

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INAUGURAL CLASS OF GREEN JOBS ACADEMY GRADUATES IN EAST PALO ALTO: Innovative Program Prepares Unemployed Parents for the Emerging Green Business Sector

East Palo Alto, CA –After eight weeks of intensive study, fieldwork and green job readiness training, the first class of San Mateo County’s Green Jobs Academy will graduate on Thursday, December 17, 2009.

Launched in October 2009, the county program will train six classes through October 2010. All 150 participants must be un- or underemployed parents who receive support through the public assistance, CalWORKs program.

“We have to do something to care for the earth,” said Dominique, a single mother of two from San Mateo and Green Jobs Academy participant, “if we don’t, we won’t have a planet to live on.” Dominique, who prefers not to use her last name, escaped an abusive marriage along with her young children. A full-time student with no income, she found herself living in homeless shelters with her sons, ages 2 and 5. A week away from graduation, she’s already had one job interview and feels a new sense of inspiration, “The program was amazing! I learned so much about the earth and the damage we’re causing, I definitely want to be green the rest of my life.”

According to new data released last week by non-partisan research and planning organizations, Next 10 and Collaborative Economics, California’s green business sector has grown steadily over the last 13 years, increasing by 45% in number with a 36% increase in jobs, while total job numbers for the state expanded by only 13%. Despite the state’s dramatic economic slowdown between 2007 and 2008, the green sector continued to grow at a rate of 5%. Green businesses in the Bay Area continued to rise above the state average, with a 51% increase in businesses, totaling 41,674 local green jobs. The report, *Many Shades of Green: Diversity and Distribution of California’s Green Jobs*, tracked data on green companies, job type, location and growth across every sector and region of California.

“Clean tech businesses provide environmental stewardship, excellent jobs, and a sustainable tax base for our county,” said County Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson. “These academy graduates are uniquely prepared to succeed in meaningful jobs that will fuel San Mateo County’s growing green business sector.”

The academy’s curriculum consists of five components: environmental literacy to engage participants in environmental sustainability and the clean energy economy, math skills, reading and writing skills, hands-on skills in weatherization, plumbing and green building techniques; and life skills in career planning and job interviewing. This integrated curriculum prepares graduates for careers in a range of green fields including energy efficiency, weatherization, solar installation, green building, community organizing, marketing and green business administration.

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“By including environmental studies in the curriculum, we helped create a passion for green jobs. That motivation to work, along with training in an emerging field, will position these academy graduates for successful, rewarding, lifelong careers,” said Beverly Beasley Johnson, Director of the Human Services Agency. “Their excitement about their future careers in the green job sector and eagerness to improve our environment will be a social good for generations to come.”

The Green Jobs Academy is administered by the Human Services Agency in collaboration with the Sequoia Union High School District, JobTrain, and ILM Partners, a clean tech recruitment firm based in the Bay Area.

The graduation will take place on December 17, 2009, 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM at the Menlo-Atherton Center for Performing Arts, 555 Middlefield Rd., Atherton, CA 94026.

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The County of San Mateo Human Services Agency assists individuals and families to achieve economic self sufficiency, promotes community and family strength, and works to ensure child safety and well-being.