

San Joaquin Valley Region

Tulare County

Tulare County Office of Education, Services for Education and Employment Youth Program, Porterville and Visalia

Selene Aguilera, a recent high school graduate and resident of Porterville, in Tulare County, needed a job to be able to afford a car, but her interviewing skills were rusty and her résumé needed updating. While looking for career options online, Selene came across the website for the Tulare County Office of Education Services for Education and Employment (SEE) Youth Program.

As part of the Instructional Services Division, SEE is responsible for providing educational programs and services to high-school-age youth in Tulare County, as well as vocational training, educational services and employment opportunities for adult residents.

After receiving guidance on interviewing skills and résumé building, Selene was referred to the manager of the local Boys and Girls Club of Porterville by Nou Cha, a SEE Youth Development Specialist/Trainer. Selene completed a month-long training program and, after proving that she had what it takes, club managers were happy to keep her on board and hire her as a part-time After School Program Specialist.

Since then, Selene has been helping children by providing skill-building after-school activities. "We do math and we have a calendar of activities," said Selene. While she's gaining valuable work experience, she said she especially likes her job because of the bonding with the kids. "I got really close to the kids - sometimes they come and hug me. I really like my job," Selene added.

Thanks to her new job, Selene is closer to achieving one of her immediate goals, owning a car. "The money that I get paid at the center every two weeks helps me pay for my car, and I only have one year left," she says enthusiastically.

In the near future, Selene also plans to use the SEE program's services to continue her education.

Kern County

America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM, Kern County

When the family business closed in 2016, Joshua Conway lost his job but not his drive. The Lake Isabella resident needed a job to provide for his growing family. He needed a new career. And he needed a change of direction – and fast.

Joshua found all three at the America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM (AJCC), Kern County, and their partner agency Employers' Training Resource (ETR). ETR Job Coach Donna Moreno guided him from beginning to end, starting with his truck-driver's license.

Joshua was eligible for workforce investment training and Donna got him enrolled at Western Truck Driving School in Kern County. But before he could finish the training, tragedy struck. "My uncle passed away in January, followed by my dad's passing," said Joshua, who suddenly was the family's sole provider. But amid the emotional upheaval, the AJCC and ETR staff stayed by his side. "They were able to help with everything through those tough times," Joshua said.

Joshua finished school and, with the proper license in hand, he used CalJOBSSM – California's online job matching system – for job searches and résumé help. He also had the help of the AJCC Employers' Training Resource staff to help create and submit documents to potential employers.

A self-starter, Joshua followed up on dozens of leads throughout the state with long-haul trucking firms. But he wanted to stay close to his mother and his family in his small mountain town of 3,500, so Joshua accepted a local job with Thomas Refuse Service as a septic pump truck driver.

Reflecting on his experience with the AJCC and ETR, Joshua said, "It really shows me that there is no excuse. If you try hard enough and apply your best, you'll find what you need through the career center. They provide all the tools, but in the end you have to put the tools to work. I did just that and I couldn't be happier with the outcome."

**Madera County
Madera County Workforce Assistance Center**



As a single grandmother raising three boys, Maribel Lopez needed to find work quickly. Maribel had been out of the workforce for years and knew she had to brush up her job searching skills to be competitive in the workforce. She turned to the Madera County Workforce Assistance Center, an Employment Development Department (EDD) partner, in Madera.

Maribel was initially overwhelmed by new technology, but with the help of interview training and résumé courses, she was able to build her tech confidence and land a job. “I put in 100%,” said Maribel, and her efforts paid off. She got a position as Office Assistant and Collections Specialist with Medvetta Financial in Madera. But that wasn’t her only option. The Workforce Assistance Center helped her get a job offer with the Madera County Auditor and Controller’s Office.

Maribel says the courses she completed at the Madera County Workforce Assistance Center helped her get updated and familiar with new technology being used in the workplace. While the process was challenging, going through the courses eventually became a family goal. Her children and grandchildren cheered her on every step of the way. Maribel says her goal is to give her kids and grandkids a better life, and teach them the value of commitment. The EDD’s partner agency helped her and her family achieve that success, said Maribel, “I feel grateful they helped me so I could show my kids and grandkids: look where I am with hard work and education.”

Kern County
Delano America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM

From the fields to City Hall, Francisca Alvarado's journey is a testament to her perseverance and work ethic. As a single mother to four young children, Francisca was determined to get off government assistance, get an education, and set an example for her kids.

She had spent hours working in the hot sun as a fruit picker as well as hours on her feet serving customers in restaurants. Despite all that hard work, it wasn't enough to pay the bills.

Tired of barely making it each month, Francisca went to the Delano America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM (AJCC) and enrolled in an 18-week Office Automation Training course through Proteus, Inc., a provider of training, education, and community services in the Central San Joaquin Valley.

During her training, Francisca had to juggle responsibilities including getting her kids to school, finding a sitter, and taking classes full-time without being paid. "It was really hard, but the sacrifice was worth it," says Francisca. Through the course, she learned how to use Microsoft Excel, Word, and Power Point, along with earning her workplace training certificate. More importantly, she acquired intangible skills such as how to interview and best represent herself, while gaining confidence along the way.

During her training, Francisca worked part-time for the City of Delano. They were so happy with her work that she was offered a full-time job. Francisca says the Delano AJCC helped make her dream a reality: a victory she celebrates with her children. Her 14-year-old son recently told her, "Mom, I can't believe you work at City Hall!"

San Joaquin County CHD/Lodi WorkNet Center

In a different time and place, you would have found Brandon Cooper behind bars. But not today. Thanks to his new outlook and help CHD/Lodi WorkNet Center in San Joaquin County, Brandon is working today as a case manager at a local agency in Lodi, where he helps parolees re-enter society – just like he did.

Brandon's path from parolee to employee was not easy because of his criminal record. He needed help making the transition, and that's when he walked into the CHD/Lodi WorkNet Center about 18 months ago. There he enrolled into the Temp Work Experience Program and the Supervised Population Program designed to help those with criminal backgrounds.

Brandon started on-the-job training at his local agency where he helped other parolees, and his employer was so impressed he was promoted to a Case Manager-Outreach Worker. "All the staff there are great," Cooper said. "They handle business and don't just sell you a dream.

Much has changed in 18 short months since the start of his journey. He took to heart what the various programs gave him and he excelled – so much so that he's now a public speaker and shares his background, his success and his message of "if you can think it, you can live it." And one day, he wants to open his own foundation to help those in similar situations.