



# CORPS CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOS ANGELES CONSERVATION CORPS • WINTER 2005 • [www.lacorps.org](http://www.lacorps.org)

## Celebrating 1-Year of Service in San Bernardino National Forest

This winter marks the completion of the first year of service for LACC's Forest Recovery Team in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Thanks to a partnership with the USDA Forest Service, the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) and the California Service Corps, LACC was able to provide 44 young people with the opportunity to train, live and serve in the Forest for a six-month term. Their mission was to help remediate the fire-ravaged forest while developing their own forestry and community organizing skills.

The young participants came, at their own expense, to the Forest from a total of 23 different states and Southern California to take part in the program. During their terms of service, team members accomplished the following:

- Contributed more than 30,000 community and environmental service hours to the well-being of the Forest
- Assisted in the creation and implementation of an important trail for the Children's Forest, a project of the SBNFA
- Helped the County of San Bernardino when flooding threatened communities within the Forest. For two days in January 2005, team members were called on to assist officials and residents of the Big Bear Valley by filling sand bags, which were used to help divert melting snow and flood waters.
- Responded first to an auto accident near their work site. Team members witnessed a vehicle lose control and fly off the side of the mountain, and swung into action by extracting and providing first aid to the driver, who survived the fall.
- Called in one of the first alarms on the "Barton Flats Fire" in July 2005. The team members' prior fuel reduction work in this area was subsequently credited with dramatically helping to reduce the spread and damage of this fire.
- Responded to the call of duty again during the "Thurman Fire." In September 2005, local County of San Bernardino fire and police specifically requested team members' help with evacuation of residents who were unable to leave the community on



their own. Following that call to action, the County's Animal Control officers asked team members to assist with the round-up and evacuation of stranded and abandoned domestic pets.

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Because of such stellar service, we are proud to report that:

- The Spring '05 Team was given a letter of commendation for their assistance during the "Thurman Fire" by the County's resident Sheriff, Deputy Shannon Kovich
- Eight team members have been recruited to work for the County of San Bernardino on trail rehabilitation and brush clearance in the burned areas of the Forest
- One member has been selected to be a volunteer firefighter for the County
- One member has been selected to be a seasonal firefighter on the Del Rosa 'Hotshots,' a Forest Service fire fighting team
- Two members have been hired as LACC staff members

LACC looks forward to continuing our Forest Recovery Team service in the San Bernardino National Forest during 2006. ■

## The Education Diversity Project

LACC's Clean & Green program partnered with Community Conservancy International (CCI) and the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) to provide participants with a path to college.

This new partnership, called the Education Diversity Project, introduces LACC participants ages 13 to 17 (the majority of whom come from low-income, minority households) to the *continued on page 04*



# A Letter from the Executive Director



The holidays are always a time for reflection, and this year I've been reflecting on how big of a difference one person can make in the lives of so many others.

For example, dedicated mentors like Mr. Pitts make a difference by helping more than 100 LACC students annually get a second chance to earn their high school diploma. Hard-working supervisors like Jennifer Guerrero make a differ-

ence for more than 300 LACC youth a year by helping them earn their first paycheck and the value of a positive work and service ethic. And committed case managers like Lucy Gutierrez help more than 400 LACC young people learn the life skills they need to pursue college and a career.

But it's not just our staff who have the power to impact our youth. As a community-based nonprofit, we rely on fee-for-service contractors, foundations and elected officials to help us create opportunities that make a difference for the thousands of young people who come to LACC each year. This year, one partner stands out in particular: Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Mayor Villaraigosa has created innumerable opportunities for LACC youth to participate in improving our environment and communities, and as a result, they care more about their own futures. In 2005 alone, thanks to the Mayor, just a few of

those opportunities included:

- Working at six service project sites for the Mayor's Citywide 100 Days of Service Event
- Performing a day of service in June with the Eagle Rock community in CD #14
- Serving on a special task force to develop a plan for implementing the Mayor's 1,000,000 tree initiative

We look forward to a new year of helping the Mayor green our city and create new opportunities for youth to participate in civic beautification and service projects.

On behalf of LACC's youth and staff, we wish all of our partners and supporters a happy and prosperous new year –

Bruce Saito  
Executive Director

## Recent LACC Accomplishments & Accolades

:: President & Mrs. Bush invited Deputy Director, Phil Matero, to attend the White House Conference on Helping America's Youth. This all-day discussion was designed to inform White House initiatives on effectively addressing youth issues.

:: At her Annual Fall Brunch, Congresswoman Hilda Solis honored LACC Executive Director, Bruce Saito, along with Maria Elena Durazo & Cristina R. Vazquez, UNITE HERE! Labor Leaders; Tomás Olmos & Dolores Leal, Employment Civil Rights Attorneys; and, Jeff Yazz of Restoring the San Gabriel River Green Belt

:: Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the Staff of City Council District 14 recognized Pablo Cardoso of LACC's Clean & Green program and Michele Deane of LACC's Girls Today Women Tomorrow program for their help coordinating the Mayor's "Day of Service"

:: The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board recognized the Los Angeles Conservation Corps at their 2005 Water Quality Awards Dinner for making an important contribution to restoring habitat along and water quality in the Los Angeles River

:: Young Adult Corps participants provided recycling services at the 15th Annual Environmental Media Awards, held at The Ebell Club of Los Angeles

:: On National Public Lands Day, Young Adult Corps participants helped Toyota with a service project that engaged over 400 volunteers in planting native plants and restoring the natural habitat at the Seal Beach Wildlife Refuge

:: At this year's annual "Lights On After School" event, LACC's Building Up L.A. program helped coordinate a celebration at Birmingham High School of all the after school activities available on local campuses, and the difference it make in the lives of students and their families

:: Staff from LACC's SEA Lab program served as volunteer captains in Redondo Beach for the statewide Coastal Cleanup Day

# Nearly \$400,000 raised and 80 college scholarships awarded at annual luncheon!

Everyday LACC youth work hard on community service projects and in their classrooms. As a result, they transform their own lives while making LACC a better place for all of us to live.

On 10/20/05, 80 LACC youth received college and vocational training scholarships, thanks to contributions from 160 generous community members.

Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa, Bruce Karatz, President & CEO of KB Home, and President & CEO of the California Community Foundation, Antonia Hernández, addressed the crowd of more than 400 attendees. Three brave scholarship recipients - Jessica Martinez, Danielle Slaughter, and Jesus Pineda - also addressed the crowd, providing such inspirational speeches that barely a dry eye was left in the house!

In addition to the 80 scholarships awarded that day, an unprecedented amount of money was raised to enable more urban youth to participate in LACC's high school diploma program and receive the supportive services they need to successfully graduate and transition to college. Our most sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to LACC's Russell Kantor Education & Scholarship Fund this year.



Nisha Agbabiaka - *Southwest College*  
Stephanie Aldana - *Santa Monica College*  
Renee Alonso - *East L.A. College*  
Raquel Alvarez - *Westwood College*  
Marie Becerra - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Brianna Bieschke - *CA State University, Monterey Bay*  
Jasmine Brewer - *Grinnell College*  
Bertha Campos - *Westwood College*  
Judith Carrillo-Valenzuela - *Future Scholar*  
Marcia Castillo - *East L.A. Occupational Center*  
Regina Chagolla - *University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
Keisha Ciego - *CA State University, Northridge*  
Judith Connor - *L.A. Trade Tech*  
Yobana Cordero - *East L.A. College*  
Taysha Davison - *University of CA, Berkeley*  
Alma De Jesus - *CA State University, Northridge*  
Laura De La Torre - *Future Scholar*  
Cecilia Delgado - *University of CA, Berkeley*  
Danna Duran - *Future Scholar*  
Duvonne Easley - *L.A. City College*  
Alonso Escontrias - *L.A. City College*

Joselinne Estrada - *Future Scholar*  
Artemio Flores - *CA State University, Long Beach*  
Elsa Flores - *Santa Monica College*  
Tracy Garcia - *Cerritos College*  
Christopher Griner - *Long Beach City College*  
Lorena Guadiana - *University of CA, Los Angeles*  
Vidal Guido - *Santa Monica College*  
Evelyn Gutierrez - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Ibeth Hernandez - *Future Scholar*  
Steve Hernandez - *L.A. City College*  
Lisa Hill - *CA State University, Long Beach*  
Kellan King - *L.A. Harbor College*  
Jessica Lopez - *Future Scholar*  
Rosa Lopez - *Chase College*  
Belem Luna - *CA State University, Los Angeles*  
Carmen Luna - *Loyola Marymount University*  
Christian Luna - *Cerritos College*  
Cesar Maldonado - *Santa Monica College*  
Michelle Mariscal - *Santa Monica College*  
Erick Martinez - *Santa Monica College*  
Hada Martinez - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Jessica Martinez - *Future Scholar*  
Darryl McClain - *CA State University, Northridge*  
Tiffany McGhee - *San Diego State University*  
Maritza Mejia - *CA State University, Los Angeles*  
Patrice Moore - *Mariello's Beauty College*  
Damian Morando - *El Camino College*  
Carlos Moreno - *East L.A. College*  
Argelia Munoz - *Humboldt State University*  
Angela Ortez - *Seattle University*  
Evelyn Payan - *CA State University, Dominguez Hills*  
Katherine Penado - *Bryman College*

Shannon Penna - *CA State University, Long Beach*  
Crystal Peralta - *Cal Poly Pomona*  
Judy Perez - *L.A. Mission College*  
Jesus Pineda - *University of CA, Los Angeles*  
Aracely Ponce - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Teresa Ponce - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Candices Pruitt - *CA State University, Northridge*  
Keyon Roberts - *CA State University, Northridge*  
Berenice Robles - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Racel Robles - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Jeannette Sanchez - *Woodbury University*  
Rachel Schaar - *CA State University, Dominguez Hills*  
Andresha Scott - *United Education Institute*  
Gabriela Sepulveda - *Mount St. Mary's College*  
Danielle Slaughter - *Maric College*  
Celisse Smith - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Maurita Solis - *American College of Medical Technology*  
Victor Solis - *L.A. Trade Tech*  
Rosa Soto - *Santa Monica College*  
Sonia Soto - *University of CA, Los Angeles*  
Katherine Stefani - *University of Illinois at Chicago*  
Aaron Strickland - *Cerritos College*  
Elizabeth Vazquez - *University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
Andrea Walker - *Clark Atlanta University*  
Kenroy Welch - *L.A. Trade Tech College*  
Araceli Zamudio - *CA State University, Dominguez Hills*

Visit our website to view more photos from the luncheon at [www.lacorps.org](http://www.lacorps.org). ■

# The Education Diversity Project

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possibility of pursuing college to study the environmental sciences.

CCI developed the Education Diversity Project in response to growing concern about the lack of diversity in environmental science university programs and related careers. CCI then asked LACC to recruit young people to participate in the project. Since LACC engages approximately 3,000 L.A.-area youth in environmental service projects a year, finding 80 who were interested in learning more about a career in environmental service was no problem!

***Since more than 75% of Clean & Green participants are the first in their family to graduate from high school, pursuing college-level training was not something they or their parents had ever been exposed to.***

The real challenge was getting students ready to enroll in college and preparing them for an environmental science major. Since more than 75% of Clean & Green participants are the first in their family to graduate from high school, pursuing college-level training was not something they or their parents had ever been exposed to before participating in the Education Diversity Project.

The project helps the whole family pursue this dream together. It started during the summer, when 20 Clean & Green partic-

ipants traveled to UCSB, where they got a chance to live and work on campus for two weeks. For most of them, it was the first time they were on a university campus. While there, they participated in hands-on environmental science lessons, talked with professional scientists, and even served as research interns! UCSB was the perfect partner campus because they offer some of the most cutting-edge environmental science programs in the nation, and boast numerous nationally recognized science



research laboratories and related degree programs.

But that was not the end of the Education Diversity Project. To build up their resumes before applying for college – and to give back by sharing what they've already learned – Clean & Green is now engaging these students in hands-on experiences planning and leading a week-long environmental sciences training for other students from inner-city Los Angeles.

Finally, Clean & Green staff are holding workshops for the participating students and their parents to discuss how to prepare to transfer from community college and/or university enrollment. Together, the staff, parents and students of the Education Diversity Project are looking forward to reaching the goal of sending more inner-city students to college to become professionals in the environmental sciences field. ■

## Introducing our New Board Member, Chris Modrzejewski



Chris Modrzejewski is a Principal at Sage Advisors, Inc., a public affairs firm that specializes in services to both the private and public sectors. Chris is a highly-experienced public affairs and government relations specialist with experience in both the public and private sectors developing and implementing political and communications strategies. He is responsible for managing a number of corporate, nonprofit and public sector clients and projects within the firm.

Prior to joining Sage Advisors, Chris worked for Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) as its Vice President of Public Affairs. As leader of the AEG team, he served as the primary contact for all issues related to political and community affairs, business diversity, and charitable involvement for AEG and its 35 separate divisions, including Los Angeles' STAPLES Center.

Previously, Chris worked for the former Los Angeles Mayor, Richard Riordan. As Riordan's Assistant Deputy Mayor and Director of Policy, Chris was responsible for the development and implementation of the Mayor's policy initiatives for the more than 30 Departments within the City of Los Angeles.

In addition to serving on LACC's Board of Directors, Chris also serves on the State of California's Seismic Safety Commission and is a Board member for the Loyola Marymount University's Center for the Study of Los Angeles. He attended the University of California, Davis

and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. Chris lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Denise, and their children Skyler and Jack.

We're looking forward to adding Chris' public affairs expertise to the wealth of experience that our Board of Directors brings to the organization.

Please join us in welcoming him! ■

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## The Planning and Conservation League Names John Van de Kamp President of the Board of Directors

The LACC is proud to announce that one of its longest-serving Board Members, Mr. John Van de Kamp, was elected as President of the Planning and Conservation League (PCL).

The PCL Board of Directors is comprised of individuals and environmental organization members, including Bruce Saito, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, who serves as a representative of local nonprofit conservation corps throughout California.

Mr. Van de Kamp, who served as California's State Attorney General from 1993 to 1991, served most recently as President of the State Bar of California. During his tenure as California's Attorney General, Van de Kamp was successful in fighting to protect Lake Tahoe and in establishing a moratorium on oil drilling off the California Coast, in addition to enforcing anti-trust and civil rights laws.

"I'm happy to announce that PCL is re-instituting its Annual Symposium in Sacramento on April 8, 2006. We're urging people from all elements of the environmental movement to come and share and obtain information about any issues that concern



them," said Mr. Van de Kamp. He expects the Planning and Conservation League to play a key role in the Capitol in the coming years by shaping legislation that will protect and restore California's natural environment and

that will also promote and defend the public health and safety of the people of California.

If you'd like more information about participating, please call 916-444-8726 or visit [www.pcl.org](http://www.pcl.org). ■

# A Postcard from College

## Greetings from UC Berkeley!

After finishing my service at LACC's SEA Lab, I stuck to my plan of attending UC Berkeley and majoring in Public Health. I'm in my third year now and am also a Pre-Med student. I chose Public Health because I'm learning that as society continues to escalate in population, prevention of illness is becoming the key to stabilizing our environment. Learning how environmental factors play into our health, especially in urban areas, really concerns me. I strongly believe that everyone should be entitled to healthcare, since the health of all people affects each person on the planet.

Right now I'm taking courses in Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy and Human Sexuality. Taking all of these courses is time consuming, but I enjoy studying for them very much.

I've also made time to get involved with projects like "Taking Action Together," where I teach Oakland youth about making healthy nutrition choices. I'm also a Community Service Chair for the Black Students in Health Association. In this role, I helped recruit more than 100 students to donate blood.

For next year, I am trying to get research work with the Biology Department. They even have a program where students can study marine life in Fiji for a semester. Hopefully the next postcard you receive from me will be from an island in the South Pacific!

Take care,  
Taysha Davison



made from recycled paper 

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