



A United Way
Initiative



United Way
California Capital Region

Success story from United Way foster youth IDA program

supported by United Way's Women in Philanthropy group

During Tony's sophomore year after years of struggling in special education classes, an AmeriCorps member noticed that Tony was having trouble relaying symbols to information. After ongoing mentoring with Tony, who is a foster youth, the member's impressions and advocacy led to a Dyslexic diagnosis. For the first time, Tony was able understand why reading was so hard and why graphics never made sense. This launched his support team to identify what he needed to be successful.

Tony is very verbal and has natural leadership skills so the member just needed to play to his strengths when finding a plan for his life and his looming emancipation from the foster care system. The member has been working with Tony for the last two years and he has consistently considered working in the forestry service. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) proved a near glove fit with Tony's goals and transitional needs.

Tony's village of support sprang into action with the member making certain things were on track. The CCC Intake Interview was scheduled in a week and they went clothes shopping. After great debate they settled on where Tony's waist actually was and purchased a nice outfit that looked great. The member and Tony conducted mock interviews, what reading he might have to do and what kind of "paper work" was needed for entry. They redoubled their efforts on life skills development.

After picking up Tony from the house for his interview, he nervously chattered at how CCC would be his springboard into the forestry service and how much it meant to him to have the opportunity and the potential to earn money through United Way's IDA program to purchase a reading tool. We spoke of his foster brother who graduated last year and drifted off his plan and is now totally rudderless - both of us knowing that this would not be an option for Tony. He emerged from the interview with the biggest grin ever seen. His interview went well and CCC had him scheduled for Intake right after graduation in the spring.

Tony graduated from High School at the end of May 2011, having successfully completed the Individual Account Program (IDA). Tony participated in 10 hours of Financial Curriculum, earned Incentives through providing over 30 hours of community service, had no absences in school, and graduated, earning him a total of \$475. This amount was matched by United Way funds, totaling \$950.

Tony utilized his IDA earnings to purchase an Intel Reader, a special device to help him with reading. This device will enable Tony to read CCC manuals and other reading required for his community college courses. Acceptance into the CCC and being able to purchase the Intel Reader greatly motivated Tony to complete the IDA program, especially in such a short amount of time. In order to complete the IDA program and purchase the Intel Reader before leaving the CCC, Tony worked closely with the member to identify his savings goal, allocate his allowance into a savings account, and receive the necessary financial trainings in budgeting and money management.

In early June, the member drove Tony to Fortuna, CA to begin his service with California Conservation Corps. Tony utilized luggage that was donated from United Way's Women in Philanthropy group. The Intel Reader was sent directly to Tony's new address with the CCC. With support from the United Way IDA program and Women in Philanthropy, Tony is assured more success than without it.