

health
happens
here
In Neighborhoods



BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

Saving Lives — In and Out of the Pool

BY KATE GONZALES

On a recent Thursday afternoon, the sun blazed down on a small group of teens as they laughed and swam. But this was no typical summer day at the pool.

These teens are the first to receive lifeguard certification training through the new Youth Detention Facility Lifeguard Program — a partnership between the YMCA of Superior California (the Y) and the Sacramento County Probation Department. The class is funded through The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative to promote community health in south Sacramento.

To participate, youth from the detention facility must be at least 15 years old and pass a swimming test. They'll spend 26 hours in training — 13 hours in class, 13 in the pool. Once they pass a final test, they'll earn an American Red Cross lifeguard certification — giving them skills for employment at community pools once they are released.

The detention facility's pool, where the training takes place, is surrounded by high walls — but the scene is not bleak. During a recent training, the youth learned techniques including ways to safely enter the water and recover a victim. Then they put the lessons to practice, working in pairs to rescue one another.

Aquatics Director Patrick Maridon teaches the class, which he says gives the teens a greater

sense of purpose and reduces the likelihood that they will re-offend.

"It's really a position they can take pride in," Maridon says. "They're going to be in a position where they get to help others, save others, and interact with the community."

**"IT'S REALLY
A POSITION
THEY CAN
TAKE PRIDE IN."**

Patrick Maridon, aquatics director, YMCA of Superior California

The program also aims to address a serious disparity. In Sacramento and nationwide, African-American children die from accidental drowning in swimming pools at disproportionate rates. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that between 1999 and 2010, black children ages 5 to 19 died at a rate 5.5 times greater than their white counterparts.

Isaih, a 17-year-old at the facility, is on his way toward earning his certification. An eager student in the classroom and an enthusiastic one in the pool, he says he wants



Patrick Maridon, aquatics director at the YMCA of Superior California, teaches lifeguard certification classes at the Youth Detention Facility in Sacramento. Photo by Anne Stokes

a life free of crime when he gets out. With no legitimate work experience under his belt, this certification could give him the second chance he's looking for.

"I just want to change my life," he says. "I want to get an actual job, make something of myself."

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

ZIP CODE
95219
Life Expectancy
73

ZIP CODE
92657
Life Expectancy
88



Your **ZIP code** shouldn't predict how long you'll live — but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long — and how well — we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.
Health Happens with Prevention.

If you are interested in hiring a certified lifeguard who went through the Youth Detention Facility Lifeguard Program, contact **Ray Lozada at 875-0291.**

The
HUB
Building Healthy Communities
www.SacBHC.org

PAID WITH A GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT