



C O U N T Y A D M I N I S T R A T O R

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COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES GRADUATE FROM UNIQUE ALAMEDA COUNTY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

OAKLAND – Nine adults with developmental disabilities were honored at a graduation ceremony Thursday for completing year-long internships with Alameda County as part of a special collaboration that provides on-the-job experience for individuals with special needs. These nine special individuals make up the third graduating class to complete internships with the County as part of its Project SEARCH Program. Project SEARCH allows interns to develop their job skills by becoming fully immersed in a large workplace and opens the door to possibilities for gainful employment. The program is a partnership between Alameda County, East Bay Innovations and the Oakland Unified School District.

Twelve members of the first and second graduating classes were placed in permanent employment following their Project SEARCH internships, while two members of the current graduating class have already secured permanent jobs set to begin next month. Overall, five interns from the first three graduating classes have secured permanent jobs with Alameda County, including one of Thursday's honorees who will begin next month working for the Auditor-Controller's Office.

Project SEARCH began in 1996 at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital and has since become a national program championing work opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The Alameda County program was launched in October 2009 as the first public sector Project SEARCH program in California, and it has since become a centerpiece of the County's multifaceted approach to making diversity and inclusion a priority in its employment practices. Project SEARCH is managed through the County Administrator Office Diversity Programs Unit (DPU). Last year, Alameda County's program received an award from International Project SEARCH for high job placement rate for program graduates.

County Administrator Susan S. Muranishi, one of the driving forces behind the Alameda County program, continues to urge County department heads to consider hiring Project SEARCH graduates when looking to fill administrative support positions. "You have all done excellent work," Muranishi told the interns at Thursday's graduation. "But what's most important is the work you all do going forward as you transition into permanent employment."

Six Alameda County departments seized the opportunity to augment their workforces with Project SEARCH interns in 2012-13: the Assessor, Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder, County Administrator's Office, General Services Agency, Public Defender's Office and Sheriff's Office. To provide the interns with a range of experience, the program called for each of the interns to complete assignments with three different County departments during their year-long stints.

Lori Kotsonas of East Bay Innovations, said the Project SEARCH interns consistently prove to be first-rate employees. Kotsonas said her agency could use assistance in finding potential employers for Alameda County's Project SEARCH graduates.

Potential employers – and anyone else interested in learning more about Project SEARCH, should call Lori Kotsonas at (510) 618-1580 ext.15 or go to eastbayinnovations.org. For those interested in participating in the Alameda County Project SEARCH program, contact the DPU at (510) 272-3895, or visit <http://www.acgov.org/cao/diversity>.

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