

# PRIME-US Student Partners with Local Youth

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Immersing myself in a completely new community is a large and energy intensive task. Yet, it was essential to develop this effort to bring a change that was missing in the medical student community. I envisioned a link between UCSF and youth that have had a similar experience as my own. In particular, I envisioned working with youth that have been affected by drug and gang violence and were looking for a change. This may seem like an easy task on paper, but paving a road without a script or framework was the essential task that I was proposing. Not knowing where I would start, I put the idea on the back burner until I was more settled with living in a new city and adjusted to the new school.

One night during the first month of medical school, I attended a panel discussion on youth violence in the Mission district. The panel consisted of representatives from community organizations, all of which shared their stories and the mission of their organizations. Amongst all of the passionate speakers, I was moved by a representative from HOMEY that aspired to attend medical school at UCSF's PRIME-US program to continue working with at-risk youth in his community. Gabriel Santamaria was on a

journey where he wielded the power of his experience to mold and guide the youth from his community, an act that resonates profoundly with my life story. Then the light bulb turned on; he would be an ideal person with which I could start a partnership. I approached him after the panel to introduce myself. After a lively discussion and enthusiasm for a collaboration shared by both parties, Youth Creating Change (YCC) was born.



YCC is a youth leadership development program in collaboration between HOMEY and UCSF PRIME that strives to help at-risk youth envision themselves as community leaders. We promote this vision through community health projects that the students develop and execute with the guidance of HOMEY staff and UCSF students. The idea of this program came out of several planning meetings between Gabriel and myself, but evolved into a functional and effective program with the involvement and input from the youth and UCSF PRIME.

The first group of YCC youth completed two successful projects that highlighted the importance of community engagement and education. In the first project, the students created poster presentations to answer two questions: 1. what are the effects of junk food on teenagers? and 2. What job resources are available to teenagers in San Francisco? The students self-organized into committees that were led by a youth project manager and a youth chief financial officer. To prepare their posters, they utilized current literature, invited guest speakers, and contacted community organizations for information. After a successful research and planning phase, they presented their posters at a community health fair where they educated a diverse audience that consisted of students, parents, professors, and even fire fighters. They were so effective that the group was invited to give their presentations at SFSU. The second project involved collaborating with Clinica Martin Baro (CMB), a student-run free clinic in the Mission

district. The students felt it was important to portray the mission of CMB through a mural. The students were moved by the message of health as a right and health through community empowerment. This project presented the students with opportunities to experience the ties between health and all other arenas. Some students focused on the development of community relationship between YCC and CMB. Some students focused on the mural development and management, especially during the painting phase. Yet other students focused on publicity, interfacing with the local newspaper and photographers and developing press releases. The final mural unveiling brought the community together to celebrate the youth's accomplishments and honor the creation of collaboration.



These experiences were impactful to both YCC youth and UCSF PRIME. The community heard reflections from both parties that expressed stories of growth and empowerment. The youth were empowered by their roles as agents of change. The two projects demonstrated that they were able to produce change by building community collaborations, drawing from their personal experiences, and expanding on their passions. UCSF PRIME was inspired and uplifted by the youth's energy and drive. They gain invaluable perspective on the importance of community engagement and relationship building to promote community health. For me, this program demonstrated that an essential link between the medical field and communities similar to mine could exist to promote social justice and improve community health.

I want to thank the tireless efforts of Gabriel Santamaria in the creation, development, implementation, and success of YCC. I also want to thank the UCSF PRIME community for supporting and contributing time to the empowerment of YCC youth.