

N E W S R E L E A S E

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**Forum prepares students with disabilities to become tomorrow's
leaders in business, community and advocacy**
Students gather for 22nd Annual Youth Leadership Forum

SACRAMENTO – When you get 52 California high school students with disabilities together for a week of professional and personal mentorship and friendship, the result is an impressive look at tomorrow's leaders in business, community and advocacy. This remarkable group converged on California's State Capitol steps this morning to demonstrate their passion for creating successful paths toward their futures and improving the lives of the disability community at large.

The morning rally was part of the five-day Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) for Students with Disabilities, held annually in Sacramento and designed to help the students, known as delegates, recognize and reach their full potential through career and leadership training.

This year's YLF, held July 22-26 at California State University, Sacramento, marks its 22nd anniversary – an event that began with a handful of delegates in 1992.

Young delegates come from all over the state and are selected based on achievements and leadership skills they've displayed in their local communities.

"It's enlightening to watch these delegates, many who have faced challenges and adversity along the way, emerge as young adults with drive and leadership, ready to take on the world," said Sharon Hilliard, Chief Deputy Director of the California Employment Development Department (EDD). "These victories in their own personal lives will serve them well as they become future leaders and make their own marks on this world."

During this year's YLF, delegates met with YLF alumni to talk about personal and professional choices that lead to success. They attended leadership training, watched demonstrations of the latest technology, learned about each other's disabilities, discussed issues facing the disability community, and obtained advice from motivational speakers and mentors.

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California created YLF in 1992 and was the first state to hold a YLF Conference. Since then, the YLF model of helping prepare students with disabilities reach their career goals, join the workforce, live independently and become involved in their communities has been replicated in 33 states and U.S. territories. To date, the California YLF boasts more than 1,000 alumni.

“The YLF helps delegates understand that the strengths they've gained through their disability experiences can be powerful launching points into adulthood,” said Tony Sauer, Director of the California Department of Rehabilitation. “The skills and knowledge learned in Sacramento will last throughout their lifetime. Former delegates have become aides to legislators, doctors, disability advocates, lawyers, state executives, business entrepreneurs, and top executives of community-based organizations.”

One of the delegates from the very first YLF in 1992 is Sarah Triano, now Executive Officer, California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

“As a delegate, I met incredible mentors with disabilities who taught me I should never let anyone underestimate me or place limitations on my capabilities just because I have a disability,” said Triano. “My journey now has come full circle as I meet with this year’s delegates as a Governor appointee with the California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

“Not only do I have the ability to give back to YLF, I also have the opportunity to recommend policies that will have statewide impact on the lives of generations of youth with disabilities to come,” she said. “That’s the power of YLF. And now this generation is poised and ready to take on the tremendous responsibility of leadership in California.”

YLF student delegate selections were made by a partnership that included local independent living centers, YLF alumni, local school representatives and representatives of the major state departments who sponsor the project.

The annual California YLF is coordinated by a partnership of public and private non-profit agencies, including major support from the California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; the Department of Rehabilitation; the Employment Development Department; the California Department of Education/Napa County Office of Education; State Council on Developmental Disabilities; State Independent Living Council; California Workforce Investment Board; and UC Davis/MIND Institute. Major private donors include the Wells Fargo Foundation; Sutter Health; Molina Health Care; Northrop Grumman; Southern

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California Edison; Mission San Rafael Rotary Club; Lockheed Martin; the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, Inc.; and Friends of Californians with Disabilities, Inc.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A list of the 52 YLF students, listed by county of residence, follows:

Alameda County

Alison Boswell, Pleasanton
Nadra Mamou, Fremont
Ashley Vega, Hayward
Joseph Wang, Fremont

Calaveras County

Megan Korbelik, Angels Camp

Del Norte County

Jacob Roeloffs, Crescent City

El Dorado County

Zachary Pickett, Cameron Park

Glenn County

Christopher Ariza, Orland

Humboldt County

Roger Bernard, Trinidad
Cynthia Chamberlain, Rio Dell
Bailey Grant, Bayside

Los Angeles County

Ryne Beachley, San Pedro
Autumn Brown, Santa Fe Springs
Briana Carter, Lancaster
Michelle Chavez, Norwalk
Asia Chu, Cerritos
Luis Gonzalez, Cerritos
Alexander Hendifar, Long Beach
Juan Lopez, Los Angeles
Carlos Ortiz, Calabasas

Los Angeles County

Jamie Perett, Whittier
Maria Ramirez, Pico Rivera
Jonathan Vamos, Los Angeles
Eliza Wilson, Long Beach

Marin County

Kelsey O'Maley, San Anselmo

Nevada County

Naomi Goodlin, Nevada City

Orange County

Julian Barajas, Santa Ana
Karla Guerrero, Santa Ana
Brenda Coria, Santa Ana

Riverside County

Adriana Arreguin, Riverside
Andy Escalera, San Jacinto
Ana Martinez, Riverside
Kevan Mckiddy, Lake Elsinore
Charlee Rowan, Lake Elsinore

Sacramento County

Raymond Carpenter-Giese, Sacramento
Arielle Green, Elk Grove

San Bernardino County

Marimar Quiroa, Fontana
Charles Turner, Apple Valley

San Diego County

Garrett Christensen, Vista
Avi Cobb, San Diego
Jamial Miller, San Diego
Jake Morel, Oceanside
Luke Stone, San Diego
Linsey Wehner, Oceanside

San Francisco County

Justin Hong, San Francisco
Lily Marshall-Fricker, San Francisco

San Joaquin County

Nicholas Duff, Stockton

San Luis Obispo County

Cameron McGurrin, Morro Bay

Santa Clara County

Angelina Maciel, San Jose

Joyce Yin, Sunnyvale

Shasta County

Madison Zimmerman, Redding

Siskiyou County

Evan Bury, Etna