



**ONE EAST PALO ALTO**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE**  
*Organizing community, brokering services and resources, advocating for change, and building the capacity of East Palo Alto's direct service providers to work together more effectively*

*One East Palo Alto* (OEPA) completed a long-term strategic planning process in 2005 which was designed to identify key programmatic initiatives in order to successfully address important quality of life issues in the community. Three such initiatives were identified which now constitute key components of OEPA's core operations. Programmatic Initiative 2 is described below.

***Programmatic Initiative 2: Take the Sponsored Employment Project to Scale***

Local community-based organizations in East Palo Alto (EPA) that connect youth to jobs are very few in number and need more resources and capacity to increase job placements for youth at risk. The main agency reports data showing that in 2002-2003, 290 EPA youth were registered for work, but less than 8% were placed. In 2003-2004, 250 youth registered for work, but only 14% were placed.

In 2005, *One East Palo Alto* used its role as convener of the East Palo Alto Crime Reduction Task Force and lead of the Task Force's Prevention and Alternatives Committee (PAC), to spearhead an important local initiative – an action-oriented community-wide response to then increasing incidents of crime and violence, especially those involving our youth and young adults (YYA). That response catalyzed a grassroots movement to reconnect with EPA youth, show them that we care, bring summer jobs back to the community, and create positive income earning opportunities for YYAs who demonstrate the greatest need to work. While the initiative's general activities promoted increased awareness of existing job placement resources, its primary work addressed the special needs of individuals with multiple employment barriers. Through this work, *One East Palo Alto* partnered with local agencies and residents to establish the Sponsored Employment Project (SEP), creating jobs in local nonprofits and public agencies and mentoring relationships for 30 youth and young adults.

OEPA's strategy in the coming years is to take the SEP to scale by:

- Providing an employer-mentor relationship-based job training experience, and develop community service/leadership development activities for youth in their work assignments.
- Creating a project implementation structure in which local residents and stakeholders can lead the design and implementation of project activities.
- Coordinating the development of a network of supporting organizations that can be tapped to make specific contributions to project implementation.

Anticipated outcomes of these activities are that:

- More than 100 youth at risk will be placed in meaningful jobs.
- More local stakeholders will be actively engaged in designing the mentor relationships, community service and leadership development components.
- More youth at risk will establish positive adult relationships, strengthen their connections to the community, and pursue opportunities for civic engagement.

Since its inception, SEP has provided summer jobs and one-on-one mentoring relationships for nearly 500 EPA youth and young adults. With this level of scaling achieved, the name of the initiative has been changed to the Sponsored Employment Program. Plans are underway in 2009 to secure funding for SEP's fifth year of implementation, in which at least 100 EPA youth and young adults will be served.