

# Redlands Daily Facts

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## Organization hosts forum for families in need

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REDLANDS — When she lost her legal secretarial job, a single mother of two also lost her home and her children.

One father of three has been out of work for six months. A number of financially stressed parents are frustrated over the technological barriers standing between themselves and employment.

"I'm hearing these stories daily," said John Costas, recruiter/job developer for the Center for Employment Training.

Build A Generation hosted a community needs forum held by the Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County Wednesday at Franklin Elementary School. The buzz word of the day was "employment." Moderate- to low-income families met with the organization's directors to discuss their needs in the present economy.

"These forums are to let the community know about the services that are available through the Community Action Partnership and how they can benefit from those

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services," said Nancy Ruth White, a Community Action Partnership board member.

The Community Action Partnership has a 15-member board divided into three sectors — private, public and low-income. White, a retired educator, represents the low-income sector.

"We're trying to assess the needs of this county," White said.

The Community Action Partnership is a private, non-profit organization that partners with other local non-profits to alleviate poverty in San Bernardino County. The Redlands Family Service Association, Angel Food Ministries and the Center for Employment Training were a few of the agencies in attendance at Wednesday's forum.

"I haven't seen a partnership as effective as CAP," Costas said. "That's why I'm here."

The Community Action Partnership conducts forums throughout the county every two years to find out what low-income families need to become self-sustaining. This year, the government's stimulus package may present the organization with the opportunity to expand and create programs.

"This public testimony will be incorporated into a community action plan which must be submitted by June 30," said deputy director

Charles Adams, Jr. "Through this process we'll evaluate our existing programs and the development of new programs to fill gaps in services."

Participants at the forum completed a questionnaire and gave anonymous verbal testimony. When the audience was asked if they had heard of or received services from the Community Action Partnership, only a few hands went up.

The agency can help low-income families reduce their energy bills by supplying them with Energy Star appliances. The non-profit offers weatherizing services, replacing windows, doors and weather-stripping. It can establish energy rate-reduction plans for qualified residents, supplement their grocery needs, provide job training and educational assistance and help families save to buy a home or start a business.

"There are a lot of things affecting people today," said Sandra Brown of the Community Action Partnership. "People don't know where to start or where to go, but we have services and programs that can help families."

And solving one problem can lead to solving many.

"I've never met anyone with just one need. One need is always related to another one," Costas said.

Costas focuses on helping clients find jobs. Though companies are posting fewer and fewer jobs, they are being flooded with resumes, he said. Companies are now relying on impersonal computer programs to sift through the mounting digital piles. The disconnect has created a resurgence in the "good old boy" network, he said.

"You almost have to know someone within a company to get hired," Costas said. "You need to connect with someone tied to the hiring process so they can put a face to your

resume. You have to find a creative way to get past the 'keyword' search used by computer programs to select potential job candidates."