

# CENTRAL CALIFORNIA CONSORTIUM

## 8TH ANNUAL INTERN GALA

BY LILY RAMOS

The Central California Consortium (CCC) hosted its 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Intern Gala on August 4, 2004 at the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) in Clovis, CA. The gala celebrated the students' success in completing the ten-week internships. The CCC has once again accomplished its goal of surpassing last year's number of interns by placing over 90 SCEPs and STEPs, as well as 17 Fire Apprentices (see chart below).

The students shared their summer experiences with their family, supervisors, community leaders, USDA dignitaries, and friends. For many students this was their first "real" work experience and for many, the experience was life changing. Carlos Martinez and Marcelo Martinez, Geologist Interns, were among the interns who presented and received recognition by their supervisor Alan Gallegos (pictured at right). The gala showcased the talent of our future natural resources leaders, who were the participants in the Central California Consortium program.

Guest speaker, Julena Pope (pictured below), R5 Settlement Agreements Director from the USDA Forest Service addressed a variety of issues including leadership and education. She encouraged students to consider permanent careers with the Forest Service. Julena presented the CCC with a check from the Washington and Regional office in the amount of \$250,000, which are the annual funds for the program.

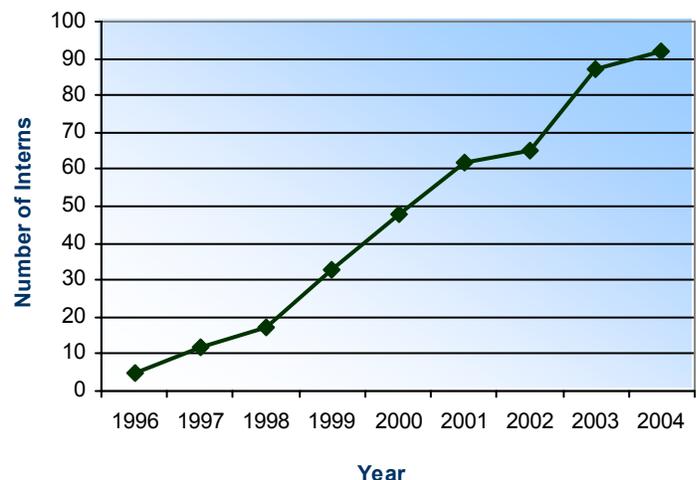
Chris Oberti, from the Fresno County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) presented a check to the CCC for \$31,120. These monies were used to employ Fresno County youth.



By creating partnerships with organizations, such as RAC, we have strengthened our efforts in providing jobs to the youth in our community. We have done an exceptional job hiring students and in some cases our students have experienced life-changing effects. This year we hired over 90 students and placed them throughout California and Washington," said James Oftedal, CCC Director.

Through the CCC, students have had the opportunity to work as firefighters, timber markers, recreation technicians, forestry aids, and wildlife biologist to name a few. The CCC matches the skills and experience of the interns to the appropriate supervisors who provide a nurturing work environment.

Central California Consortium Interns 1996-2004



USDA Forest Service



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*"By giving students life changing experiences, we are building leaders. We did this by challenging students and taking them out of their comfort zone. We hired over 90 students from underserved communities. For many of them, it was their first job outside of picking and packing fruit in the fields. We also took 30 high school students to the Cal Expo State Fair; a leadership camp in Sacramento for 10 days. We brought community leaders and parents together to showcase the talents of our interns. Because of the success of the program, we're being asked to participate on a national level in projects like the Greater WA DC Youth Symposium and the Hmong National Conference. I was honored to serve as the keynote speaker in WA DC for Hispanic Heritage Month. I hope you enjoy the two new features in this newsletter; the Hmong report and staff/student profiles. Happy Holidays!"*

*- James Oftedal  
CCC Director*



## GREATER WA DC HISPANIC YOUTH SYMPOSIUM

BY LILY RAMOS



The Central California Consortium (CCC) participated as a workshop presenter at the first ever Greater WA DC Hispanic Youth Symposium, which was held July 21-23, 2004 in Arlington, Virginia at Marymount University.

The Hispanic Youth Symposium was sponsored by USDA and included non-profit organizations such as the Hispanic College Fund and the Freddie Mac Foundation. Some goals of the symposium included encouraging Hispanic youth to pursue higher

education and building partnerships between school districts, colleges and universities, corporations and the Federal Government.

CCC staff included James Oftedal, Lily Ramos, and Fabian Garcia. James shared his experience in working for the Forest Service and how he went from an entry level position to a program director. Lily and Fabian shared their educational, career, and personal stories. CCC staff focused on overcoming adversity and stressed the importance of giving back to the community.

CCC staff served as facilitators for two 3-hour workshops entitled "Issues to Action: How to Overcome Barriers to Success." It focused on giving Hispanic youth the tools to succeed. At the end of the workshop, students presented their issue and their solutions. The CCC held a separate workshop, focusing on the CCC and Forest Service career opportunities. The workshop included components like employment, college, and scholarship information. A short film was also shown, stressing the importance of staying focused on goals and overcoming obstacles.

## FSIS HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

BY LILY RAMOS

CCC Director, James Oftedal, served as keynote speaker for the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Agency on September 28, 2004 in Washington, D.C. The theme was "Hispanic Americans: Making a Difference in Our Communities and Our Nation."

As the keynote speaker, Oftedal shared the needs of the community, as well as the needs of Forest Service.

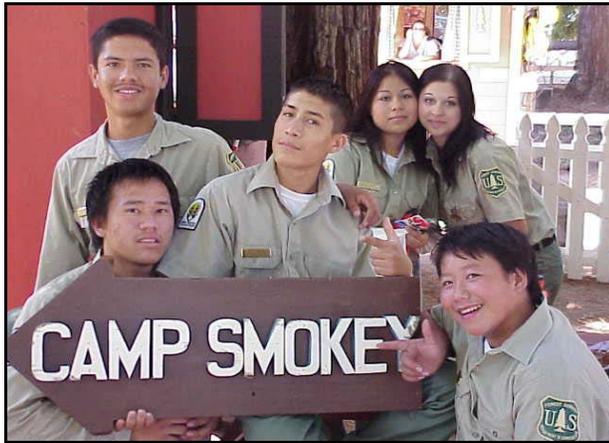
He related the Forest Service's need to diversify to FSIS' and encouraged everyone to become part of the solution. He challenged FSIS to build on past achievements and get involved with outreach programs. Oftedal stated, "Everyone can get involved to help make a difference, no matter what level you are at, or what position you hold. We can all volunteer with grassroot programs or provide human or financial resources." Oftedal stressed that partnerships are the key to successful organizations.



Pictured above (left to right): Sylvia Holguin Bourn, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager; William P. Milton, Jr. Assistant Administrator; Dr. H. Steven L. Newbold II, Director of Civil Rights; James Oftedal, CCC Director; Karen Messmore, Deputy Assistant Administrator; Dr. Elsa A. Murano, FSIS Undersecretary; and Dr. Barbara J. Masters, Acting Administrator. Picture was provided courtesy of FSIS News & Notes (Vol. 10, No. 38).

## 6TH ANNUAL GENERATION GREEN LEADERSHIP CAMP

BY LILY RAMOS



This past August, thirty-one high school students from Reedley, Parlier, Duncan, and Roosevelt High Schools attended the 6th Annual Generation Green Leadership Camp at the Sacramento State Fair. The students were separated into two groups of 15, each working 10 days. Students worked with Forest Service employees for ten days staffing the Forest Service exhibit, Camp Smokey; an environmental education area where kids learn about fire safety. The students interacted with children and adults in English, Spanish, and Hmong. Forest Service employees shared their career experiences with the students. The students gained valuable leadership and communication skills throughout the leadership camp.

The selection process was based on a complete application, which included: a resume, personal statement, and a letter of recommendation. They stayed at the

McClellan Air Force Base in dorm living facilities throughout their work experience. They were divided into two groups and worked for ten days each, earning a stipend of \$75/day. Every morning students would wake up for breakfast at 7:00 a.m. and go over the day's itinerary. Students washed and ironed their own Forest Service uniforms. They were ready for breakfast by 8:00 a.m. and worked on their presentation skills afterward. They left to work at 11:00 a.m., where they worked teaching the public about fire safety (pictured at right),

natural resources, and what to do in case of an emergency. The public also enjoyed a puppet show about environmental conservation and the importance of recycling. The public was given Camp Smokey passports and directed to different stations. After completing all 8 stations, each participant received a Smokey Bear handkerchief and free face painting.



The Generation Green students pitched in every night to order a family style dinner. During the evenings, all the students called home, kept journals, completed homework, and performed leadership activities. While in Sacramento, the students used their time off to visit the state capitol, meet elected officials, and learn about the state government and legislative processes.

The CCC would like to send a special thank you to those who served as chaperones.

## REACHING THE HMONG COMMUNITY

BY BAO VUE



Since 2000, the Central California Consortium (CCC) has been reaching out to the Hmong community. Bao Vue and Blong Vang serve as the CCC Asian Community Liaisons, working to link the USDA Forest Service to the

growing Hmong Community in the San Joaquin Valley. Their projects include translation, environmental education, and presentations on employment opportunities.

Bao Vue is a current student at Reedley College and will transfer to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to earn a BA in Urban Forestry. She has been working for the CCC for over four years. Blong Vang is a current student at Fresno City College and will transfer to Fresno State to earn a BA in Biology. He has worked for the CCC for over three years. Both Bao and Blong started their careers as Forestry Aids on the Sierra National Forest.

On a local level, the CCC works to outreach to the Hmong community by going on Hmong radio, attending job fairs, and posting up stations at local Hmong stores to provide information on current rules and regulations. On a national level, the CCC has participated in the Hmong National Development Conference (HND) for the last three years; two of which it has served as workshop presenters. The 2005 HND Conference will be held April 8-10 in Fresno, CA. This is also the 4th consecutive year that the CCC will conduct outreach at the Hmong New Year held in Fresno, CA. This year will be the 30th Anniversary of Hmongs in the United States.

**CCC WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBER**  
 BY LILY RAMOS

The CCC welcomes new staff member, Wendy Reynoso. Ms. Reynoso will serve as the CCC's Environmental Education Coordinator. She will be teaching environmental education to schools in the Kings Canyon Unified School District and West Fresno Middle School.

As the new Environmental Education Coordinator, she has many new and exciting plans. One of her top priorities is to begin a successful environmental education program at West Fresno Middle School and to build a stronger relationship with the African American community.

Ms. Reynoso is a graduate from California State University, Fresno where she earned a BA in Liberal Studies. She is currently working towards a teaching credential at National University.



**NEW GENERATION GREEN PRESIDENT**  
 BY WENDY REYNOSO

In August of 2004, Marisela Gonzalez (pictured at left) was voted as President of the Generation Green (GG) Club. She is a senior at Reedley High School and lives in Orange Cove, CA. She stated, "My goal is to provide more extracurricular activities for students so that they may learn from many experiences."

She encourages new experiences for her fellow students because she personally knows the difference it can make. This past March 2003, she participated in the National Young Leaders Conference in Washington D.C. She was nominated by her teachers and selected to attend the week long conference. Four hundred exceptional students were elected from all over the United States to attend the conference. Ms. Gonzales was the only student chosen from the Central Valley to participate and the only Hispanic student at the conference. The purpose of the conference was to prepare future leaders in running a government system.

As President of GG, she plans to use her past experiences, like the conference, to help inspire other minority students to participate in educational trips and life long experiences.

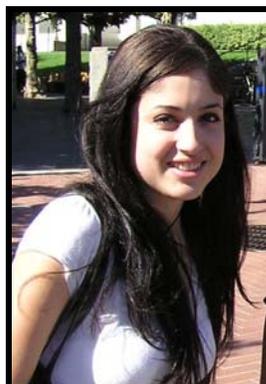


**CCC ARCHEOLOGY INTERN**  
 BY FABIAN GARCIA

One of this year's top STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) students is Alba Mercado (pictured at right), a Latina from Dinuba who is the daughter of two hard working migrant parents. Just last summer, Alba worked as an Archaeological Intern under Karen Miller, Sierra National Forest Archeologist. As a STEP employee, Alba hopes to become a SCEP (permanent) student soon.

In regards to her internship, Alba stated, "I really valued the hands on experience that I received in Archaeology. I had a very supportive supervisor and I learned a lot. It gave me the confidence and motivation to continue on with my dreams of getting a Masters degree in Cultural Anthropology. I plan to one day become an Archaeologist for the Forest Service, so I can give back and protect mother earth."

Alba Mercado is currently a second year student at College of the Sequoias in Visalia, CA where she is currently completing her AA degree. She plans on transferring to UC Santa Cruz, where she will seek a BA in Anthropology, with an emphasis in Archaeology. She is the first in her family to aspire to a 4-year university.



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The CCC is a minority outreach and recruitment program funded by the USDA Forest Service, serving the San Joaquin Valley. Since its inception in 1997, the CCC has placed over 400 minority and women both regionally and nationally.

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