

**Tuesday, January 6, 2004:**

**SERVICE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS THROUGH UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY**

Classes are still available to students, who earn academic credit while providing services to residents at public housing sites

Students encouraged to sign up for this nationally-recognized and model community service program

LOS ANGELES – January 6, 2004. College students have the opportunity to provide services in their field of study, while earning academic credit, at various County public housing sites through a unique service-learning program offered by the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission (CDC) [[www.lacdc.org](http://www.lacdc.org)] -- which serves as the County's Housing Authority -- and participating universities and colleges.

Through this nationally-recognized and model community service program, college students enroll in classes with a service-learning component, which allows them to devote between 25-35 hours per quarter or semester assisting public housing residents in a variety of areas, including homework assistance, job training, arts and culture appreciation, computer literacy, and senior life issues.

Participating schools include UCLA; the California State universities at Bakersfield (Lancaster extension), Dominguez Hills, Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Northridge; and the College of the Canyons, Glendale Community College, and Long Beach City College. With new terms set to begin this month, there is still time for students at these schools to sign up for classes with service-learning components.

CDC Executive Director Carlos Jackson, said, "This program is about learning and personal growth for both sides: the college students and the residents of our public housing sites. So many of the students that have participated say that it is a life-changing experience, that the humanity they saw and felt broke the common stereotype of the people we assist at our sites. The need for volunteers is real, and we welcome more students and professors to participate in this model program."

The CDC partnership is the only service-learning program in California that places college students at public housing sites; the agency is also aware of only one other similar example in the entire United States. Supervised service opportunities are available at a number of locations, including housing sites in East Los Angeles, La Crescenta, Lancaster, Lomita, Long Beach, Santa Clarita, South Los Angeles, and West Hollywood.

The CDC's service-learning partnership has secured nearly \$650,000 in grants from a variety of sources. In addition, participating colleges and universities have pledged in-kind commitments with a total value exceeding \$600,000, as calculated by an established federal formula. These grants and the collective volunteerism by professors and students are coming at a critical time. The service-learning program helps offset recent cuts in federal funding that have reduced CDC staffing for its

resident services, which are deemed vital in increasing the probability that public housing residents will achieve self-sufficiency.

College students get a lot out of it. One California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), student, Marcia Rewoldt, wrote after volunteering at the CDC's Carmelitos public housing site: "The most positive part of my experience was the excitement in my mentee's attitude and personality as soon as I walked through the door each week. She made improvements in her academic performance that were noticeable every week. It was great to see how she adapted to the sessions and became more comfortable around me."

Youth and seniors at the sites are appreciative. For example, Gladys Tello, a Carmelitos youth in the third-grade, said of her tutor, "I felt excited and looked forward to meeting with her. She was nice, and I loved her. She helped me with my multiplication, like  $13 \times 23 = 299$ . She told me I needed to get ready for college."

The partnership with CSULB at the 713-unit Carmelitos site in North Long Beach started a year-and-a-half ago and was the first service-learning effort of the CDC. To date, over three-fourths of the nearly 200 service-learning participants in the overall CDC program have volunteered at Carmelitos. Last year, the National Association of Counties (NACo) – the only national organization that represents county governments – bestowed a "2003 Achievement Award" on the program for its innovation.

The CDC's overall service-learning program is evolving, and the CDC is engaged in ongoing talks with six other schools in a proactive effort to expand the program's reach beyond the current nine participating institutions.

Individuals interested in learning more about this exciting and meaningful program should communicate with Michael Jones, Ph.D., program director for the CDC's service-learning venture, via telephone (323-838-7718) or e-mail ([Michael.Jones@lacdc.org](mailto:Michael.Jones@lacdc.org)). Dr. Jones is available to visit campuses and give short presentations on the program to professors, college administrators, and students.

**Media Contact:**

Calvin Naito, CDC

Tel: (323) 838-7577/(323)855-3967

Email: [calvin.naito@lacdc.org](mailto:calvin.naito@lacdc.org)