

THE PROMISE



Mission Youth in Action at MEDA.

MEDA Launches Mission Youth in Action Program

We are excited to announce that **MEDA** has become a grantee for the **Department of Children, Youth & their Families (DCYF)** Empowerment Service Area. This generous grant will allow us to further develop our **Mission Youth in Action** youth leadership program, providing young people with the tools to understand the power of leadership and community organizing.

In the **Mission Youth in Action** program, youth will explore the history and impact of youth leadership through a variety of activities such as community-building exercises, power analysis, storytelling, and leadership development workshops. The goal is to empower young individuals by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to become active agents of change in their communities.

The program kicked off with extensive outreach across **MPN** schools and the Mission community throughout mid-July and August. Through this outreach, we attracted 76 students who expressed interest by submitting forms to join. Our Policy team, led by our **Susana Gil-Duran, Family & Youth Engagement Specialist**, followed up with each of them, personally inviting them to be part of the program. Out of the 76 students, 46 applied, and 34 attended the orientation on September 18th, which included both students and their parents.

An orientation was held to share the program's vision, expectations, and timeline with families and students.

One key component of the program is to connect parents to MEDA's broader services, helping them work on their own financial, housing, and employment goals. For families with students attending **John O'Connell High School**, there is additional support through **MPN's Family Success Coach, Alejandro Bautista**, by helping them navigate services.

A key aspect of the program's design is the Student Success Planning initiative, which connects each participant with a trusted adult, which are the three staff members leading this work. There will be monthly check-ins with students to develop academic and personal goals, connect them to resources such as photography classes or academic support, and provide ongoing guidance.

The **Mission Youth in Action** program is not just about developing leaders—it's about creating a community of support for youth and their families, helping them navigate educational, personal, and professional pathways. We're thrilled to see this program continue to grow, and we look forward to the impact it will have on the youth, their families, and the broader community.



Generic photo.

Entrepreneurial Influencer

In many cases, sometimes people have to be creative to figure out the answers to the unexpected paths that arise in their lives. In Mercedes' case, the answers came from unanticipated sources. Although she tried (and won) the housing lottery through the mayor's office, she encountered some barriers just before finishing the process. As she told her story to her support team, the friendships and ideas of people helped her achieve her goal.

Mercedes was living in a room provided by the city, a form of shelter where many families pass through trying to find a place to call home. She had to enroll her children in school, which is where she met **Mission Promise Neighborhood's Family Success Coach, Blanca Castillo**. Mercedes first spoke with Blanca about concerns about how the room she was living in was being issued to her, and why it was in poor condition. As well as advocating for her, Blanca shared her perspective with Mercedes and assured her that everything was going to be okay. This advice came to Mercedes at a time when she said it was difficult to get by.

During this time, what Mercedes did to support herself was to create content on social media. Because of being a single mother and also other barriers, she was not able to have a typical job, nor a steady one. She earned her income from apps like TikTok, Instagram, and others that pay their creators to generate impressions.

Together, Mercedes and Blanca continued to apply for low-income apartments through **DAHLIA**. When she found out that she won the lottery for the apartment, Mercedes was afraid that her application would be denied because she did not have a typical income. Blanca assured her that through her social media earnings, she should be able to qualify for the apartment. Blanca also wrote a letter advocating for her, and, after making several appointments and taking the time to speak with the city's staff, Mercedes achieved her goal of securing her apartment. She has also qualified for a housing subsidy.

As of now, Mercedes has stopped posting videos as a content creator. She has focused on other goals and continues to work with Blanca to make a plan to achieve these goals. She has also found a supportive community of her own, getting involved in a church and making new friends. Mercedes shared some of her thoughts about this time in her life: ***"there were nights where I couldn't sleep; I was hopeless due to a lack of help and my new home is a gift from God"***. Mercedes has never stopped talking positively about Blanca, assuring us that Blanca has been a ***"beacon"*** for her and that she ***"never left her alone"*** in her journey to get to where she is today.

An Informed Family is a Prepared Family

This summer, more than 200 families from **MPN** schools came together virtually to build their knowledge about financial education, strategies to talk to their children, and information on available resources. **Mission Promise Neighborhood** is conscious that having knowledge about some topics and resources available in our community can help us in difficult times, and even better knowledge prepares us for those times.

Each year, **Mission Promise Neighborhood** hosts an Education Forum designed to provide families in our community with valuable insights through a range of informative workshops. The **MPN Educational Forum** was held virtually on Facebook throughout the week of August 5th-9th, with the theme "**An Informed Family is a Prepared Family**". The workshops were offered by five of our partner organizations. They shared important information and resources, guiding families on topics of interest and relevance to our community. One topic that resonated most with the audience was "**Saving for College**," a session presented by **Luz Maria Ayala** from **Mission Graduates**. This session highlighted the unwavering commitment of families to their children's education, regardless of their circumstances. Families are always considering giving their children a higher education, and they are proactive in informing themselves and taking advantage of opportunities such as the **K2C** and **CalKIDS** accounts.

Continuing along the line of finances, **Jaqueline Marcelos** from **MEDA**, pleased us with an in-depth talk about the importance of having control and organization in our finances to meet our individual and family goals. We couldn't miss a topic that our families have been waiting for in these difficult times, when having a decent and safe place to live is complicated. **Maritza Gomez** from the **Latino Task Force** knows about this and spoke to us in more detail about Housing and other resources. And in an effort to cover all fields, we invited



Patently waiting for her selection of books.



Workshop led by LTF.

Yesenia Lemus from **Mission Neighborhood Center (MNC)** who facilitated the session on resources for early education, sharing their programs in detail. **Mission Promise Neighborhood** also wanted to address one of the most difficult practices for parents and for that, we invited **Cindy Urquidez** and **Erica Gallegos** from **Instituto Familiar de la Raza**, who pleased us by talking to us and giving us strategies to have difficult conversations with our children. To close the forum, **Mission Promise Neighborhood** wanted to thank the families of our community who attended the **10th Mission Educational Forum**, supporting them on this back-of-school time, giving away backpacks with school supplies, books donated by The Children Book Project, and raffling off ten gift cards.

Without a doubt, this **10th Mission Educational Forum**, "**An Informed Family is a Prepared Family**" left a good learning experience among the attendees and would not have been possible without the effective participation of our community partners. Thank you.



The Promise Committee

From left to right: **Alejandro Bautista**, **Karla Herrera**, **Aarón Ayala** and **Celina Castro-Saelao**. Our mission is to share stories of students, families, and partner organization's accomplishments and stories across our network. The Promise newsletter will be published quarterly, the next one will be in the Winter of 2025. If you have an idea or would like to share your story, contact **Celina Castro-Saelao** - craelao@medasf.org