



Case Statement

We Care for Youth (WCFY) provides **high-quality entrepreneurial and business training, leadership development, and violence prevention programs**. WCFY improves the lives of at-risk youth in Los Angeles County, primarily Pasadena, Glendale, and Burbank, while assisting them in the creation of a brighter future.

Mission and History

We Care for Youth's mission is to offer unconditional love as the path and leadership training, character education and employment training as the vehicles that improve youths' self-respect and competency. This mission is achieved through programs that are rooted in peace, guided by compassion and conducted in teamwork while striving for excellence. WCFY believes **youth learn business by doing business, learn leadership by becoming leaders, and learn violence prevention by becoming champions of peace** in their neighborhoods, their schools and their communities. Since its inception, WCFY has provided mentoring, character education, leadership training, organizational management training, employment readiness training, entrepreneurial instruction and activities and peace training and activities to **more than 9,000 youth**.

Founded in 1991, WCFY programs and services give young people opportunities to experience success, build confidence and generate hope for the future. WCFY began as a grassroots mentoring program targeting 20 female members of rival gangs. By showing this group of disaffected, young women love and compassion and helping them realize a different life was possible, 19 of them chose to walk away from the gangs that had become an integral part of their lives. Today these young women are college graduates, business owners, and parents - responsible members of a community to which they never believed themselves to belong.

In 1998, WCFY founders Linda Maxwell and Jose Quintanar received the **Educators of the Year Award** from the Armenian Educational Foundation and, two years later, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation honored Maxwell and Quintanar with its **Champions of Children Award**. In 2003, the organization received national recognition for its work through two awards. The first, **Facing History and Ourselves: The Power of One** recognizes a core philosophy of WCFY; that our thoughts, words and actions create our reality. The second, **The Jefferson Award** ("the Nobel Prize for Public Service in America,") was presented to Quintanar in Washington D.C. One year later, WCFY received the rarely given **Philanthropy Award** from the Glendale Community Foundation. In 2006, the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission presented Maxwell and Quintanar with the **John Anson Ford Award** for "empowering communities and ... promoting an informed and inclusive multicultural society."

Programs for which funding is requested

WCFY serves youth between the ages of 12 and 22 in Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena. **More than 52% live in single parent homes and 42% live at or below the poverty level.** Our youth are predominantly Armenian and Latino as well as Pacific Asian, Chinese, Korean, African-American and Caucasian.

❖ **Bliss Unlimited - Learning business by doing business**

In 1995, the **youth-directed retail enterprise** of Bliss Unlimited was born. What appears to simply be a 700 square foot retail store located in the Burbank Town Center is, in actuality, the hub of a progressive and innovative teenage business academy.

Youth between the ages of 15 and 22 order all necessary supplies, select and create the merchandise, are responsible for sales and marketing and the overall retail management, with support from community volunteers and WCFY staff. Bliss Unlimited products are inspired by youth, dedicated to the empowerment of youth, and designed to cultivate world peace, including necklaces created by Colombian children who would otherwise be working in coal mines, boxes made by Kenyan artisans which support HIV testing and clinics in Africa and bowls made from recycled telephone wire supporting heart surgery for youth in Vietnam, every item sold by WCFY is specifically chosen to make a positive global impact. By selling items that are humane, ecologically sound, made with integrity, and support some of the world's most impoverished nations, the WCFY values of conscientious and compassionate action are furthered with each purchase.

This intensive program prepares youth for a successful future. Through a series of Employment Readiness Workshops (Website Design, E-Commerce, Retail Merchandising, Purchasing, Publicity, etc.), Life-Skills Training (Personal Money Management, Resumes and Interviewing, Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving, Health, Family Responsibilities, etc.), Community Service, and Practical Work Experience youth achieve a true understanding of responsibility and self-sufficiency. Bliss Unlimited provides this combination of job training, education, work experience, and community involvement to **100 at-risk youth each year.**

❖ **Youth Leadership Training - *Learning leadership by becoming leaders***

WCFY provides **project-based trainings in which youth realize their capacity for creating change within themselves and in their communities.** These trainings help youth understand the importance of pursuing a meaningful life that contributes to society in positive ways. WCFY uses **Appreciative Inquiry** as an organizational tool to facilitate large projects in which youth make decisions about how to address current issues. First the teens must identify and select an issue critical to their community. They are then responsible for creating, organizing, and implementing a community event to address the issue. This results in students being the guiding force in examining their community and the people within it, the breaking down of racial barriers and divides, and developing leadership qualities and healthy problem-solving abilities.

Using this model, WCFY created Burbank Youth 4 Youth, guiding twenty-six middle and high school students through the planning and implementation of a 'Solutions Summit' for 200 Burbank teens in order to discuss solutions to violence and other issues. After reading the ensuing report, the Burbank City Council appropriated \$1,300,000 to implement the solutions arrived at by teens, including the creation of Burbank Teens in Action.

In Glendale, WCFY used the same methods to assist teens in several youth inspired projects including: implementing teen issues conferences and other community benefit projects in the Peace Leadership Institute; creating community gardens; and hosting a welcoming lunch for incoming freshmen.

❖ **Violence Prevention - *Learning violence prevention by becoming champions of peace***

WCFY is certified in anger management and diversity training and offers an array of programs and services to reduce violence on school campuses and in the community. The **High School Violence Prevention Program**, which has been offered at Burbank High School, Toll Middle School, Hoover High School, Glendale High School, Manual Arts, and McKinley K-8 School, addresses violence among youth from age 12 to age 18. The purpose of the program is to provide opportunities for both at-risk and mainstream youth to build self-confidence and self-esteem through structured activities which become templates for positive and productive life-long behaviors. **The program provides direct training and intervention to a minimum of 150 teens each year.** Workshops in anger management, conflict resolution and prejudice reduction are interspersed with exercises designed to bolster confidence and

improve social skills. **Evaluations of this program have shown that incidents of violence on campuses served by this program have been reduced by as much as 50%.**

In addition to program facilitation, WCFY trains teachers, community advocates, and organizations in violence prevention and intervention techniques. WCFY also serves as a **Crisis Response Organization** and is called on by city officials, police departments, probation officers, school administrators and counselors when youth have been killed by violence. The program provides comfort for those grieving, support for families experiencing loss, and works to prevent retaliation and unrest in the community.

Peace is seen as the wellspring of inspiration, strength and hope for all of the work done by WCFY. If youth can believe that a non-violent future is truly possible for them, they are more likely to set and accomplish goals; make emotionally and physically healthy choices; and show respect, compassion and love to themselves and others.

The programs offered by We Care for Youth act as an effective intervention for youth who struggle to survive and thrive amid poverty, violence, and a lack of support and opportunity. WCFY trains young people to become independent, confident, socially conscious, and self-actualized adults.

Usual Sources of General Support

Donations and sales from Bliss Unlimited are the main sources of income for We Care for Youth. **California Statewide Certified Development Corporation (CSCDC)** has been providing a large portion of WCFY's operating budget for the past 4-5 years and have been donating for thirteen years. While the economy has affected every business, CSCDC still keeps WCFY as a line item in their budget. Donations, including that of CSCDC accounted for approximately 60% of revenue. Net sales from Bliss accounted for another 25% and fee for services and grants accounted for the balance.

WCFY does not exceed 12% in administration fees during any year and seeks to be at 10%. All funds are put into programs and projects. Occasionally, a grantor will request funds to be dedicated to a specific project or area such as the Department of Justice.