

Summer Youth Employment Program

One program alumna comes full circle to recruit the class of 2021 participants.

Kaiser Permanente's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) provides underserved or at-risk high school students with supportive and meaningful employment experiences in the health care field. Participants attend educational sessions and motivational workshops that introduce them to the possibilities of pursuing a career in health care.

One alumna of the program, Maribel Alejandre, is currently employed as a Program Manager at EXP, one of Kaiser Permanente's non-profit partners, where she supports internship and outreach programs, including recruiting students for the 2021 Virtual SYEP. Maribel shared her insights on the program.



Maribel Alejandre
SYEP alumna and Program Manager at EXP – The Opportunity Engine

Tell us about your educational and career journey. How did SYEP help create a pathway to success?

There is no doubt that being part of SYEP at Kaiser Permanente South Bay was a catalyst to my success! My internship was my first paid work and resume-worthy work experience. My time as an intern in the NICU allowed me to develop many skills but, most importantly, it allowed me to break out of my shell.

I had the opportunity in college to mentor SYEP students during my INROADS internship at Kaiser Permanente's Regional Laboratories. It was there that I realized that my love for helping and developing youth was my calling. After much thought and reflection, I transferred to CSULB to major in Human Development, with a minor in Psychology.

I was then offered employment at a local nonprofit in Wilmington, SBCC Thrive LA. I worked almost four years for their Energy Pathway Program. I assisted residents from communities throughout the South Bay

and Greater Los Angeles in finding entry level jobs in local refineries. I was able to see these individuals go from generational poverty and disparity to being able to purchase their first home, earn livable wages to sustain their families, and have a career that could lead to retirement.

My journey came full circle when EXP posted an opening in October 2020. Being an employee at EXP allows me to use my own lived experience to innovate with our students' interest and goals in mind.

What advice would you give younger people coming through the program today?

Don't take the experience for granted. Not everyone in high school has the fortune of interning for a great organization, such as Kaiser Permanente. Learn as much as you can and ask questions. It might not make sense now, but all the guest speakers have your best interests at heart. As a person who now mentors students, know that we want to make sure that you learn from our lived experiences. Meaning, listen to the advice and keep it in mind while navigating your continued education and career. One day those words of advice might bring you clarity and aid.

Wishing all the 2021 SYEP interns a summer of successful learning and may you all continue to Thrive!