



NEWS RELEASE

Workforce Development Board

February 26, 2016

CONTACT:

Sandy Harmsen
Executive Director
909-387-9862

sharmsen@wdd.sbcounty.gov

Workforce Development makes positive impact on youth



The San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (formerly the Workforce Investment Board) celebrated another impactful year of providing services to youth facing barriers to building careers, and will continue to make a positive difference in young people's lives. The youth program offers free career counseling, training, internships and job seeking services to youth in San Bernardino County who face obstacles to gaining employment.

Shantrina Ealy of Victorville, 17, was left to raise herself at an early age and became a mother herself at 15; Shane Huffman of Rancho Cucamonga, 23, couldn't write until he was 18. These are just two examples of the many youth in San Bernardino County who have overcome barriers to their future career success through the youth program.

While some dismiss this segment of the youth population as lost, the Workforce Development Board (WDB) is working to help these young people become successful, self-sufficient and productive members of society.

The San Bernardino County WDB's youth program offers services year round to young people, ages 16 to 24. Youth from throughout the county who participate in these programs have the opportunity to convene each year to share their stories, network, participate in workshops and listen to motivational speakers at the annual Y4 event.

This event, designed by participants in 2009, serves as a capstone for all the programs and presents an opportunity for youth to realize they are part of a bigger picture – a countywide vision to provide the necessary resources to ensure opportunities are readily available for them to achieve success in their careers and in life.

"We realize that there are youth in San Bernardino County who face tremendous hardships and challenges that would be difficult for adults to endure, and yet they have the fortitude and determination to persevere," said San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman James Ramos. "Their resilience and courage is remarkable and we are committed to providing them with the tools they need to succeed, promoting prosperity within our community."

The event, Y4: "Why youth? Why wait? Why now? Why not? Because the next generation is already here!" took place in the fall at the Ontario Convention Center.

"So many young people here have incredible stories that could be used as excuses for why they don't progress, but instead they're using these stories as motivation for success in life," said nationally renowned author and motivational speaker Dr. Alex Ellis. Dr. Ellis presented at Y4 teaching young people how to dress for success.

Shantrina is obtaining work experience through Goodwill and is determined to provide for her 2-year-old daughter. She graduated from high school ahead of schedule in November, a milestone she didn't expect to achieve due to her challenges. "I've seen my mom on drugs and I'm doing everything to make sure I can be better, and to teach my daughter right."

Shane is merely four credits shy of graduating high school. He has been enrolled in Operation New Hope in Rancho Cucamonga where he received vocational credits and life skills training. "I never thought I could get my high school diploma, but because of all these people (academic coaches) I'm going to achieve it," Shane said. He is currently enrolled in a pre-veterinarian tech program, engaged to be married, owns a car and lives in a house with his fiancé.

"Hearing from youth about their struggles and how they overcome them with such strength and tenacity is inspirational to all of us who work fervently behind the scenes helping at-risk youth achieve their own greatness," said San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board Executive Director Sandy Harmsen. "During events like Y4 we see the excitement on their faces when they speak of possibilities that before now they never thought would be within their reach; it validates why we do what we do."