



**The Youth Empowerment Fund of the
Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF)
Announces**

The 2012-2013 Youth Warriors

The Youth Empowerment Fund proudly sponsors the annual Youth Warrior Award and Fellowship, awarded to remarkable young leaders who have made a commitment to using their knowledge, skills, and talents to bettering themselves as well as the community around them. Youth Warriors are nominated by community-based organizations and selected for their strength in overcoming challenges in their lives and dedication to being positive change-makers.

Youth Warriors take part in an 8-month leadership fellowship focusing on bringing youth voice to government. Warriors receive trainings led by Youth Warrior alumni on public speaking, facilitation, government, and advocacy in order to prepare for their leadership roles in Youth Advocacy Day, a historic day of youth empowerment and civic engagement. On this day, Youth Warriors lead San Francisco high school students to meet with elected and city officials to discuss the top issues that affect young people. Upon completion of the fellowship, Youth Warriors are awarded a \$500 educational scholarship and Mayoral Award.

Below are brief bios highlighting just a few of the accomplishments of the 14 recipients of the 2012-2013 Youth Warrior Award & Fellowship. These young leaders are all hope-instilling and shining examples of what it means to truly be a Youth Warrior.

Anna Lei, 17**Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)**

Anna has worked on health care access, education, and transportation issues locally with CPA's Youth MOJO program. She is also involved with the Common Roots program at CPA --a program that collaboratively works with the Latino organization, PODER, on affordable housing issues. Over the past year, she has helped advocate for the Health Care Services Master Plan--a plan that will help determine where future healthcare services will be in San Francisco. She is president of the Red Cross Club at Galileo as well as an active member of the Social Awareness Club, a club that seeks to engage young people to learn about social issues. Anna was also part of the Writers' Corp--a youth group who published different written pieces on Muni billboards around Market Street in SF.

Danny Ruiz, 21**Conscious Youth Media Crew**

Danny produced and edited "Toxic Trial" for film, a documentary that profiled a young activist in Richmond, California and her work raising awareness about the Chevron Refinery and environmental justice issues in her community. Danny has presented the film publicly including a special screening at the deYoung Museum as part of the San Francisco Arts Festival's "Young At Art" program. Danny recently started volunteering to teach the summer program to the younger interns. He has been a tremendous asset and has shared his skill set with the new interns and helped them complete their final projects. He has shown dedication, responsibility, and initiative as a mentor.

Elisa Harrison, 15**College Track**

Elisa is one of the most committed youth leaders at College Track. Although she is a soft-spoken young leader, her words show that she has a great amount of wisdom and insight. She has a strong sense of social justice and a good awareness of the issues that are affecting young people in San Francisco. Despite the struggles and barriers that Elisa endures every day, she is exceedingly motivated. As a student, Elisa is committed to school and consistently earns high marks. In addition, she wants to serve as a role model for other young people in the Bayview and show them that young people from this part of town are proud, smart and successful. Elisa is a true role model to the children and youth in her community.

Elizabeth Esqueda, 18**Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco, Mission Clubhouse**

Elizabeth has contributed over 250 hours of service to the Boys and Girls Club, its members, and the community. Liz was one of six youth that recently participated in the SF Aids Walk to help raise funds and awareness to the issue. She has always been willing to stand alone and be an example of what she wants. Safety is not the coolest topic to stand for or discuss, but her ability to negotiate, relate and be supportive has made her stand out in the program. She is an inspirational role model and a great example to others. She is also willing to hold others accountable when the boundaries of the program are not being honored. Liz has become a person that is present in the moment and is primed to take a huge step in life.

Erica Nguyen, 17**UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women's Health**

Erica designed a young women's health program for her peers at Mission High School, wrote a proposal, and was awarded funding for implementation. She then evaluated and presented her project to an audience of UCSF and SFUSD staff and families. As an Innovator, Erica exhibited remarkable strength, flexibility, and determination to make her project successful. She is an incredibly insightful and articulate young woman. She goes out of her way to connect with people who are shy, struggling, or needing a friend, and is open to new experiences, ideas, and perspectives. In this way she is both respectful and highly respected by her peers. She is not one to give up but stays true to her values and passion, always staying positive, working cooperatively with others.

Iris Wu, 16**Enterprise for High School Students**

Iris is a mature and thoughtful young leader with the Enterprise for High School Student's (EHSS) Pathways Program, a youth employment and empowerment program. Iris is a highly motivated and driven student and head copy editor of her school newspaper at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory. She is incredibly civic-minded and passionate about youth voice in city politics. Iris earnestly desires to learn more about the life beyond her school community and to learn about how to engage with the larger San Francisco community. She shows her commitment to community work by volunteering a great deal of her time to helping others in need.

Jacqueline Cruz, 17**People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER)**

Jacqueline has been a youth volunteer and youth organizer at PODER for over a year. Jacqui has been a leader in advocating for Health Care for all in last summer's Common Roots Campaign. She has also been a leader in PODER's bike project, taking leadership in creating a neighborhood bike tour to highlight contaminated areas of the neighborhood as well as community organizing victories. Jacqui stepped up to be a youth organizer and mentor in this year's campaign to demand that the MTA turn over the Balboa Upper Yard to the Mayor's Office of Housing for much needed affordable housing. She was a leader in the youth led action held in front of the MTA this summer. Jacqui is a natural community organizer that is passionate about Latino immigrant rights and learning more about what she can do to defend social justice and equality for all that needs it.

Jocelyn Ruiz, 16**Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth (HOMEY)**

Jocelyn has developed as a positive community leader through the Kalpulli program at HOMEY. She has been committed to the programming and served as not only a voice of the youth, but has attentively listened to the more reserved members of her cohort, which in turn allows them to develop. She spoke up at City Hall in regards to the Coleman Jobs for Youth. She led a group of youth and made sure everyone not only participated, but learned about the democratic process, and why it was important for them to speak their mind. She also helped organize events emphasizing the ethnic studies struggle in Arizona, and spoke as a youth representative on a panel. She quickly picks up and takes initiative in applying what she has learned to better herself and the people around her.

Kyle Isidro, 17**Mission SF Community Financial Center**

Kyle has worked with Mission SF's New Economic Rights for All (ERA) since the summer of 2011. He is a youth organizer dedicated to doing research and creating awareness about the debt risks of using predatory services. Kyle has been very dedicated to learning and carrying forward Mission SF's message to promote financial education and moving people from using predatory services to credit unions and banks. Due to his dedication, he has become a central component of New ERA and will become a lead youth organizer this new cycle. Despite all the struggles he has faced, Kyle maintains a positive attitude and caring spirit.

Lolo Hightower, 18**LYRIC**

Lolo plans and facilitates weekly community building groups for queer youth and their allies who are 24 and younger. Lolo stands out because of her personal journey from quiet and shy to an outspoken ally for the queer youth community. When Lolo first started as a Queer Educator, the group she was assigned to facilitate was for queer young men and their allies. The group had a small and irregular attendance but she was committed to making sure the space was open, safe and welcoming for queer boys. Due to her outreach and her energetic facilitation style, the young men's group is the most popular group at LYRIC with attendance regularly maxing out the chairs in the room. Lolo is an bright, energetic, and passionate youth leader in her community.

Loraina Flores, 17**CollegeSet, Juma Ventures**

Loraina is an active youth in the College Set program and is also a participant in Juma Ventures. She has also participated in the CORO Exploring Leadership program in which she worked for several months with other youth to make a difference in her community through service learning projects. Loraina has a strong personality and is always engaging with people around her. She is always willing to step up as a leader when she is working at the ballpark as part of Juma Ventures. Her managers are always impressed by her focus and her ability to lead the people around her. Loraina loves her adopted community and is ready to make a big difference in the lives of those in need.

Marco Ponce, 13**CARECEN**

Marco is an incredibly mature and dedicated young man at the ripe age of 13. In addition to being a member of Cuerpo Sano, Marco and his family are active participants with the CARECEN organization-wide events, such as immigration rallies, backpack giveaways, and CARECEN family nights. Marco has been a member of the tutoring program at 826 Valencia for the last several years and has risen to become one of their program leaders. Marco also provides leadership by showing the younger students proper techniques for the various sports played during program time. Marco is very welcoming to new students, letting them know how the program functions. Marco is a curious young man with a sense of adventure and a love of leadership.

Mark Belocura, 15**Galing Bata Afterschool Program**

Mark has developed leadership skills and become a prime example of great student activism. Mark has done a lot of community work within Galing Bata as well as with local organizations such as SOMCAN, the South of Market Community Action Network. Within Galing Bata he has helped raise funds for Philippine natural disaster relief efforts. In the summer of 2010, he accompanied a small group of parents and staff in making a presentation to the school board in order to reinstitute our funding. He also participates in SOMCAN's YES initiative (Youth Empowering SoMa), a group of young high school students who try to address issues within the SoMa neighborhood. Mark has a keen eye for what social justice is needed within his community and a relentless determination to strive for that.

Raymond Fisher-Travis, 17**Youth Funding Youth Ideas (YFYI) CHALK**

Raymond was first hired as a Youth Evaluator for CHALK's grant-making program, YFYI, and has developed so many skill sets that he is currently in transition to be a youth staff supervisor. Raymond has not only worked at YFYI as a grant-maker and youth evaluator but has also headed the Policy and Rules Committee for CHALK and facilitated workshops for new CHALK staff. Raymond has also been on youth leadership panels for CORO Youth Fellows. He is comfortable with diversity and quickly adapts to different environments while maintaining a positive sense of self and a positive outlook on the future. He is dedicated to his own development and that of whatever community he is involved with. Raymond has a natural charisma that captivates and while he has a captive audience he is able to speak directly to the needs of that audience. His willingness to harness that ability for positive change is what makes Raymond a stand out leader.