



NEWS RELEASE

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Ribbon cutting launches formal beginning of Opportunity Youth Academy

SAN JOSE, CA – Only 7 years after immigrating to the United States, Nayeli found herself homeless at age 14. Earning her high school diploma paled in comparison to more urgent matters, such as where her next meal would come from and where she would sleep each night. She didn't complete school.

But Nayeli's story doesn't end there. In fact, it has a new beginning thanks to a new Santa Clara County Office of Education program that is re-engaging students aged 16-24 to help them earn their high school diploma. Now 18, Nayeli told her compelling story at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Opportunity Youth Academy in Gilroy on Nov. 6, one of three academies around the county to open this fall. With the individual attention the program provides, Nayeli is on track to graduate with a dream of going to college and ultimately helping others get out of the same circumstances she experienced.

"We need a lot more programs like this," said Superintendent of Schools Jon R. Gundry. "I'm happy to be involved in this work and making sure that young people who become disconnected from the system have an opportunity to be brought back in and given a path to success."

The Opportunity Youth Academies offer students a blended program of teacher-directed instruction and online credit accrual and recovery options. The individualized support of teachers, counselors, navigators, liaisons and access to the services of SCCOE partners from community-based organizations is the hallmark of this unique program. The focus is ensuring that students leave the program with a high school diploma, not a GED and a path to post-graduation college or career. The classes students complete satisfy admission requirements for California public universities and military service.

Beginning two years ago with the support of the Board of Education, Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Deputy Superintendent brought together top SCCOE administrators and community partners to develop the plan for the Opportunity Youth Academy to serve the 2,200 students who had dropped out of school in Santa Clara County. Most of these students were under 18 years old, and made up part of the 4,500 young people in the community who were not in school nor employed.

Two additional sites recently opened in San Jose and other sites are planned throughout Santa Clara County. Interested 16- to 24-year-olds who would benefit from the Opportunity Youth Academy program should call 1-844-OYA-4UUU (1-844-692-4888) or email oya@sccoe.org

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