

# Summer Youth Employment Successes



On August 5, 2009, more than 1,200 young people gathered at the Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario for Y4 - "Why youth? Why wait? Why now? Why not?" to celebrate their accomplishments in the Summer Youth Employment Program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Approximately \$7 million in stimulus funding, granted to the county's Workforce Investment Board, placed 1,800 disadvantaged youth in summer jobs throughout the county. The program gave youth the opportunity to gain valuable work experience over the summer, which they most likely would not have been able to find otherwise.



With the current economy, many of the summer jobs traditionally available to young people are being filled by adults. This has reduced opportunities for youth to find work and build skills essential to becoming productive employees in our county and leading successful careers in adulthood.

Participants worked at a variety of jobsites including, Pleasure Point Marina in Big Bear, Barstow Community College, and Galerie Mistral jewelry store in Lake Arrowhead. Many of the youth had the opportunity to work in their field of interest, or work in industry sectors they had not considered before.



"The Summer Youth Employment Program was a huge success and an inspirational journey for many of the young people involved," said Sandy Harmsen, executive director for the Workforce Investment Board. "The Y4 event was a fun and exciting way to close the program and give participants new resources and additional encouragement to continue down a path to success."

The event included presentations by Arel Moody, Michael Simons and Luke Tipple, young entrepreneurs who motivated the students with stories of how they accomplished their goals despite starting without much more than gumption, perseverance and raw talent. They encouraged youth to pursue their interests and conquer their dreams. This was followed by a resource and job fair featuring 40 local businesses and education and training facilities.

Students were bused in from each corner of the county, including Needles and the High Desert, which created a true feeling of camaraderie among this geographically diverse group.

