



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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES GRADUATE FROM UNIQUE ALAMEDA COUNTY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

OAKLAND – Seven people will be honored at a graduation ceremony Wednesday, January 29, for completing year-long internships with Alameda County as part of a special collaboration that provides on-the-job experience for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. **The graduation will be at 2 p.m. in the chambers of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, 5th Floor, 1221 Oak Street, Oakland.**

These seven individuals make up the fourth 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.

Twenty members of the first three 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 in the coming weeks. Wednesday's ceremony will include presentations of graduation certificates and talks by local officials involved in the internship project. Some of the young graduates will also be available for interviews following what is sure to be an uplifting event.

Project SEARCH began in 1996 at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital and has since become an international 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 is managed through the Alameda County's 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.

"All of our Project SEARCH interns have each shown themselves to be reliable, valuable additions to our workforce," said Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County Administrator. "I am extremely proud of each and every one of them." Muranishi continues to urge County department heads to consider hiring Project SEARCH graduates when looking to fill administrative support positions.

Lori Kotsonas of East Bay Innovations, said the Project SEARCH interns consistently prove to be first-rate employees. "We could really use some help from the community to identify new employers or for employers to come and meet these new graduates who have developed strong work habits and amazing office support skills," she said.

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>.