

Building Healthy Communities



My name is Yajaira Medrano and I am a 16-year-old girl living in East Salinas. I currently work as a Friendly PEERsuasion Teen Teacher at El Sausal Middle School with 7th grade girls. Over the past couple of months, I have become involved in a new project, through Girls

Inc., called Building Healthy Communities a project from the California Endowment and the Community Foundation for Monterey County; focused on improving the lives of residents in East Salinas. About 45 community members form the Steering Committee, with a total of 8 youth involved.

Growing up in East Salinas, I have seen that people's voices on my side of town are rarely heard. Many of the residents are not actively involved in trying to improve the community or find solutions to the problems they face everyday. By being involved in this project I am able to voice my opinion on all the issues that I feel affect East Salinas. I feel that by getting involved in this project I am making a difference in my community. During the El Grito Festival I helped gather the

opinion of local residents', and during the next few weeks I will be helping put together small groups of community members to present all the information we gathered.

I believe that it's extremely important for youth to get involved in their community. By doing so, they get to address many of the issues that affect them. These problems cannot be solved if we do not make our voices heard. I am very proud of myself because I am making a difference in my community by being involved in this project. I have contributed by sharing my personal experiences and what I see with my friends and classmates. All the time that I have invested in this project has been very productive and I am sure it will pay off in the future. I expect great results from this project and I know I will see a lot of changes in my community.

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