

nova

Youth Employment Program



Where does a homeless 18-year-old go for help looking for a job? Where can a determined teen mom find support for her dreams? At the NOVA Youth Employment Office—but we need your help! NOVA is seeking sponsorships for work experience opportunities for local youth. As you'll read in the enclosed profiles, these entry-level experiences are often a turning point for young people facing challenges and a lack of direction about their future. Your donations will cover wages and support services, or you may host a local youth directly at your company.

Who We Are

The NOVA Youth Employment Program offers information about future career or educational possibilities, employment trends, and workforce requirements. We provide a welcoming, information-rich environment where young people aged 16–24 learn how to conduct an effective job search, research careers, access job listings, find volunteer opportunities, and much more. Workshops, computers, and—most importantly—friendly, professional staff members guide youth so they can make informed choices about jobs, education, and careers.

NOVA also administers a program designed to help at-risk youth develop and achieve individualized educational and career goals to lead them to economic self-sufficiency. Youth in the program must be low-income. Priority is given to those with significant additional challenges: basic-skills deficient, disabled, pregnant/parenting, foster/emancipated, homeless/runaway, or at risk of gang involvement.

NOVA staff work one-on-one with these youth to provide support, resources, and guidance to help them problem-solve and overcome the day-to-day obstacles that can divert them from their path to success. Goals focus on improving basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, earning a high school diploma/GED, entering community college or vocational training, gaining workplace-readiness skills, and securing/retaining employment.

As part of this comprehensive program, youth may participate in a 200-hour

subsidized work experience designed to build their confidence and skills as they gain valuable, real-world knowledge of the world of work. All youth receive employment-readiness training and are placed in an entry-level job at a private business or nonprofit organization.

How You Can Help

There are far more applicants than jobs. NOVA is forced to turn away many deserving young people every year due to funding constraints. Each donation of \$2,500 will sponsor one youth by covering wages and support services including assistance with transportation, appropriate work attire, and any required pre-employment testing.

Is your company interested in giving back to our community by hosting a local youth? In addition to financial sponsorship, we are seeking meaningful work experience opportunities at Silicon Valley firms. Your company will benefit from having a cost-free employee while exposing these motivated young people to a variety of careers as they prepare themselves to become part of the workforce of tomorrow.

For information, contact Youth Program Manager Cathy Haynes at 408-730-7631 or chaynes@novaworks.org.

“ I really wanted to **get back on track** with my education and work. ”

Yvette

The path from 16-year-old runaway to poised young woman intent on pursuing a career in the medical field has been a long and winding journey for Yvette.

It all started with an internship at a health clinic in Mountain View—a position she landed through the NOVA Youth Employment program. Before working at the RotaCare medical office, Yvette’s life had taken many uncomfortable turns.

Yvette dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and left home at 16. None of her friends had high school degrees, she reckoned, yet they had still managed to get retail jobs. “I wasn’t the type of person to look at the long term,” Yvette explained about her mindset at that time. “I just didn’t care about the future.”

Motherhood dramatically altered her view. Yvette realized she wanted a more solid life for her daughter, born in 2007, and ditched the party crowd she’d been running with. She began to see that the way to a fulfilling career was to develop solid work skills and obtain at least a high school degree.

As a teen mother, however, reaching those goals was tough. Soon Yvette was pregnant with her second child and still in and out of night school. At the urging of a friend, she went to see a counselor at NOVA. “I told them my situation and right away they told me they would help,” Yvette said. “I really wanted to get back on track with my education and work.”

Yvette had always enjoyed helping people, so the receptionist position at RotaCare was a perfect fit. She greeted patients, arranged medical appointments, and recorded medication dosages in each patient’s electronic health file. Bilingual in English and Spanish, Yvette learned complicated medical terminology and was frequently called into exam rooms to translate for Spanish-speaking patients.

As part of her internship, Yvette also talked to medical professionals at the clinic about their jobs, the train-

ing those positions required, and what schools they had attended.

Her supervisor at the clinic, Nidia Farrugua, calls Yvette energetic, outgoing, super-smart, and full of potential. “She was very persistent at any task we’d give her and so eager to learn,” Farrugua said, noting that before the three-month position ended, Yvette had even trained clinic volunteers how to perform her duties.

Yvette’s earnings were vital for her young family. She lives in San Jose with her boyfriend and their children, now aged one and three. The money helped the couple cover their rent, buy gas for the car they share, and purchase diapers, clothing, and other necessities.

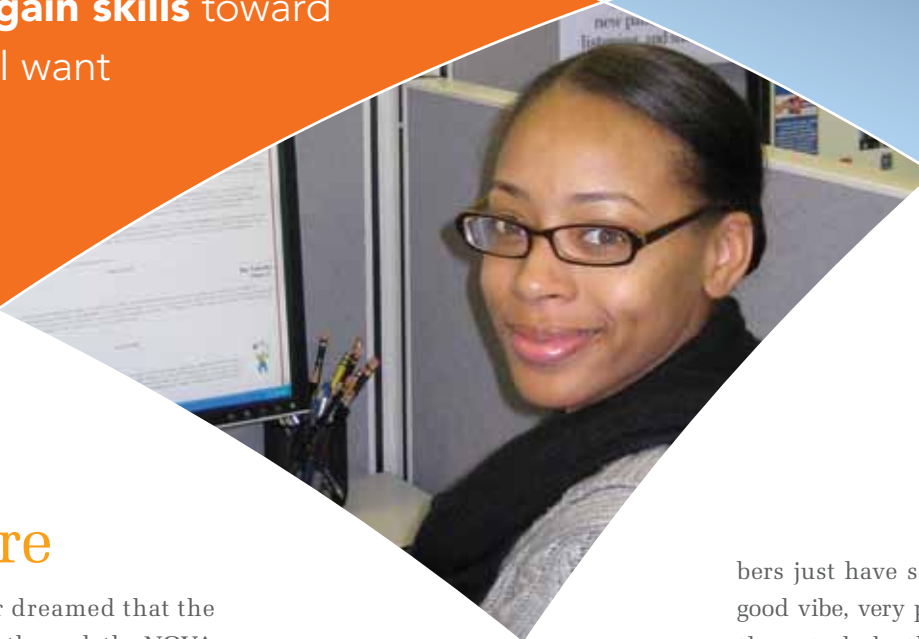
Working alongside doctors and nurses also gave Yvette a chance to envision an alternative future. She’s still deciding on a specific career but is certain she’ll someday work in the health field.

Without the wider view of life that she gained at RotaCare, Yvette said, “I would still be sitting at home, wondering, ‘What if?’”

“But now, after talking to so many people at the clinic about their jobs, I’m thinking, ‘Well, they did it—why not me?’”



“ I feel like I’m able to **grow and gain skills** toward something I want to do. ”



Ausharre

Ausharre never dreamed that the summer job she got through the NOVA program would lead to a permanent position. But it did.

In 2009, the Mountain View resident started out as an intern working with the corporate communications team of San Jose-based technology giant Cisco Systems, the world’s largest maker of networking gear.

When the NOVA position ended, she was asked to stay on as a part time project specialist while she attends Foothill College. The job has given the Mountain View resident the grounding she’ll need to go for a career in law one day. “It’s just been a really positive learning experience,” she said of her Cisco post. “I feel like I’m able to grow and gain skills toward something I want to do.”

Ausharre’s job is integral to her team. She’s responsible for keeping track of details big and small. She explains what gives her the greatest satisfaction on the job: “Not seeing the

team members stressed out made me feel good because I was able to take things off their plate and get things running smoothly.”

One recent trip took some Cisco executives to Switzerland to meet with more than a dozen representatives from different countries. Ausharre pulled together documents for that trip, including briefing documents containing photos, biographies, and work duties of the foreign officials on the agenda.

“If the CEO is having a meeting with several people, he really doesn’t have that much time to read the details,” Ausharre explained, saying her job is to include only the most important information in those documents.

She calls her work interesting and fast-paced and says she’s excited to get to the office each day. “The team mem-

bers just have so much energy and a good vibe, very positive. I’m glad to be there to help them. I can learn, be creative, be an asset to a team, and be helpful.”

One of the biggest lessons Ausharre has learned is how to communicate in a corporate environment. Members of the team gave her informal instruction. “They were very good in leading by example,” she said. “They were really open about saying, ‘Watch how I do this.’”

With the money she’s earning, Ausharre helps pay for her schooling. She lives with her mother, a stay-at-home mom, and two younger siblings. Ausharre helps buy groceries for the household and pitches in when her younger sister, who’s on her high school’s basketball team, needs money for food or game fees.

Ausharre says working at Cisco has given her an up-front view of what it’s like working in corporate America: “Without NOVA, I would not be where I am today.”

“She had confidence in me and persuaded me to do different things. She would always be there for me.”



Cuauhtemoc

As a teenager, Mountain View resident Cuauhtemoc appeared to be sliding into the same life as his three older brothers, who never graduated from high school. With poor grades and a listless attitude about education, Cuauhtemoc lacked direction and had no clear plans for his future.

But just take a look at the 21-year-old today. A student at Mission College in Santa Clara, he is preparing to become a web programmer and works part-time as a tutor in an after-school program for elementary school students.

He credits the attitude change to mentoring and support he received from a summer job with the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce—an opportunity made possible by the NOVA Youth Employment program.

Starting out as an office assistant, Cuauhtemoc recalled that he “learned a lot of skills, stuff that might seem

pretty basic, like making copies, phone etiquette, and taking messages.” He took on higher-level duties too, contacting local businesses to interest them in joining the Chamber and using his self-taught computer skills to update the organization’s website.

After that, Cuauhtemoc assumed another duty—being part of the team that kept things moving smoothly during the city’s annual Mountain View Art and Wine Festival. Working that high-profile fundraising event further honed his organizing and communications skills.

One of the most memorable parts of the summer involved a chamber member, mortgage broker Lisa Epstein, who diligently mentored Cuauhtemoc. She

helped him explore different career options, learn how to network with business professionals, and prepare for job interviews.

“He has a tenacious spirit,” Epstein said of Cuauhtemoc. “He wants to get somewhere and do better in the future than he has in the past.”

The unwavering encouragement from Epstein was a huge influence on Cuauhtemoc, who had to balance his life goals with helping support his parents and a brother, with whom he lives. He used some of his salary to help his family pay the rent.

But, he said, Epstein urged him to reach beyond his current circumstances and dream big.

“I had wanted to earn an associate’s degree. She pushed me to get a four-year bachelor’s degree or even a master’s,” Cuauhtemoc said. “She had confidence in me and persuaded me to do different things. She would always be there for me, and that really helped a lot.”

“ I like having something to do in my life and that **work definitely kept my life moving.** ”



Jimiyo

Eighteen-year-old Jimiyo has had a far more complicated life than most people his age.

He left Santa Clara's New Valley Continuation High School at 17 to enter the Job Corps, a federally funded residential education and vocational training program for low-income youth. But that program was in Utah—light years away from the Bay Area's “distractions,” Jimiyo says, but also too far from his family. After just nine months, before completing the entire program or finishing his high school degree, he returned to the Bay Area to find his family “falling apart.”

Without a stable place to stay, Jimiyo lived temporarily with relatives and friends in San Jose, Santa Clara and Oakland. For a time, he even slept on the bus. Nearly every day, he'd head to local malls hoping to snare a retail job, but had no luck. While one part time position with UPS looked promising, he couldn't even afford the cost of getting there on public transportation. “I remember waking up so many

mornings and feeling so confused,” he said. “I had nothing. I was stuck.”

After four months of disappointment, Jimiyo learned about NOVA from friends. Through his counselor he landed his first job ever—a position at Our Daily Bread, a nonprofit group that regularly serves meals to the needy at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Sunnyvale.

His duties included chopping up fruit salad, washing pots and pans, setting up tables, serving patrons, and handling various other duties for the program, which serves hot lunches to 1,000 people each week.

“I like to take on tasks, and in that work, I was able to take on a lot of tasks,” Jimiyo explained. “I like having something to do in my life and that work definitely kept my life moving and kept me going. They gave me that stepping stone.”

His ambition impressed Our Daily Bread's organizers, who knew Jimiyo had to get up at 4:30 a.m. to make it to the church, on the bus, by 9 a.m. “Most kids would not have done that commute” from Oakland, said David Barnes, Our Daily Bread's program manager. “He has the determination, the strength, and the willingness to make things happen. I think he will be a survivor.”

With his salary, Jimiyo paid a nominal rent to the people who allowed him to share their homes. He was also able to afford a cell phone, which has been instrumental in his search for another job now that NOVA's funding of his position at Our Daily Bread has ended.

Back in night school, attempting to get his high school diploma, Jimiyo hopes for a job at a store or restaurant. One day he aims to become a registered nursing assistant specializing in radiology.

Jimiyo credits his job at Our Daily Bread with instilling him with the confidence he'll need to become a professional: “Before, I was nervous and afraid of rejection. After working, I see that if you really want something, you can go for it and get it.”

“ I could do
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my own life. ”



Yolanda

Yolanda experimented with drugs while in middle school, flirted with the idea of joining a youth gang at about the same time, and had a daughter by the time she was 16. But that background hasn't stopped the determined Mountain View resident, who is enrolled in college and planning to pursue a career in social work or child development.

Now 21 and living at home with her mother, Yolanda says she thoroughly understands kids who fall off the track. "They are missing some kind of support," she explains. "I want to be a mentor to them because of what I went through in my own life."

Yolanda, a De Anza College student, might never have ended up with a new attitude had she not gotten involved with the NOVA Youth Employment program.

After having her baby in early 2006, Yolanda said she did what it took to graduate with her class the next year because she had something to prove: "I didn't want to be another dropout, just another teenage mom."

She went on to finish an adult education course and learn computer skills.

That was followed by several low-wage restaurant positions. Yolanda thought she might one day end up working two jobs, just like her mom—a single parent and restaurant employee with four children to support.

But Yolanda yearned to accomplish more. NOVA placed her in an office clerk job at the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce in the summer of 2008, where she typed, answered phones, and helped with fundraising. Through watching Chamber members interact, she learned the importance of making connections: "Everybody does networking to get their business up." With her earnings, she helped her mother pay off credit card debt and purchased clothing for her young daughter.

Yolanda was fortunate enough to get another NOVA job in 2009 working at the offices of the Foothill-De Anza Com-

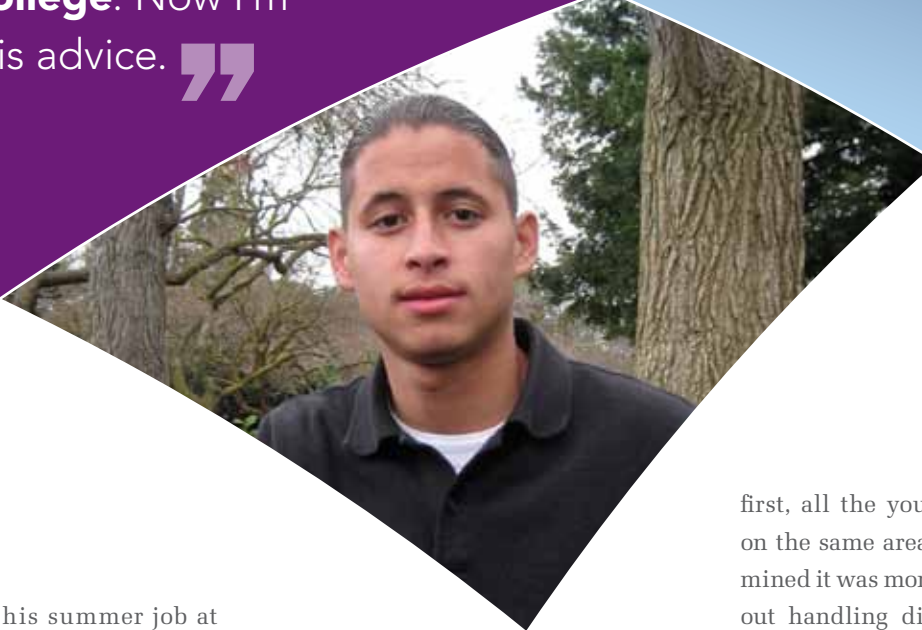
munity College District. She performed data entry, answered phones, and completed other projects. To her surprise, Yolanda discovered nearly all the top-level people working in the office of the college's president were women of color. "That opened my eyes to the fact that I could do so much more with my own life," said Yolanda, who is Latino.

The petite student had a reputation for never giving up, even if the work was difficult. "She is very determined," said her supervisor, Mary Clark-Tillman, who recounted how Yolanda kept at it for a week until mastering how to complete advanced Excel spreadsheets. "Even if there was something she didn't understand, she would do her best," Clark-Tillman said. "I think she left here knowing that she is capable of doing things she probably thought she couldn't do before."

Yolanda hopes to one day impart that same ambition to other teens from rough backgrounds.

"I want to work with those children. Just getting them to know that instead of being in a gang, they can become the new doctor, the new teacher. As long as I change one person's life, it's OK. I'm good with that."

“ [My supervisor] **urged me to go to college.** Now I’m following his advice. ”



Pablo

Pablo relished his summer job at Sunnyvale’s Ponderosa Park.

Here’s proof—even though his shift as a maintenance employee began at 6 a.m., he always showed up ten minutes early, full of energy.

He was the one regularly spotted pedaling through the nine-acre park on an oversized, three-wheeled bike outfitted with a park worker’s essential tools—a rake to clean barbeque grills, a metal can to cart away hot ashes and dusters to scrub picnic tables clean.

“It was a good job because I love working outdoors,” said Pablo, who landed the park worker position thanks to the NOVA Youth Employment program.

“And the people that go to the park are so friendly,” added Pablo, who’d often strike up conversations with folks enjoying family barbeques or playing on the tennis courts.

The cheerful 19-year-old’s solid work ethic made him stand out to his supervisor, Johnny Hernandez.

“Whether he was sweeping floors or raking leaves, he gave us 100 percent every single time. He has a lot of pride in what he does,” Hernandez explained.

Pablo said what he learned from Hernandez and the parks job will help take him closer to his goal of becoming an architect, a career allowing him to combine his love of working outdoors and drawing.

The top lesson he learned that summer was the importance of teamwork. On his very first day, Pablo and three other new employees were assigned a major project—spreading two heaping truckloads of wood chips evenly around trees and along walkways. At

first, all the young men concentrated on the same area. But they soon determined it was more efficient to each start out handling different outer sections and work until they met in the middle.

Pablo explained: “We had to cooperate together and work to finish the task.”

The second thing he learned—be assertive. “You don’t have to be shy at the job, you have to speak out,” Pablo said. “If you don’t understand something, you’ve got to say what you don’t know.”

And the third lesson—focus on furthering his education. “Johnny urged me to go to college. I’m following his advice,” Pablo said. A 2010 graduate of Wilson High School in Santa Clara, Pablo is now enrolled in a public speaking class at Mission College in Santa Clara and taking English composition, math, and jazz dance at West Valley College in Saratoga.

Fortified by knowledge, where does he expect to be in 10 years? Pablo is quick with his answer: “I see myself finishing school and getting a career.”