



Valley nonprofit to get \$500,000 grant

Written by Connie Llanos, Daily News Staff Writer
September 21, 2010

A San Fernando Valley-based nonprofit was one of 21 groups selected Tuesday to receive a coveted federal "Neighborhood Promise" grant designed to revitalize struggling communities.

The Youth Policy Institute, based in Pacoima, was one of only two Los Angeles area nonprofits selected to receive the \$500,000 planning grant. Proyecto Pastoral, based in the Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles areas, was also awarded the grant.

The funds will help groups gather data and community feedback to develop plans that bring "cradle-to-career" services to lower-income neighborhoods.

The institute hopes to design a plan that will bring services such as prenatal classes and social workers to a dozen schools in the Northeast Valley and the communities that surround them.

"This is a big deal for the Northeast San Fernando Valley," said Dixon Slingerland, executive director of YPI.

"This is fundamentally about combating poverty within a neighborhood."

YPI, which will also work with schools in the Hollywood area, plans to target these schools in Pacoima and San Fernando: Haddon Avenue, Telfair, O'Melveny and Broadous elementary schools, Maclay, Pacoima and San Fernando middle schools and San Fernando High School.

The nonprofit will also continue to work with the schools it operates in the area, including Bert Corona Charter School and the pilot school it runs on the San Fernando Middle School campus, San Fernando Institute for Applied Media.

Modeled after the "Harlem Children's Zone" in New York, the Neighborhood Promise program was promoted by President Obama during his election campaign. The program is designed to saturate schools in a community with myriad services to improve student achievement, and in turn restore impoverished neighborhoods.

"You cannot have a strong, healthy community if you have a broken school, and you can't have a strong school if you don't have a strong community," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

On Tuesday, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa also applauded the Los Angeles nonprofits that were chosen for an award that drew some 300 applicants nationwide.

The two groups are also eligible to win federal implementation grants next year that could bring up to \$10million a year for three consecutive years to a selected community.