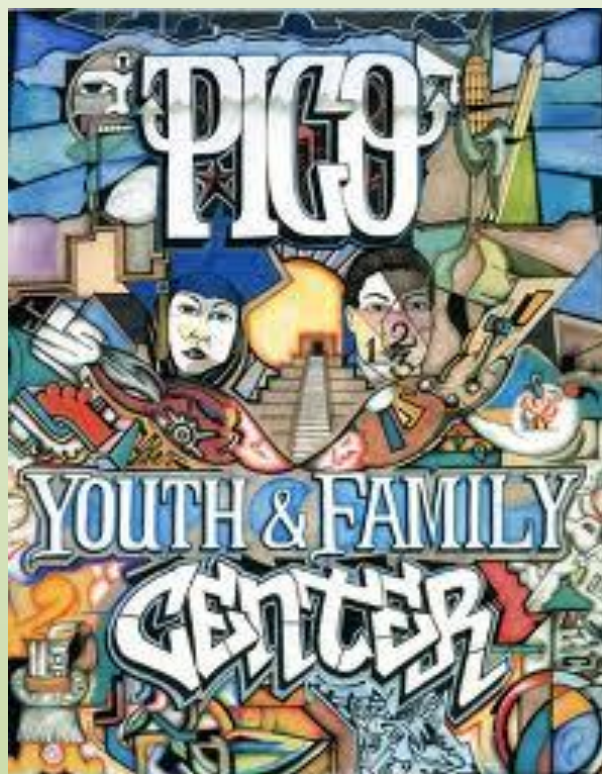


MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2014-15

Pico Youth & Family Center (PYFC)

Selina Barajas, PYFC Program Director



Major Accomplishments in 2014

Gender Specific Support Groups

PYFC Prom Giveaway: The PYFC organized a Prom Giveaway to support our graduating seniors who cannot afford to attend the prom. The goal of this giveaway was to award a prom dress, hair and makeup services, and a day of relaxation for our graduating seniors who have participated in Girl's Group. All six seniors received hair and makeup done by a professional stylist, dress and accessories, and they were able to get their first pedicure and manicure. All of this was made possible with donations from local businesses and community residents.



The Girls Empowerment Group consists of a dynamic group of seven registered youth in this reporting cycle. PYFC Case Manager, PYFC Program Director and St. John's Family Therapist co-facilitate this group. The following girls participated in our

PYFC Prom Giveaway and will be attended college Fall 2014:

- A.B, Sonoma State University
- E.E, California State University, Long Beach
- S.M, University of Puget Sound
- R.R, University of Arizona
- S.S, California State University Northridge
- C.V, Santa Monica College

Leadership Development

Mandela Day: PYFC Leadership Council, along with Revelations Entertainment hosted Mandela Day on Thursday, July 18th at the center. Revelations Entertainment is Morgan Freeman's production company and the Pico Youth & Family Center was selected to host the event. The overarching objective of Mandela Day is to inspire



individuals to take action to help change the world for the better, and in doing so build a global movement for good. Ultimately it seeks to empower communities everywhere. "Take Action; Inspire Change; Make Every Day a Mandela Day." Youth and families were able to hear about Nelson Mandela, his life and legacy and watched "Invictus!" The audience was able to ask questions regarding Nelson Mandela and the entertainment industry.

Civic Engagement: In honor of Cesar Chavez day, PYFC's youth leadership council organized a March to support Hotel workers at the Double Tree Hotel in Santa Monica. Leadership council invited parents and community members to the March and organized a hundred people march to commemorate Cesar Chavez' legacy. Leadership council also attended the Cesar Chavez movie

screening, where youth got to participate in the Q & A with the Director of the film.

http://surfsantamonica.com/ssm_site/the_lookout/news/News-2014/April_2014/04_01_2014_Pico_Youth_and_Family_Center_Pickets_Santa_Monica_Hotel_for_Cesar_Chavez_Day.html

Lifeskills: Job Readiness and Employment Service Referrals and Placement

PYFC Case Manager continued to individually case manage and develop action plans for a total of 30 youth. Although the needs and the degrees of attention vary, 30 youth met at least two objectives defined by our program plan [See *Graph 1: Achievement Plan Breakdown of Case Managed Youth*]. As members of the City's YRT2.0 collaborative, we have made a substantial amount of referrals to other YRT2.0 navigators in the areas of employment (JVS/ HTA), counseling (St. Johns/ CLARE), and assisted living (First5/ St. Joseph's center) programs.

Graph 1: Achievement Plan Breakdown of Case Managed Youth



Academic Support: Tutoring & College Readiness

Senior Graduation: The PYFC is proud to announce that 20 PYFC youth graduated from Samohi, Olympic and SMC. In June, the PYFC held a Senior Banquet Luau and invited the youth and families to celebrate this major accomplishment. We awarded several scholarships and certificates to support our college-going culture at PYFC. The center awarded over \$2,500 scholarships to our youth to assist them with their first year of college.





College Retreat: In the month of April, PYFC youth and staff participated in a weeklong college retreat where students visited 3 Cal States (Humboldt State University, San Francisco State, Cal State East Bay) and 3 UC's (UC Santa Cruz, UC Berkley, UC Santa Barbara). Eleven PYFC students participated in the college retreat and were able to experience the 'college life'. The students slept in University dorms, shadowed University students and were provided with formal panels and campus tours by college students. For

all of the students who attended the retreat, this was their first time visiting the college campuses and experiencing Northern California.



Music Production & Artist Development

On April 25, 2014 International Salsa sensation Oscar D'Leon visited the Pico Youth & Family Center (PYFC) to donate funds so that the youth serving organization can purchase new equipment for their pioneering recording studio. D'Leon donated \$2,500 to the PYFC's Music Studio. PYFC staff, youth participants in PYFC's music program, and community leaders held a press conference to announce the donation and celebrate the legendary Salsero's contribution to the youth of Los Angeles.

“The PYFC opened the first public recording studio for youth in our City's history in 2002 and our equipment is old and over used,” said PYFC Founder and Executive Director Oscar de la Torre. “D'Leon's support and contribution will give new life to our recording studio. His act of goodwill has inspired us to name the recording studio in his name. The PYFC will now be home to the Oscar D'Leon Recording Studio for Youth.” The recording studio will provide free access to young musicians 16-24 years of age who meet the PYFC's criteria for services. Young musicians who participate at the PYFC must work to promote the PYFC's motto of Peace, Unity and Social Justice. “D'Leon is showing aspiring young musicians that one must never forget their roots and giving back to the progress of others is the true definition of

being a star,” stated PYFC Board chair Francisco Juarez. Founded as a response to an upsurge in youth and gang violence, the Pico Youth & Family Center provides gang and youth violence prevention services, case management, counseling, tutoring and college readiness, leadership training, artist development workshops and free access to a recording studio where youth have recorded five CD compilations. Since opening in 2002, gang violence and most importantly gang membership, has decreased in Santa Monica's Pico Neighborhood.



Referrals

The PYFC provides a safe space for youth to congregate Monday-Friday from 11-7pm. Drop-in services include wrap around services, such as learning life skills, attaining job readiness skills, and general tutoring and mentoring. In 2014, the PYFC (re) registered over 100 youth members. Also, the PYFC helps assist youth in setting goals in key areas for improving their future by collaborating with partnering agencies and other organizations Monday-Friday from 11-7pm and by appointment.

Community Healing through Health & Wellness

Yoga with Mothers: Yoga/Counseling with PYFC Mothers PYFC community volunteer and MFT candidate Mercedes Gertz continued to provide yoga and counseling sessions to mothers and/or PYFC participants. During the month of May and June, three mothers have been very consistent in both yoga and counseling sessions. This has proven a great benefit to these mothers who are learning stress reduction and communication techniques that help them in managing relationships in their households. All of these sessions are free of charge and we are looking to expand this group after an evaluation of the pilot. Ms. Gertz and her son are former clients of PYFC and this is a great example of PYFC inculcating the principle of people giving back to the community. Ms. Gertz is fully bilingual and connects well with our mothers. The parents have stated that this program that emphasizes physical, mental and peer support helps them deal with stress in their lives.

Spirit Run: During Spring 2014, Leadership Council participated in the 4th Annual “Four Corners Spirit Run”. Our leadership group was instrumental in assisting event organizers with outreach and planning. The event is intended to bring peace and unity to the communities that have shared a long history of gang violence; youth and families run through the Venice, Santa Monica, Culver City and Sotel neighborhoods as a testament to solidarity.



Major Accomplishments in 2015

Gender Specific Support Groups

PYFC partnered with Girls PACT to celebrate International Women’s Day on Saturday March 7th from 1:00PM-4:00PM. The celebration was held at the PYFC and over 60 young women ages 15-24 attended. International Women’s Day included a keynote speaker, performances, vendors, and Open MIC!

PYFC Program Director, Selina Barajas re-launched Girls Group in 2011. PYFC’s Girl’s Group is a safe space for the young females who attend Samohi, Olympic, and SMC and/or are from the community of Santa Monica. The women of PYFC are dedicated in improving the educational and mentorship opportunities, leadership empowerment, and civic engagement in our communities. We seek to inspire the women to think critically about how we are portrayed in society. The group promotes and encourages the development of our self-identity and unity among women. PYFC’s goal is to equip them with the necessary tools for them to adjust in everyday situations and throughout their lives. We also want to generate within these girls a feeling of inner respect and love for themselves, while learning to be self-empowered.



Statistics prove that girls with low self-esteem are likely to drop out of school, be promiscuous, have unsafe sex, attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, develop an eating disorder and cut themselves. 7 in 10 girls feel insecure and, statistically, girls that feel

ugly and worthless are 50% more likely to get pregnant than girls that feel good about themselves! Michelle Shegda, founder of Girls PACT, understands insecurity “stuff”. She knows that sometimes family stuff, school stuff, relationship stuff or work stuff makes us feel lonely, fat, ugly, sad, angry, depressed, stupid, disappointed, jealous, scared, stressed, or just tired. When this life stuff makes us feel bad about ourselves, we do not make the best choices for ourselves. Rather than feel ashamed of or embarrassed about our stuff, Girls PACT creates a world where it is safe to “Rock Ur Stuff!” The mission of Girls PACT is to combat unplanned pregnancy among young women ages 15-24 by revealing the power of self-confidence. We inspire positive personal values, teach sexual health, develop assertive communication skills and promote healthy relationships to build self-assurance and poise. Our goal is empower all young women to manage their “stuff” with confidence and style. Girls PACT facilitates weekly meetings with Girls Group at PYFC.

Leadership Development

Dias de los Muertos was celebrated at venues throughout Santa Monica, including the Pico Youth & Family Center (PYFC). This year, PYFC and Highways @18th Street Arts Center collaborated once more for our annual Dia de los Muertos celebration. PYFC held a week-long series of educational, artistic, and cultural workshops revolved around the significance of Dia de los Muertos from October 27-November 2, 2014. Over sixty youth and community members participated in the facilitations. This year, PYFC offered the following workshops.

On Monday, October 27th, PYFC offered the workshop, *Honoring our Ancestors Through Hip Hop*. Youth and community members were able to share stories and anecdotes of their loved ones who have passed on. PYFC Music Consultant and

Program Director helped the group compose a collective song in our PYFC Music Studio.

On Tuesday, October 28th, we held the *La Catrina Mask Making Workshop*. Highways was able to hire a professional artists to come and teach our youth how to make their very own mask at PYFC. Day of the Dead skull masks are endowed with special meaning and ceremonial purpose as a link between two spiritual worlds.

PYFC along with UCLA's MEChA Xinachtli ("the seed that germinates") hosted a presentation on Wednesday, October 29th discussing the history and significance of dias de los muertos. This workshop was titled *DOD History & Significance Workshop*.

On Thursday, October 30th, PYFC held a *Papel Picado Workshop*. Again, Highways was able to provide the center with a professional artist. Youth and community members were able to hear about the traditional art of Papel Picado or Mexican tissue paper cutout banners (literally perforated paper). Papel picado is made especially for the festivities of the Days of the Dead (dia de los Muertos) and include skeletal figures engaged in the everyday activities of the living. Participants were able to make their own papel picado banner and helped the PYFC string together to create festive, colorful decorations for our DOD celebrations!

Throughout the week, PYFC staff and youth visited the altars at Highways Performance Space. On Friday, October 31st PYFC decorated the community altar with pictures, personal objects or mementos and candles. The idea was that by placing these artifacts, flowers and foods the person will be remembered and celebrated for who they were in life and this would encourage them to pay a visit.



PYFC has held an annual Dia de los Muertos community event for over a decade. This year, PYFC held our DOD celebration at Highways Performance Space on November 1st and 2nd. This weeklong event was a beautiful celebration. On

Saturday, *Dia de los Muertos: Ritual, Remembrance & Performance Art Celebration* at Highways was a free, all day event from 2-9pm. The community was able to participate in a ritual ceremony to welcome and honor all ancestors and recently departed. Youth and families enjoyed performers Chicano Secret Service and Jose Torres-Tama in humorous and satirical performance works. All were able to celebrate the cycle of life "Vivos y Muertos Juntos" at our festival and partake in traditional pan de muerto, tamales, Oaxacan comidas and live music at Highways. It was a day for the community to remember and honor our departed loved ones with live music, performance, vendors, art, and traditional foods. Youth and families were able to celebrate the cycle of life! On Sunday, November 2, PYFC held *The Cycle of Life in Words, Music, and Dance: A Dia de los Muertos Celebration* also at Highways. Readings by local spoken word artists, poets, and hip-hop artists under the direction of Leila Steinberg and PYFC performed. Folklorico dance performances by Cabeza de Vaca Cultural School opened up the event and traditional Aztec dancers closed the ceremony.

Thankful for Peace: As part of promoting unity and building community, the PYFC held our 5th Annual "Thankful for Peace" Potluck. The dinner was held on Friday, November 21st from 7-9pm at the PYFC. This is an opportunity for all of us to connect with one another, our families, community and Mother Earth. A mini-documentary film showcase in collaboration with Echo Park Film Center accompanied the potluck dinner from our Youth Leadership Council.

On Sunday, November 23rd Boxes of Love partnered with PYFC and Virginia Ave Center and distributed over 50 turkey/Thanksgiving boxes and \$25 gift cards to our youth and their families. This was the second annual Turkey Giveaway. All of the families who participated were very appreciative.



Toy Drive: The PYFC provides youth the opportunity to acquire leadership skills by organizing informative community workshops, leadership retreats, and community improvement projects. In midyear, PYFC youth leaders helped organize our first civic engagement activity. PYFC staff and youth leaders organized a Toy Drive with Shrinners Children's Hospital. PYFC Leadership Council left a toy bin at Starbucks (Pico/Lincoln) and collected toys and school items to distribute to children who are undergoing treatment in the areas of Orthopaedics, Burn Care,

Spinal Cord Injury, and Cleft Lip and Palate. As a result, PYFC helped these sick children feel special during this holiday season

Lifeskills: Job Readiness and Employment Service Referrals and Placement

YRT2.0 Highlights: PYFC staff continued to play an active role in the City led Cradle to Career and YRT 2.0 meetings. PYFC’s Case Manager led the presentation on 13 “opportunity youth” during this reporting cycle. We continue to work in collaboration with Navigators with YRT 2.0 and other youth serving providers. The PYFC has a unique role in YRT2.0, as the agency with the most amount of YRT2.0 youth, our involvement is crucial to the YRT’s success.

Academic Support: Tutoring & College Readiness

During this reporting cycle, PYFC Staff met with SMC and UCLA students to discuss our Academic Support program.

In October, UCLA Xinachtli executed the college readiness workshops and curriculum. At midyear, UCLA, SMC, and college interns continued to provide tutoring for youth including college and GED preparatory. The tutors/mentors met here at PYFC every Wednesday from 3:30-6:30pm.



In October, PYFC Program Director and two youth attended a forum on education and ethnic studies at Cal State Dominguez Hills. PYFC Program Director, Selina Barajas spoke about her experiences in Arizona and HB 2281 and the PYFC youth discussed our cultural events and workshops. After the presentation, PYFC youth were able to dialog with current college students and tour the campus.

UCLA Raza Youth Conference

On Saturday, February 28th our PYFC staff and eight youth attended a field trip to MEChA de UCLA’s 22nd Annual Raza Youth Conference (RYC). The purpose of this day long conference is to promote higher education and collaboration between students, parents, and community members regarding “raza” related issues. This year’s theme was “Conscious of my Historia, Embracing my Roots, Today I am Resilient.” Throughout the day, students and parents were able to attend workshops covering topics from financial aid to feminism in the 21st century. PYFC Music Consultant and youth presented a workshop, "Hip Hop: In the Classroom & the Story of the PYFC." They held a great Q&A after the presentation and students



were impressed with the dialog. Participants also took part in talking circles where they discussed topics such as higher education, music and media, and beyond! Participants were able to meet and interact with over 1,000 students, parents, and community members that attended the conference.



Black/Brown Night

On March 9th, Xinachtli tutors hosted a Family Dinner Night at U.C. There was strong turnout and great discussion shared between students, elders and youth. The discussion and higher education panel, which focused on Black and Brown unity was solely facilitated by UCLA Xinachtli. This topic was recommended from parents and the principal from Santa Monica High School.

Family Dinner

UCLA's



Music Production & Artist Development

In 2014-15, our Music Production & Artist Development program was highly utilized by youth participants. We had 29 youth enrolled in our music studio during this fiscal cycle. All of the youth engaged in our Music Studio either attend or have attended Samohi, Olympic High School or the Off Campus Learning Center. Through

a series of workshops and hands-on studio sessions, these motivated youth continued to learn music production and recording techniques using state of the art recording equipment. The group worked on their lyrical and song writing skills. In 2014, the Music Studio completed the 5th youth-led CD compilation album and will be released April 2015. Twenty tracks will be featured on the album. PYFC has now 100 original songs in five CD compilations that represent an archive of youth voice and perspectives on a range of topics. Post surveys were also collected during this cycle.

Community Healing through Arts & Culture

This summer the PYFC participated in a 6-week (July 7-August 15) Summer Arts Program. Seventeen PYFC members enrolled in this program. The PYFC Summer Arts Program was led by local artist/educator Elias Serna and PYFC Program Director. Serna is a filmmaker, cofounder of the comedy group Chicano Secret Service, and teaches film/writing/Chican@ Studies at Cal State LA & Dominguez Hills. He is also a Santa Monica Native. During the summer, the Summer Arts Program produced t-shirts, murals, and featured guest artists, writers, and attended field trips every Friday throughout Los Angeles County.

