

Bliss Unlimited is a project of We Care for Youth (WCFY), a Burbank, California based not-for-profit organization. It was started in response to the needs of teens seeking employment and connection to their community. WCFY has provided thousands of at-risk and mainstream youth with life-skills and employment readiness training, and job placement, at no cost to them or their families. As with all of projects, WCFY uses **Positive Youth Development (PYD)** fundamentals in the development and delivery of trainings and programs at Bliss Unlimited.

The challenge to provide more jobs for youth, high-level job skill training, and mentoring on an on-going basis created Bliss Unlimited. The business initially started as a coffee brokerage operation

in 1995 in a partnership with the Glendale based Piacere Coffee. Teens were instructed in all aspects of gourmet coffee products and sales techniques. They began selling coffee to business and government leaders in the Glendale, CA area in 1995.

This evolved to become Bliss Baskets, a company specializing in gourmet coffee gift baskets for the Christmas season catering to the corporate business market in Glendale and the greater Los Angeles area. The business proved to be very successful as a vehicle to develop job skills, mentor youth, involve community, and operate as a potentially profitable business.

By the end of 1995 Bliss Baskets' test operation produced \$4,500 in sales and

operated at a break-even level. No wholesale license was established, so, other than the coffee products purchased from Piacere at a significant discount, all other products and supplies were purchased at full retail prices and in small quantities. In 1996, revenue generated was \$19,000, representing a 325% increase from the previous year.

The success of Bliss Baskets evolved into Bliss Unlimited, a Teen Business Academy. In November of 1997, Bliss Unlimited launched a retail operation in the Glendale Galleria, a super regional shopping center. The **Glendale Galleria** provided (at no cost) the first retail store featuring unique holiday gifts, cards and gift-wrap inspired or made by youth. Excess revenue for 1997 was \$1,500.00. Due to an extraordinary loca-



tion in the mall and grants from the **Jacobs Family Foundation** and private donors, Bliss was able to generate nearly \$25,000 in profits in 1998. This was used to sustain the operation throughout 1999.

Space was provided in locations not permanently leased. The fourth and last Galleria location opened in August 2000 and closed in February, 2001.

While there is tremendous competition within the gift industry, Bliss Unlimited's association with WCFY, and its inspired business model generates demand and community support. Clients like **Time Warner** and many of its divisions, **American Express** and local businesses knew the value of cause-related marketing and jumped on the Bliss bandwagon.

In November 2005, Bliss re-opened in the **Burbank Town Center. Crown Realty** has given Bliss its first permanent home. Teens attending the business academy receive high school credit through the **Los Angeles County Regional Opportunity Program (ROP)**. The program also serves students qualifying for 'workability' programs. Since the opening, Bliss has graduated four (Fall 2006) semesters of local teens, providing them real world job training and life skills.

Starting in the summer of 2006, through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and **Burbank's BEST program**, teens who completed their ROP course are being invited to apply for paid employment with Bliss Unlimited.

A new partnership with **Woodbury**

University (www.woodbury.edu) has begun with two general goals:

- To introduce Bliss teens to the university environment
- Start the Bliss Unlimited Scholarship Project (To donate, go to the DONATE button at www.wecareforyouth.org -make a notation that your gift is for the scholarship)
- To promote Woodbury University to the public

Keep checking the News section of our site for updates and special events!

Bliss is located in the Burbank Town Center 201 East Magnolia Blvd. #120 (lower level - just outside of Macy's) Burbank, CA 91502. Our phone is 818.846.3047. Our email address is BlissUnlmt@aol.com.

