant CAO Manny González, Probation Chief Marcia Parsons, Judge Timothy Roberts, Youth Center Director Jennifer Butz, and retired Center Director Richard Gray stand together in front of a mural created by 15 Center residents as part of an arts therapy program made possible by the Arts Council for Monterey County. Photo by Linda Hevern.

The former Director of the Youth Center, retired Probation Division Manager Richard Gray, was the keynote speaker for the event. Also speaking to the crowd was a former and current resident of the program, thanking the group for their dedication.

Among the dignitaries attending the event: the Honorable Judge Timothy Roberts, Supervisor Fernando Armenta, Supervisor Jane Parker, District Attorney Dean Flippo and Assistant CAO Manuel González.



## Health Department Marks First Health Equity Scholarship Academy Graduation

The Health Department recently celebrated a first - the first graduation from its Health Equity Scholarship Academy (HESA).

HESA is a thorough and intensive program exploring institutional and environmental health inequities and strategies to overcome barriers for equity and equality. The program is open to department staff at any level and is coordinated through the Planning, Evaluation and Policy unit.

Developing, coordinating and conducting the program is a major undertaking. La'Quana Williams, Health Equity Coordinator, explains the importance of the program and its value as the department looks towards improving the health of the entire community.

### **Q. How many people were involved in the first HESA?**

**A.** 25 staff members participated in Cohort I.

Participants ranged from Assistant Bureau Chiefs to line staff. The program coursework was 20 hours over about ten months.



The HESA program offered staff intensive discussions exploring the causes of health inequities.

### **Q. What would motivate someone to apply to be part of this program?**

**A.** There are many motivating factors:

- Professional development
- Finding out more about the connection between social justice and public health
- The ability to collaborate on complex issues
- The opportunity to be involved in changes happening in our county health department as well as departments across the country to address the root cause issues of health inequities

### **Q. Part of the mission and vision of the program is addressing health disparities and injustices. What would be an example of a disparity or injustice that academy graduates could begin to address?**

**A.** “Health disparity” generally refers to a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by one population group relative to another. While disparities are

commonly viewed through the lens of race and ethnicity, they occur across many dimensions, including socioeconomic status, age, location, gender, disability status, and sexual orientation.

One learning tool in our modules is the documentary “Unnatural Causes... is Inequality Making Us Sick?” which explores racial and socioeconomic inequities in health. One episode is focused on African American infant mortality rates which remain twice as high as infant mortality rates for white Americans. The film provides a thought-provoking statistic: African American mothers with college degrees or higher face the same risk of having low birth-weight babies as white women without a high school diploma.” Social and economic disparities are often a reliable indicator of health disparities.



HESA Cohort members at work.

**Q. Through this program, do you feel you are creating the next generation of public health workers?**

**A.** Absolutely! Health Equity Scholars have volunteered their time to learn more about what we call the “social determinants” of health. Social determinants of health are the social, economic, and physical conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes.

**Q. Modules take participants through basics and then into issues that the public doesn’t always associate with public health such as structural racism and its**

**effect on health outcomes. How do participants respond to that?**

**A.** The modules begin with an introduction to public health, recognizing that scholars come from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds. From there, we delve into topics such as structural racism recognizing that structural racism is a social determinate of health. It is at the root of many of the negative health outcomes we provide services for in our everyday work as public health practitioners such as violence, chronic diseases and low-birth weight babies.

Participants respond exceptionally well to having a space within their workplace that tackles these issues head on as opposed to sweeping them under the rug. This process is not about finding the culprit; rather it is about exploring opportunities to empower ourselves and the communities we serve.



## Young Readers Will Enjoy Furniture Donated to County Libraries

This one is just right said Goldilocks of the little chair she sat on in the home of the three bears. Now, young readers won't have to brave bears or dark woods for a right-sized chair at county libraries.

Last month, Monterey County Free Libraries (MCFL) received a donation of 40 child-sized rocking chairs from Bank of America. Not only did the bank donate the chairs, but bank staff assembled them.

“This is a really unique and fun gift for us,” said Library Director Jayanti Addleman. “Some of the chairs will go directly to branches as they are, some will be painted or decorated and for some we have special plans. We are very grateful to Bank of America and United Way for making this possible.”

Every year Bank of America holds a special retreat for high-performing employees from all around the country. These outstanding employees get to participate in a series of fun workshops and team building events. The team building portion of the retreat includes an activity that gives back to the local community, and this year that ‘give back’ was assembling rocking chairs.



Library Director Jayanti Addleman (above) strikes a playful pose with a mallet as the chair building event begins. Bank of America employees (below) use team work and tools to assemble chairs.

Bank of America's event coordinator had contacted United Way of Monterey County about where to donate the chairs and United Way representatives suggested the MCFL.

Thirteen employee teams came together to assemble the chairs and Addleman was on hand to receive them, sharing with the group the importance of encouraging children to read and how that will help the county's illiteracy rate, which is about 25%.



Look for these chairs in a library near you!

