

health happens here



In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

Wanted: More Community Health Workers

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

The entire country is facing a shortage of health care professionals, with the Association of Schools of Public Health reporting that roughly 250,000 more public health workers are needed by 2020 to fill the gap. With this shortage, it has become more important than ever to encourage young people to pursue careers in health.

This January, with help from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative, five high school interns began working at La Familia Counseling Center, Inc., gaining firsthand experience of what it means to be a community health professional, educator and ambassador to their local communities.

Monica Soto, one of the interns from Hiram Johnson High School, says the main reason she applied for the internship was to see different kinds of careers available in health. "It's not always going to be that you are a doctor or a nurse," she says. "In a crazy way, even the Zumba teacher can be a health worker."

Community health careers can include social work, interpreting, counseling, nursing, working as a dental hygienist, learning disabilities specialist, behavioral or mental health clinician, care coordinators, health navigators and much more. But one of the biggest challenges California faces is filling the gap of diversity in the health industry. In 2012, a review by the California Senate reported the state's current workforce of health

professionals do not reflect California's racial and ethnic composition or language proficiency.

So during their time at La Familia, the interns planned a health fair for over 400 people, made presentations to their local community about different health topics, including bullying, abuse, hypertension and the importance of good nutrition and exercise, as well as surveying local populations about their health needs and helping them register to vote.

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Monica Soto, Intern at La Familia Counseling Center, Inc., senior at Hiram Johnson High School

Oreana Luna, an intern from Valley High School, worked on a project about obesity in the Hispanic community, and says, "That project was part of being an ambassador to my community and advocating for them about the risk that obesity does have." This internship inspired Oreana "to really do my best and help more people in my community, because that's the future generation," she says.

Monica was also inspired by her internship with La Familia. "Community workers can



From left, Monica Soto from Hiram Johnson High School, and Oreana Luna and Anthony Lor from Valley High School gained exposure to community health careers during an internship with La Familia Counseling Center, Inc. Other interns (not pictured) are Vanessa Jajar from Luther Burbank High School and Isela Martinez from Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School. Photo by Anne Stokes

change the lives of many people," she says. "We all think it is a beautiful thing that we get to work with this community and learn from people you wouldn't normally associate with."

After college, both Oreana and Monica plan to pursue careers in public health.

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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Your ZIP code shouldn't predict how long you'll live – but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long – and how well – we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.
Health Happens with Prevention.

Get involved

La Familia offers a wide of range of educational workshops and programs for adults and children, including karate and Zumba classes, parent support groups, youth leadership groups, women support groups, employment services and more. Visit lafcc.org or find them on Facebook at [facebook.com/lafamiliacounselingcenter](https://www.facebook.com/lafamiliacounselingcenter)



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