



PACE

Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment

News!

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On PACE

By Kerry Doi
President and
Chief Executive Officer

My dear friends, I just recently returned from a grueling travel schedule. At my age, let me tell you that it was exhausting, yet very inspirational.

The first part of my journey began with a week-long session at Harvard University's Achieving Excellence in Community Development program. Inundated with complex concepts and theories and bombarded by presentations from incredibly accomplished individuals, my simple Hawaiian brain was taxed. I began to have brain fatigue after the second day. Combined with sleep and rice deprivation, I pushed on because I know that, even after being in community development for forty years, it's important to continue learning if we are indeed to make the world a better place. A famous man by the name of Martin Luther King, Jr. said that not everyone can be famous but everyone can be great. And you are great if you are of service to other people. How much more can we do? How much better can we spend our time than helping people get out of the stranglehold of poverty.

The second part of my journey took me to Washington, D.C., where I collaborated with other Asian and Pacific Islander leaders from around the United States to continue our efforts to form a national voice for the API community. It inspires me so much to see the great work of other organizations like PACE throughout the country. The biggest honor came when I was invited to the White House. I was five feet away from the President of the United States as he signed the executive order for the reestablishment of the White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs. This was truly a remarkable experience. The President understands that when every segment of our society gets the attention that it deserves, the American model will truly be the best in the world.

It was a grueling trip but it inspired me to do better and to do more. Please join us as we continue in the movement to make the world a better place.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Swells PACE's Green Efforts



Thomas Brackeen (left) and Elvis Martinez are two of those who are finding new careers in Green Industries thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

PACE's Weatherization Program is on track to get more than \$7 million in federal weatherization assistance program funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009.

The money, to be granted in performance-based allotments over the next two years, comes under the act's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy provisions. These contain \$6.2 billion for a national program to help make American homes healthier and make them use less precious energy. It's the largest program of its kind in the nation's history, based on both the current dire need for jobs and the desire to reduce the nation's dependency on costly imported fuels.

The Weatherization Program is managed by PACE Assistant Director Lin Vong, who says, "We want to prove to everyone that this program will be a great success, and that the funding, which is administered by the California Department of Community Services and Development, goes to those most in need, and to as many of these people as possible."

So, in addition to weatherizing, PACE

is doing something else here. It's begun an extended outreach program to bring awareness of the program to as many people as it can possibly reach. The more people receive these services, the more energy will be conserved and more good-paying jobs can be created and retained.

PACE has used its diverse resources to bring as many people as possible into its weatherization program. Gordon Beck and Thomas Brackeen were recruited through GreenWorksLA, a green job training program administered by PACE. They took classes in photovoltaic technology at the East L.A. Skills center and their transportation to the classes, their books and other costs were paid for.

"We want to reach out to local elected officials and grass roots organizations to help spread the word. It's a neighborhood-by-neighborhood outreach. We have something very important to offer, and it doesn't cost the beneficiaries anything," says Jon Bishop, the program's Outreach Coordinator. "Our goal is to reach the unreachable, those most in need of the free weatherization services."

Bishop adds, "Every dollar spent on

weatherization returns about \$2.72 in benefits and fuel savings over the life of a home." The weatherization services include caulking, weather stripping, energy-efficient refrigerators, installing compact, energy-saving fluorescent light bulbs, checking gas appliances for health and safety issues and replacing those that are defective and dangerous. When it comes to carbon monoxide hazards from malfunctioning appliances, the health and even the lives of the residents are at stake.

Cynthia Llana, PACE's Director of Energy and Environmental Services, says that the new program, after ramping up for its first three months, is now running at full capacity. "There's a 60 percent increase over the work we've previously done." Each dwelling unit may be eligible for \$3,000 or more in stimulus improvements, depending on eligibility factors.

The program will grant the first half of \$7.05 million to PACE for its first year of work (including the ramp up), ending in September 2010. If the first year is successful, the balance of the funds will be available to the end of September.

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Namoch Sokhom From Cambodia to California (via Minnesota)

PACE is special people. Its hundreds of employees include many with unusual and poignant backgrounds that have brought them to work at this unique and far-reaching organization.

Perhaps none of them, however, has a life story more singular than that of the Business Development Center director, Namoch Sokhom, who this year celebrates his tenth anniversary at PACE.

What he best remembers about his boyhood is how he endured by helping others survive. From his turbulent homeland of Cambodia's civil war and the Khmer Rouge to the refugee camps of his early exile, Sokhom had to learn a myriad of skills. For him and his family, the major enemy was mass starvation.

"We were lucky enough to avoid the Cambodian mass murders," he said. But as a child he saw many thousands die who, like Sokhom and his parents, had been dropped into the countryside, without food or even training to grow crops.

"So we learned to plant and harvest, to fish, to trap animals. We learned a lot in a very short time." The family survived on sparse rations of food like sweet potatoes and sugar cane. And then he, his



PACH Business Development Center Director, Namoch Sokhom (above, left) as he is today and (above) as a bright young man in Cambodia.

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PACE's Green Efforts

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ber 2011. "But it's on a first come, first served basis, prioritizing vulnerable populations such as the elderly, the disabled and families with small children," Bishop said.

The people who hope the hardest for the program's success and continuation are probably the folks working out there in the field, people with a broad range of ages and backgrounds, who are doing the weatherization work. Many of them lost good jobs in the past year's recession. For them, PACE's Energy and Environmental Services Department is a golden opportunity, not only to earn a decent living, but to gain qualifications and learn important new skills in the growing field of Green construction.

Gordon Beck



After a life of working in the printing trade, Gordon Beck's employer moved out of state three years ago, leaving him behind. "I retrained and went outdoors, working in construction. I liked that.

Even though I was usually the oldest in the crew — I'm 100 percent gray!" But then the building trades took a hit in the recession.

So he retrained again at East L.A. Skill Center, this time taking solar photovoltaic and advanced solar technology courses. "What I like about this job is it's more than just building things. It's saving energy and heat, but it is also about saving children's health and sometimes people's lives."

And he expects to move up in his new trade. "I could become a solar installer. Or work on building green buildings. It's the future."

Thomas Brackeen



After decades of working for the same Simi Valley furniture firm, Thomas Brackeen found himself suddenly downsized out

of a job in his mid 60s. "I lost my main revenue source," he says, "so I couldn't afford to retire."

Now, at 65, with three grown children, three stepchildren and eight grandchildren, the Culver City resident has found a new job and a new career. He's a PACE Weatherization Program field worker. He works throughout the 13 Los Angeles County cities served by PACE, making thousands of low-income homes warmer, more economical and even safer for the people who live in them.

Brackeen first heard about PACE through the East L.A. Skill Center while attending Introduc-

tion to Solar Photovoltaic training. He attended the PACE Westlake WorkSource Center's "Positive Recruitment Fair" in June and was hired after his interview. He continues with his advanced solar photovoltaic training in the evenings after he leaves work at PACE.

"I like the work," says Brackeen. "I've always been good with my hands. And I'm getting even better at 65, maybe because I have less to worry about nowadays. It's the immediate gratification, too. You don't wait around for something to do, you fix things immediately and then move on to another job."

Elvis Martinez



PACE's Weatherization training programs aren't just for older workers. At 29, Elvis Martinez's promising career in aviation technology was interrupted when he was laid off from his

airport mechanic's job of working on small-aircraft engines. He said he was desolated to find that, for all his extensive and expensive training in this field, he couldn't find a similar niche anywhere.

So he came to PACE to consult with one of his old mentors in a weatherization training program he'd attended as a teenager. The mentor had moved on, but PACE helped him anyway. He was told to draw on his weatherization background and to apply for the new program's opening as installer.

He said the past few months' working experience and his classes at the San Bernardino Training Facility have pointed

his career in an entirely new direction. "I'm doing something that's environmentally friendly and that makes me feel worthwhile. I'm considering moving on into a career of working with Green Energy production.

Martinez says that his PACE energy experience, combined with his aircraft technical expertise, will help him advance far. He looks forward to a career working with wind generator turbines. "They have big propellers just like airplanes, and they have to be aerodynamic."

Like all the others in the PACE program, when Elvis Martinez seemed to be hitting a career dead end, he found himself a doorway into the future.

PACE News!

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Comments and questions are welcome. Please address them to:

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PACE Celebrates Women in Business

Five women, winners in the annual Women & Co. Equity Award, a Citi-Group, Inc. initiative, were honored at PACE's second annual Celebrating Women in Business event at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. More than 200 women entrepreneurs and dozens of exhibitors attended.

Don Kinsey, a vice president of Comerica Bank, a longtime partner in PACE's Women's Business Center

(WBC), said small businesses, like those awarded, "understand that the community comes first. They are the engine that drives our economy."

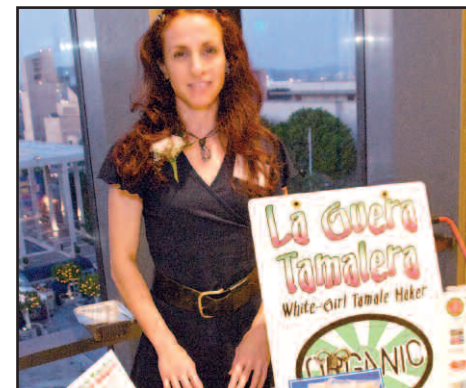
Citibank vice president Vivienne Lee agreed. "Women are taking an ever bigger role in business. So now more than ever, they need the training PACE gives them."

"It's an important opportunity to network, just to talk to one another. The

PACE (WBC) is more than just an SBA program," said Jackie Jones, a WBC manager.



Women business entrepreneurs were recognized at PACE's second annual Celebrating Women in Business reception. (From left), Jackie Jones, Rosanna Ruey, Deborah Stern, Luriko Ozeki, Karen Marcus, Shannon Bizzy, (unidentified), Citibank vice president Vivienne Lee.



DEBORAH STERN
La Guera Tamalera

Top prize winner Deborah Stern's La Guera Tamalera of Silver Lake makes artisanal organic tamales with local ingredients and no trans fats. Her mentors are a family of tamaleros from Veracruz, Mexico who have been making and selling tamales for generations.

Stern learned about PACE Women's Business Center through Mama's Hot Tamales Café and graduated from the entrepreneurial training program in June 2008. She got early great media coverage for her fine products but then couldn't meet the demand for them. Her \$5,000 award helped to hire two employees and rent a kitchen. Her new capacity has since garnered five new wholesale accounts.

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PACE's Key Role in the Bank on L.A. Program

You couldn't break open Nancy Rodriguez' cookie jar if you tried. The 12-ounce Pepperidge Farm cardboard can is covered and sealed from top to bottom with tough, broad transparent tape. Except for the slot on top. That's the slot into which Rodriguez regularly put the money that saved her financial life.

"I kept it in my clothes closet, just so I wouldn't be tempted," she recalls now.

The cookie jar discipline was part of a PACE program that focused on people like Rodriguez: those whose personal financial problems left them with bank debts that looked unpayable. Her problem was that she lost her checking account, leaving behind unpaid overdrafts that put a wall between her and banking privileges

that most of us take for granted. She had become, after two years of unemployment, one of those unfortunates known as the "Unbanked."

As Carol Wu, PACE's Asset Building Coordinator, puts it, "Nancy was put back in the cash economy." Rodriguez' relief payments, which she cashed at a local check cashing store, were feeding herself and her four children with nothing going toward her overdraft debts. She paid high fees to get her checks cashed, and of course had nowhere to invest or even bank her funds once she cashed her checks.

Then, when she got a job recently, her employer told her about the Bank on L.A. program. Begun by the Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's

office in imitation of a successful program in San Francisco and other major cities, Bank on L.A. wants to get 10,000 unbanked Los Angeles residents back into what it calls "second chance accounts." PACE's BDC (Business Development Center) is one of four leading local partners in the city program.

With a half-time office job, Rodriguez still gets relief payments for her family. But now she has a start-up account at her local branch of Union Bank of California. It's a savings account, and now she can make deposits and withdrawals at any of the bank's branches. Her new bank account is also a major step toward the checking account she can regain once she pays off her old debts, as well as a means to pay those debts by diligently saving. But even after that payoff, it will take five years for her to purge her past checking account

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PACE Breakfast Club

Assemblyman Mike Eng Speaks to PACE

Mike Eng, the Democratic 49th District Assemblyman who represents most of the southwestern San Gabriel Valley, loves to tell the story of how one of his Chinese immigrant ancestors did not strike it rich in the New World.

"[My grandfather] worked many years in San Francisco as a house boy for the blue jeans tycoon Levi Strauss," Eng said, adding that his forebear had helped to raise the Strauss family. The patriarch was so pleased that, when the children were grown, he awarded his servant with an exclusive Levi Strauss franchise. The franchise happened to be in Honolulu.

"It wasn't until he moved to Hawaii to start his business that he realized that people just don't wear blue jeans in Hawaii," Eng recalled, speaking to the July PACE Breakfast Club meeting in Rose-

mead. The family dream of Hawaiian wealth and success faded and blew away.

So his grandmother and grandfather ended up working hard for low wages in Hawaiian garment factories. His parents had to struggle too, and didn't have enough time for child care. "I was an at-risk child," he says. "I grew up in neighborhoods where if you weren't six feet tall and didn't weigh 300 pounds, you got beat up regularly."

He could easily have gone wrong, he said. What saved him, he now recalls, was the Kiwanis International High School Key Club. "I joined the Key Club and became a do-gooder," he says. The club still directs teens toward community involvement and leadership skills.

Those Key Club lessons stuck. He



Assemblyman Mike Eng, speaking at a recent gathering of the PACE Breakfast Club.

went on to attend the University of Hawaii, where he earned both Bachelors and Masters degrees. He paid his tuition by working full time in a hospital emergency room. He says it was there that he encountered the realities of America's unequal health

care system, meeting desperately ill people coming through the emergency room who were seeing a doctor for the first time in their lives.

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Women in Business

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SHANNON BIZZY
Bizzy Bee's Landscape Maintenance

Shannon Bizzy left her hometown of Mariposa in northern California with two great talents: a gorgeous singing voice and a knack for making plants grow.

The rural county seat of 1,300 people didn't provide room for all this bright potential. So, like so many others, she came to Los Angeles. She took singing lessons, learned to play the bass, and then faced a hard reality: L.A.'s club scene was crowded with talented vocalists. But there were genuine opportunities for her other skill: premium landscape maintenance.

So, while she kept up her music by night, she dug in the dirt by day, maintaining and improving the yards of Los Angeles.

"I'd been working with landscaping for years," she recalls. "I was the rare kid who liked to do yard work." By the time

she got here, she'd worked on 18 golf courses. She quickly got a job with a top landscape architect but soon realized that she wanted to plant and grow her own business.

So she came to PACE's Women's Business Center to learn the basics. Her \$3,000 award helped her buy new equipment and hire two more people. Her monthly sales doubled, from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Meanwhile, her hard-rockin' band, PDP, can be heard Sunday nights at Hollywood's Knitting Factory.



KAREN MARCUS
You're Not the Boss of Me

Just the name of Karen Marcus' business, "You're Not the Boss of Me," brought laughs from the audience.

Marcus, who'd shown strong artistic ability ever since her teens, decided at age 50 to finally center her life on her creativity. She has been a part of the PACE Women's Business Center for the past three years and in that time she continued to develop as an artist and a busi-

nesswoman. She marketed her greeting cards all over Los Angeles, and currently they are sold in hotels, airports, salons, floral shops and at local events. She did not have any space to create and store her cards, but thanks to her \$3,000 grant she now has an office. You'll soon be able to see her work on her website.



LURIKO OZEKI
Iyashi Wellness

Luriko Ozeki is the founder of Iyashi Wellness, a West L.A. Chinese medicine and holistic wellness clinic. Ozeki is a graduate of Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and honed her pain reduction skills at the well regarded Venice Family Clinic.

She is an advocate of an individual's capacity for self-healing and is committed to ensuring the optimal well-being of her patients by helping them realize their specific health goals. She came to PACE last year to sharpen up her business. She plans to use her \$1,000 award to enhance her marketing so that more people

can learn about and experience the benefits of preventive medicine and holistic healing. "I want all my clients to be calmer," she says.



ROSANNA RUEY
e-Recycling Stewards

Rossana Ruey's e-Recycling Stewards, Inc wants to save the world, or at least preserve the earth from the gathering mounds of e-waste.

She first came to PACE Women's Business Center intent on starting a different business but after conducting extensive market research, she decided on e-recycling given her experiences and her passion. e-Recycling Stewards collects end of life, out of date, obsolete and beyond economic repair electronic waste for reuse and recycling. "I want to make it easy for customers to be socially responsible," she says. A self-described "serial entrepreneur", she'll use her \$500 award to create her own e-waste recycling website and a corporate identity.

Namoch Sokhom

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sisters and parents were among those who escaped as refugees after the Khmer Rouge fled the Vietnamese invaders in the late 1970s.

The family spent two years in refugee camps in Indonesia and Thailand. Sokhom, barely in his teens, managed to learn basic English on his own. It wasn't easy. Sokhom recalls, "Learning English was forbidden in the camp. There were no text books." He learned by listening in furtively, sitting outside near a window or behind a blackboard, to a private English class. He took his class notes on old empty cigarette packs – the only available paper.

It was these notes he used, six months later when the teacher left the camp, to teach "English as a Second Language" (ESL) to his fellow internees – his first teaching experience. Meanwhile his parents sought refugee placement in France, Canada, Australia and, finally, the United States. They tried for New York and they tried for California. Instead, these natives of subtropical Cambodia wound up settling in Minnesota.

The year-round climate may have been cold, but the Minnesota reception was warm. A strong religion-based refugee outreach effort "particularly among the Catholics and the Lutherans," brought his family to that state. Suddenly, he went from a refugee camp to St. Paul's Highland Park High School. He helped his parents, who worked as hotel employees, adjust to American culture. He still recalls and admires his parents' independence. They banned TV and strongly encouraged Sokhom and his three sisters' education. Then they proudly insisted that all four children graduate from college. Now, three of the four have Master's degrees, and another is working on her Ph.D.

"My father said education can't be burnt, it can't be taken away from you," Sokhom recalls, who now has two children of his own.

Many Americans complain about their high school years, but not Sokhom. "After four years in the Cambodian Killing Fields and two years in camps, it was a really big treat," he recalls. More than that, he felt at home in his new environment.

"None of us ever thought of our family as poor, or disadvantaged or underprivileged. I soon found that



Namoch Sokhom's story is one of optimism, generosity and an unabiding dedication to helping people. From his childhood in Cambodia, through relocation to Minnesota, return to Cambodia and, for the last ten years at PACE, Namoch has worked for a better world. Above, he is shown with his immediate family as they prepare to leave their refugee camp in Thailand.

there were plenty of students there in St. Paul who were in far worse circumstances than I," he recalled.

One major advantage Sokhom had over many of his fellow students was his attitude toward his teachers. "In Cambodia, we had an extreme respect for our teachers, just as we did for our parents. We actually saw our teachers as second parents," he recalls. "They bring us the gift of knowledge."

So he pitched in to help his instructors. By the time he was a senior, he was an ESL teaching assistant and a student representative with the local school district's policy committee.

He says helping others helped him to be a better student. "When you pitch in and help others, you don't have much time to complain."

It was almost by accident that he ended up at Minnesota's St. Olaf College, a Lutheran private institution

that one of his favorite high school teachers strongly recommended. He visited it and liked what he saw. Maybe, as an immigrant to the U.S., it helped that St. Olaf was itself founded

by immigrants in 1873 and annually celebrates its immigrant heritage.

"They gave me early acceptance," he says. "It's the only college I actu-

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Namoch and classmates at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, where one of his responsibilities was as resident assistant in a men's dormitory.

PACE Frontline

By Yusa Chang

Vice President & Chief Operating Officer



If you were on PACE's electronic messaging system and/or were a fan of PACE on Facebook, you probably already received three exciting announcements from us.

PACE's 4th Annual Asian Career and Business Fair took place on Wednesday, October 28, once again

at the Pasadena Conference Center. This fair featured 50+ exhibitors and was attended by over 1,000 job seekers and entrepreneurs. It has been featured in the L.A. Times, local ethnic media, Facebook, Jobing.com, TV18 and other sources.

PACE is now a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) designed Microenterprise Lending Intermediary! With an initial injection of \$750,000 in lending capital from the SBA and matches from local banks, we expect to assist local area small businesses with their capital needs in a very tight credit market.

PACE just received a federal grant from Washington, D.C. to establish and operate "GreenBiz sPACE". It is a business incubator that will house up to 10 small, Green start-up or expanding businesses. In addition to space, common use areas, and equipment, GreenBiz sPACE will provide tenants with networking opportunities, business counseling, mentoring, and access to contracting and marketing opportunities.

Of course you can read in more detail about these three exciting announcements in the next issue of PACE News! But if you sign up to be on our electronic messaging system or become a fan of PACE on Facebook, you would have known about them already... plus other periodic announcements of events or impact of our work.

However, we will make the following pledges:

We will not share your e-mail address with anyone else except for PACE use only.

We will not irritate you with too frequent e-mail blasts on trivial information. We will be very selective with our messages.

If you are interested to be placed on our e-mail list, please contact Alvaro Bermudez at ABermudez@pacela.org. If you already have a Facebook account, you can log on to www.pacela.org to sign up as a fan of PACE.

Work Opportunity Program Steps Up to the Plate

In this difficult recession economy, with so many men and women struggling to get jobs, PACE continues to perform exceptionally in the basic task of moving people from the welfare rolls into gainful employment. Now, with new federal stimulus money backing it, the PACE Work Opportunity program is more vital than ever.

"Our bottom line is to help a CALWORKS client land a position of self sufficiency. In this we already have a 75 percent success rate," said Albert Sy, chief of the Work Opportunity program. PACE placed at least 250 people under this program this year—up from just 30 before the stimulus act.

CALWORKS is the work-oriented California benefits program that replaced straight welfare payments in 1996. Now, cash welfare aid is limited to 60 months total in an adult lifetime; the intention being to bring unemployed and indigent people into the workforce and to wean them off this public dependency. And that's where PACE comes in: finding jobs. "This stimulus funding suddenly gives our job program a huge shot in the arm," says Sy.

Sonia Burgos, a mother of one who'd been on assistance since she lost a warehouse job over two years ago, early this year got into

PACE' Transitional Subsidized Employment program. This means that her wages are partly paid by government money. Now she's a PACE program assistant, and in eight months has learned the ins and out of how best to serve people trying (as she did recently) to



Albert Sy heads PACE's Work Opportunity program.

get off of welfare assistance and into a job.

She recalls PACE's employment orientation opened her eyes: "They taught us how to dress, how to write a resume, to do an interview, and how to behave on the job. It was all very useful." As a mother

with a partner living with her at home, she's entitled to up to 35 hours a week of work. She knows she's acquiring valuable experience toward a more permanent career, one that will, she hopes, enable her to finish the two-year degree she began years ago at Long Beach City College.

Her colleague, Jessica Ruiz, has three children. She had a similar experience that put her on assistance. "But the simple fact is," she said, "That you get a lot more money when you are employed than when you are on assistance." Right now, she's working as Sy's personal assistant at PACE. Ultimately, she'd like to go to college too. She's already got a career goal. "I'd like to join the LAPD and become a homicide detective. I like to figure things out."

Both Burgos and Ruiz, after completing their training, are now working full-time at PACE. They are among the 20 people in the program PACE hired.

The new stimulus-funded program is an expansion of the 13-year-old welfare-to-work program. But the new program (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) also offers government-subsidized pay of \$10 an hour, up from \$8. Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe announced earlier this year that as

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PACE's Key Role

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problems from her bank records.

Wu said, "The problem is that so many people don't understand banks and are afraid of them. Both banks and the people who use them need to build mutual trust. Bank on L.A. is one good way to do that." It's estimated that at least 15 percent of all American households are "Unbanked." In minority populations, the proportion is much higher.

Founded in March of this year, Bank on L.A. has already launched 2,000 new "rebanking" accounts, Wu says. The PACE BDC likes to offer the program to people involved in its Remedial Financial Education Programs. In addition to Union Bank of California, PACE's partners in Bank on L.A. include Bank of America, CitiBank and Wells Fargo (which now includes Wachovia). Wu further credits HSBC Bank, which began its own asset-building program three years ago even before Bank on L.A. started, becoming

the local pioneer of the asset-building rebanking concept.

Wu points out that the banks can also benefit from the program in a big way. More bank clients in low-income areas could inspire banks to open more branches to draw in depositors. It's estimated that about \$10 billion annually passes through the check cashing and payday loan shops that serve the fiscal needs of the people who don't get to use banks.

That's potentially a huge and profitable new customer base for the bankers.

PACE

Head Start Parents Learning Self-Empowerment

We usually think of PACE's Head Start Early Childhood Education as being focused on the very young. After all, PACE does provide its basic pre-school learning for over 1,600 pre-Kindergarten children in its program.

But PACE Early Education also provides services for adults, including parenting and literacy classes for pupils' mothers and fathers, along with comprehensive services for the whole family.

Now there's another educational force emerging among Head Start parents. It's the force that empowers them. This is the PACE Head Start Policy Committee, a regional body comprised of representatives from each of the 25 centers throughout the county operated by PACE.

"It started out as simple parental involvement," recalls PACE Early Childhood Education Director Rachelle Pastor. "Now it has evolved into a true parents' policy group. We're teaching

them all how to speak out." More importantly, this regional volunteer panel now has staff hiring and firing powers; it helps PACE with the budget and plans curricula; it even plans field trips. A 4-person Executive Committee elected from the larger body oversees the 50-member panel and also meets separately, helping to steer the entire organization.

Angel Santiago, 44, a Santa Monica hotel worker, sits on the Executive Committee. He has two children, a girl in middle school and a boy who is just going from Head Start into Kindergarten. Santiago was on the larger committee for a year before he was elected to the executive panel. "The experience has made me a better parent," he says. "And it has given me a basic understanding of how the system works."

Rosa Amaya, on the other hand, is relatively new to the executive leader-

ship program. Her two children have been in Head Start for just two years, so she is in her second year with the parents' group. And she's still in her first year on the Executive Committee.

"We're giving our children the basic understanding they'll need in school," she says. "But we're also gaining some understanding ourselves. We learn how to work together and how to help our children learn at home."

Amaya added, "I started to work on the PACE Head Start Executive Committee because I wanted to be able to help my children learn better, not just now, but when they are going on to primary school. And even beyond that."

The committee provides a venue in which parents can not only get to know one another and work together to better preschool education, but to learn how to stand up and become effective community members. "It gives them a chance to articulate," Pastor says. "At first the members tend to sit quietly." But eventually, they stand up and say something. Then they start to get deeply involved in the process of helping run the organization. A member of the committee sometimes gets so involved that he or she stays on three or four years, even after their child has

gone onto Kindergarten. This establishes continuity and experience in the body.

Each of the 25 PACE Head Start centers has its own local parent committee, and each committee elects its representatives to the regional Policy Committee. The candidates first get training in the rules of order and other working aspects of the committee's functions, a training that's reinforced before each meeting. There's also an annual training event. The second event, held last March at the downtown Center for Health Communities, attracted 500 Policy Committee members.

"The empowerment learning goes beyond the pre-school experience," Pastor said. "We hope it will carry over into primary school PTA involvement. It also gives the parents greater confidence in asserting themselves in gaining better health care, or in buying a house. In the context of neighborhood organizations, it even empowers parents to deal with city and political officials - to get a pedestrian cross walk or a stop sign put up on your corner, for instance."

Pastor hopes it is this experience that will eventually help PACE parents become valuable citizens and community members.



Rosa Amaya



Angel Santiago

Assemblyman Mike Eng

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"I'm now a major supporter of health care reform," he says.

He came to Los Angeles to attend UCLA Law School. There he met his wife-to-be, Judy Chu (now California's first Asian American Congresswoman). She persuaded her young lawyer fiancé to stay in L.A. - and not "go back to those Islands." He has never regretted the decision.

Now Eng sits in his wife's former Assembly seat, but he's long had an independent career of his own, first as a poverty lawyer (that means "when the lawyer makes less money than his clients do," he joked), then as a mainstream attorney with his own firm. His parallel political career saw him elected as a city councilman in Monterey Park, where he later served as mayor.

He recalls that he and his wife moved to Monterey Park when it was still a majority white community, and where ethnic discord resulted in nationally noted discrimination against Asians. "There were still those people who complained about what language your store sign was in," he recalled. He recalls fighting prejudice personally.

Perhaps most symbolic of the city's progress toward a peaceful era of tolerance was the \$18 million Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Public Library expansion for which Eng, as a three-term city Library Trustee, oversaw the fundraising campaign that raised half the project's cost. The assemblyman is still proud of the new library, which reopened in 2006. It is now twice the size of its predecessor and also serves as a significant regional center for the education for U.S. citizenship applicants.

Speaking to PACE just after the tentative resolution of the state's severely prolonged budget process, Eng singled out Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign pledge to eliminate the car license tax in 2003 as a key element of California's financial problems. "Elimination of the vehicle license fee put a \$4.5 billion hole in our budget every year since then," he said. He also cited the national mortgage crisis, which he said was caused by increasing regulatory laxity under the last Bush administration, as another major factor in the state's problems. He compared the huge amount of paperwork and references he had to produce for his own first home purchase mortgage with the extreme laxity of the housing-boom mortgage lending of the past four years. "No documents, no phone calls. Brokers were making their millions on many thousands

of house sales to people who just couldn't afford the mortgage payments." Then last year, things fell apart. "What started in Washington, D.C. spread all over the country and then the world," Eng said. "And to California in particular."

Eng, who chairs the state Assembly Transportation Committee, indicated that Sacramento's Democrats are holding strong for some new taxes to protect crucial services that might have been passed had the governor supported them. He cited the oil severance tax common in all the other oil-producing states, which California's Republicans continue to fight. "This tax alone could bring in \$1.2 billion a year." Eng contended that since oil is a global commodity, the severance tax would have no effect on this state's pump prices. A similar amount would have come in tax revenues had the state passed a \$1.50 per pack cigarette tax hike. These proposals are still viable, he said. He also expressed hope that there would be a new state constitutional convention and that initiatives will make next year's ballot.

He even ventured some optimism about the state's long-term future. "We in the government share your pain. But our doors are always open. And we know that California will someday become again the Golden State for us and for our children."

Work Opportunity

Continued from Page 6

much as \$160 million in stimulus funds would be available to L.A. County alone. These funds are intended to create 10,000 temporary jobs until September of next year. (The program may also be extended another year). Federal funds will pay 80 per cent of the employee wages for one year and the employers pay the rest. At the end of the subsidized period, program officials hope that their new employers will hire many of the workers permanently.

Knabe's spokesman, Dave Sommers, noted, "It's a very successful program. We've already filled 6,000 of the jobs." He explained that because the wages are so heavily subsidized, the program gives recession-hit employers a chance to expand their work forces at low cost to them. Even Starbucks has hired some of the program applicants, he said. The employers benefit by being able to expand their businesses with the new hires.

Knabe himself, at a March press conference, complimented PACE for not only training but hiring transitioning workers in the program.

Sy notes that the new funding is particularly welcome in this region, where the unemployment rate has gone past 10.5 percent. He says, "In order to fulfill our obligations, we have to work really hard to get people jobs." He gives a lot of credit for PACE's success to Jenny Chen, the PACE Work-Source Center's resident genius of job searching, who has been matching unemployed people with jobs for 25 years — five of those years at PACE.

The workers hired through the program usually take positions offered by PACE's partners, which include the county. These include maintenance chores, clerical work and other functions in public, private and nonprofit workplaces.

"Most of the people who go in these jobs keep them at least a year," said Sy. After that year of employment in a PACE transitional position, many of those in the program are able to move up to long-term employment elsewhere, trading welfare dependency for job independence and new careers. These people are real success stories of PACE's new partnership Work Opportunity program, Sy says.

Namoch Sokhom

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ally applied to." Not surprisingly, he did well there too. But Sokhom's college campus career was busier and more serious than that of most students in the late 1980s.

Instead of the usual social fraternity, he joined Alpha Phi Omega, a national organization dedicated to leadership and service. "We'd visit the elderly, we'd plant trees. We ran our own print shop that served the whole campus." A French-language student of outstanding abilities, he became a French Department teaching assistant; he also held an educational leadership post as resident assistant in an international male student's dorm. This job got him crossways with several football players after he made them pour out all their beer in the course of a particularly raucous party. In angry revenge, the bereft drinkers tossed his hall rug out of the window. "It was a tough job," he recalls of his time spent riding hard on his St. Olaf classmates.

After graduation, Sokhom got his MBA in finance and banking at Thunderbird School of Global Management in Glendale, Arizona, a school strong on international relations. His first real-world full time job was as an accounting manager with Knight Ridder's St. Paul Pioneer Press newspaper. But in 1995, he took a big, emotionally charged step and returned to the tormented land of his birth: Cambodia.

"It was very moving," he says now. "I still remember how I felt when the plane began to descend and I first saw that landscape again after so many years." He faced one of the toughest challenges of his entire career: working as an economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) implementing facilities to stabilize the exchange rate. He also volunteered to teach over 300 employees of the fledgling Cambodian government about American accounting principles, business practices and English business terminologies. The purpose was to help make Cambodia eligible to join the Association of South East Asian Nations (known as ASEAN).

Looking back now, he says, "It was a lot like what we do here today with the PACE Business Development Center. Only instead of giving courses to aspiring startup business people from all around Los Angeles, I was teaching this nation's top economic officials." He was also, in effect, helping to bring his native land back to life.

Among the problems Sokhom faced in his job was not just teaching his "students", but to do so in the absence of textbooks. Few books had survived the vicious Khmer Rouge reign. At first, he tried to get English business texts translated into the Khmer language. Eventually, though, his governmental students learned enough English business terms and concepts that they preferred to be taught in English.

Sokhom says his main objective in his native land was to help implement the IMF's concept

of sound monetary policy. In this capacity, he helped bring about a \$120 million loan to the National Bank of Cambodia. The establishment of that independent central bank, along with a stable currency and the privatization of nationalized industries, was a key IMF mandate. "The IMF's only mission is to maintain financial stability," he said. In Cambodia, its work had at least a qualified success. But after the 1997 coup (never so termed by the IMF, who wanted to shield their accomplishments) by Cambodia's ruling coalition partner Hun Sen, Sokhom and many of his colleagues felt it was time to leave the country. He then came to Los Angeles, where he served two years as a senior accountant and finance analyst with the American Heart Association before coming to PACE in 1999.

PACE was then looking for someone who spoke Khmer. But Sokhom brought much more than that. And at PACE, he found his current career goal: helping economically challenged people of all backgrounds put their finances on a firm basis, particularly by starting businesses of their own.

As director of PACE's BDC, Sokhom again found himself teaching the same basic economic principles of modern commerce that he'd taught to Cambodia's bureaucrats. But this time, he was reaching out to an enormous variety of people in the Los Angeles area, people of all ethnicities and educational backgrounds. What they had in common was a driving interest in moving ahead by building a successful business for themselves and their families.


Now, with a staff of 14 and five interns, Sokhom's Business Development Center is a model of its kind. It's a nonprofit organization, but it is dedicated to nurturing and advancing the profit making businesses that bring jobs and revenues to lower income communities. The program uses a combination of classes, consultations and coaching to teach and help students implement the basics of business plans, bank accounts, and credit.

"It really all sits on good credit," Sokhom says. "Credit is the key foundation. And you need a working relationship with your bank, too." He notes that for businesspeople in particular, home ownership is a helpful major step. It also provides a stable fiscal resource for the entrepreneur and his or her all-important credit rating.

Sokhom admits it's a bit of a paradox that a major non-profit like PACE has become so important in bringing so many people into the big tent of entrepreneurship, and has nurtured so many successes.

"But actually," he says, "we are trying to create more than just profit. Even if businesses aren't overwhelming successes, they bring jobs into communities and they generate services and revenues. They help neighborhoods grow and prosper. That's why we are all so passionate about what we do here."

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