

County Program Helps

County Program Helps High School Dropout Turn Life Around After Tragic Death of His Father. Workforce Investment Board helps local youth secure a job and earn his high school diploma.

San Bernardino, CA -- Family life for 21-year-old Fabian Mujica was a series of tragedies that included murder, kidnapping and incarceration. Despite the despair, he has overcome adversity to create a brighter future for himself. With help from the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board, Fabian now has a job, has graduated from high school and plans to join the U.S Army. "I am very proud of myself and grateful for the help I have received from the Workforce Investment Board. They opened doors for me; my life has turned around," said Fabian. Fabian was incarcerated at age 13 after a fight at school resulted in a charge of assault and battery. After serving time, he returned to Mojave High School but dropped out to join his father and uncle in Mexico, where they ran a mining business. In a tragic turn of events, they were kidnapped; Fabian's father died of a heart attack in captivity and his uncle was murdered. With nowhere else to turn, Fabian moved back to California. He lived in a trailer and picked fruit for a living until a co-worker encouraged him to pursue an education.

At his old high school, he met teacher Werner Von der Heide, who runs the Workforce Investment Board's youth program for Hesperia Unified

School District. "Due to the fact that Fabian was previously a special needs student, he was able to stay on at high school until he is 22 to earn his diploma," explained Von der Heide. "He only had 50 credits and needed 220 to graduate, so there was a lot to do within a year. I'm glad to say he took all our advice, has been extremely focused and graduated in March." The Workforce Investment Board also found Fabian a part-time paid internship as an insurance agent for Allstate. "Without the help of the Workforce Investment Board, I would not have had these opportunities. I gained valuable experience in computer skills, customer service, administration and telemarketing," added Fabian, who is now applying to join the Army. "I am even more determined now to represent my country after what it has given me. I never used to enjoy school but now I find studying incredibly easy and realize the importance of education." Fabian recently secured a new job as a retail assistant at The Mall of Victor Valley.

Sandy Harmsen, Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Board said, "Fabian has overcome significant struggles to achieve his dreams. We are proud to have helped him and so many others. In just one year the Workforce Investment Board has helped more than 1,330 youth to develop the skills needed for a successful career."

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chair Janice Rutherford says Fabian is just

one of many great success stories: "Like Fabian, many young people face overwhelming obstacles to employment. Factors such as the high cost of education, competition from more experienced adults, and lack of awareness regarding career and training options are just some of the challenges. These are the issues we address to help young people build a successful career."

The Workforce Investment Board of San Bernardino County (WIB) is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the County of San Bernardino Board of Supervisors. The Workforce Investment Board, through the County of San Bernardino's Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, operates the County of San Bernardino's three America's Job Centers of California (AJCC). The AJCCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life. The AJCCs also support and provide services to the County's businesses, including employee recruitment and business retention programs. Interested in the Workforce Investment Board programs call: (800) 451-JOBS or visit www.csb-win.org.

