

# On Site

Playa Vista Job Opportunities and Business Services

Volume 4 Number 3 ■ Fall 2003

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Ernest Roberts  
Executive Director, PVJOBS

PVJOBS' annual awards luncheon is fast-approaching this fall season. This year's event, Reaching New Heights, will take place on November 19 at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The Honorable Alex Padilla, president of the Los Angeles City Council, will serve as our keynote speaker.

One of our collaborators, US VETS, will provide entertainment as we recognize two PVJOBS workers who have demonstrated a superior work ethic and have overcome significant obstacles on their path to self-sufficiency. The Visionary and Contractor of the Year awards will also be presented to those who have assisted PVJOBS in furthering our mission.

I expect this awards event to be moving, inspirational and well worth attending. For more information, please contact our offices at (310) 448-4684. We hope to see you there.

## PVJOBS Employment Update

**Security Positions Available!** A local security company is looking for security guards for immediate hire. Candidates should have no felony records and have adequate transportation. We expect there to be many positions available over the next quarter. Interested parties should contact Juan Alvarado at (310) 448-4655 for more information.

**Operating Engineers Union Now Accepting Applications!** Operating Engineers Local 12 is accepting applications for only a short time. PVJOBS clients who have an interest in operating heavy construction machinery should either contact Local 12 at (626) 792-8900 for application information or PVJOBS at (310) 448-4684.

*continued on page 3*

## Gayle Avant: A Spirit To Give

Case manager Gayle Avant felt right at home when she began working at PVJOBS nearly three years ago. In her position, Avant helps local nonprofits enroll at-risk residents in the PVJOBS program. That level of benevolent work is the type of vocation Avant feels perfectly suited for. "I've always been a giving person, so when I came to PVJOBS, I fit right in," she says.

Avant was encouraged to serve others while growing up in Nashville, Tennessee. Raised the oldest of five, Avant was reared by parents whose careers allowed them to interact with a diverse spectrum of people. Her printing business-owner father and research scientist mother demonstrated through their professions how to interact with a wide range of people. "My parents instilled in me that a person should be able to work with anybody," she says. Armed with that principle, Avant spent her high school years dedicating time to those she wouldn't ordinarily encounter, like teaching handicapped children how to swim, because "it felt good inside to reach out to help people."

Studying to become an elementary school teacher while attending Tennessee State University, Avant left college to get married and move to Japan, where her husband was stationed in the military. There, Avant taught English and art to Japanese children. A few years later, the couple returned to the U.S. to make a home in Long Beach, where they raised their son and daughter. To help support the family, Avant worked in the financial industry for nearly the next two decades, despite her longing to work in a career that focused on serving others.

Avant reached a crucial turning point in her life when during the



Gayle Avant

*continued on page 3*



Page 2  
PVJOBS at Work  
"Sweet" Alice Harris &  
Parents Of Watts

Page 3  
PVJOBS at Work  
Page 4  
Community Partners

# PVJOBS At Work

## Vickie Williford: Finding Her Way Back Home

Playa Vista carpenter Vickie Williford stands out among her crew – not just by her clear talent for her job, but also because of her gender. “Carpentry is typically a man’s job, and I’m the only woman on my crew,” says Williford, 42. “But it turns out that everyone respects each other, and I really enjoy my work.”



Vickie Williford

That levelheaded reasoning is only one of the many constructive attributes that Williford has embodied since deciding to turn her life around three years ago. A

reformed ex-offender who admits to having had practically all of the at-risk factors listed on the PVJOBS application, Williford now values the promising life that she abandoned during her youth.

Raised an only child by a single mother in West Los Angeles, Williford desired to see the world at a young age. Due to her mother’s full-time work schedule, Williford admits to having “a lot of freedom” during her unruly teenage years. While she reveled in taking drama classes as a student at L.A. High School, she decided to quit school after her teachers restricted her from continuing the drama program. “So I started hanging out with other drop outs, and my mother lost control over me,” she says.

At 17, Williford became a runaway, opting instead to sell drugs for a living. Her drug involvement led to her first jail sentence when she was 19, an experience that she would relive many years to come. “Going in and out of jail took nearly 20 years of my life,” recounts Williford. Although she enrolled in a number of trade schools between prison releases, she inevitably returned to selling drugs – a lifestyle that her mother refused to accept. “My mother would never turn her back on me, but she made it clear that she didn’t accept my lifestyle,” she says. “And I love her for that.”

After completing her last prison sentence in 2000, Williford made a decision to end her hopeless cycle. “I was tired of the life,” she explains. “And I wanted to change my life for my mom.” She moved back home with her mother in pursuit of earning an honest living by using her trade skills. But her job search was frustrating, going seven months straight without finding work. Finally, a local Urban League center referred her to PVJOBS after learning she earned a carpentry certificate. Within several months, Williford was hired by Lane Framing Systems, a Playa Vista contractor that she still works for more than two years later.

Inspired by her budding career, Williford now feels like she is settled, for once in her life. “I’ve never been a part of ‘society,’ but now I am. And it feels good.”

## “Sweet” Alice Harris & Parents Of Watts: A Story Of Inspiration

Before Hillary Rodham Clinton told Americans that “It takes a village to raise a child,” Sweet Alice Harris began demonstrating that philosophy decades ago in the Watts community. For nearly 40 years, Harris has devoted herself to changing the lives of disadvantaged children and adults. Her life’s work is reflected in the Parents of Watts, a nonprofit organization that she formed to encourage children to remain in school and stay away from drugs and gangs. “We started this work to keep peace and bring harmony in the community,” says Harris, “and we’ve been doing that ever since.”

Harris’ work began as a volunteer service that she ran out of her home, where she provided health care assistance to her neighbors in the Jordan Down

projects. When the Watts Riots erupted in 1965, Harris realized that her services were needed more than ever. Her work grew to receive widespread support from neighboring volunteers, who helped her significantly expand her services throughout the 1970s. In 1982, Harris purchased a small house, located next door to her



“Sweet” Alice Harris

own home, to open a new headquarters for the organization, which became incorporated the following year.

Today, Parents of Watts has expanded into a 4,000 square-foot facility that operates more than 15 programs serving the basic needs of local residents. The organization provides emergency food and shelter for the homeless; employment training and placement programs; health education, parental training and high school completion classes; and after-school and early childhood literacy programs. Through its invaluable services, Parents of Watts has become a shining pillar in its community, as the organization now serves more than 20,000 residents annually.

Shortly after the launch of PVJOBS, the job program partnered with Parents of Watts to support its employment opportunities in the Watts community. Since forming their partnership, PVJOBS has found work for 25 at-risk residents in Harris’ community.

While the Parents of Watts has made its indelible mark on the local community, Harris still directly oversees the organization, after all these years. That staying power has endured because Harris feels like the organization is as an extension of who she is. “All my life, all I’ve ever wanted to do is help people,” says the 68-year-old wife and mother of nine. “Once you learn something you enjoy, you don’t ever want to do anything else.”

# PVJOBS

## Employment Update

*continued from page 1*

**PVJOBS Employment Update:** As of mid-October, 691 PVJOBS candidates have gained employment, filling more than 1,130 positions. Approximately 265 candidates have completed a minimum of 500 hours, and 17 candidates have completed more than 3,000 hours. We expect to fill an additional 100 to 150 positions this quarter at Playa Vista and elsewhere. Bear in mind that many candidates listed in the table below are already working. We specifically need candidates to fill positions as sheet metal workers and operating engineers. Candidates with these specific trades need to submit an application to the applicable union and pass the union test before they are eligible for referral to work through PVJOBS. For more details, please call PVJOBS at (310) 448-4684.

CONSTRUCTION TRADE	ACTIVE IN DATABASE
Carpenters	960
Flooring/Carpet Layers	50
Concrete Masons/Finishers	153
Electricians	121
Iron Workers	193
Laborers	1707
Tile/Marble/Brick Masons	304
Operating Engineers*	28
Painters	433
Plasterers	123
Plumbers	317
Roofers	169
Sheet Metal Workers*	28

*\*Trades Specifically Needed*

## Gayle Avant: A Spirit To Give

*continued from page 1*

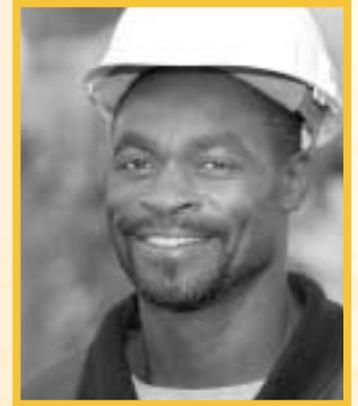
mid 90s she embarked on a soul-searching mission to find her true career passion. After realizing that she wanted to return to a job that served the community, Avant accepted a case management position with a youth employment organization. Although she enjoyed her new career, the organization's funding struggles forced her into a layoff. That's when she heard about PVJOBS. "When I met with PVJOBS, they saw my caring attitude and leadership skills, so they knew I would be an asset in helping them move along their program," she says.

Avant's instincts have proven to be right on target. Since landing her current position, Avant has played an extraordinary role in helping at-risk residents successfully enroll in the job program. Her down-to-earth, hands-on approach to her job has made her a favorite at PVJOBS as well as to the many community-based organizations that assist the same at-risk residents who she strives to serve.

# PVJOBS At Work

## Gary McCauley: Becoming His Future

For the past two years, Playa Vista contractor Color Concepts has taught Gary McCauley the fine points about the painting and drywall industry. Actually, McCauley has learned so much about the trade that he has embarked on his own business enterprise. "Color Concepts did such a good job in training me that I'm starting my own painting business," he says proudly.



Gary McCauley

That sense of pride has always been a part of McCauley, 40, but much of that pride was misdirected while growing up as a youth. Born the youngest of five in Dayton, Ohio, McCauley was an adventurous child who enjoyed life. At 14, his parents moved the family to Southern California in search of better career opportunities. The move also gave McCauley an opportunity to spend time with his uncle, a general contractor who taught him construction skills. "I felt like I learned a trade for life, and no one could take that skill away from me," he says.

While much of McCauley's youth was spent learning about construction, most his young life was marked by his rebellious activities. As a high school student, McCauley became involved with a local gang that he eventually joined after turning 18. He continued his gang activity until, at 23, he was sentenced to jail for a crime he committed through his gang affiliation. Although his jail sentence was brief, the experience was unforgettable. "Once I was released, I found out how hard it was to make it in life without a trade," he says.

After working in a factory and several odd jobs, McCauley's brother, a forest ranger, helped him get a position fighting fires for the U.S. Forrest Service, where he worked for the next eight years. But when he read an L.A. Times article about PVJOBS, McCauley was reminded of his joy of learning construction from his uncle. He soon applied to PVJOBS, landing a laborer position several months later. "I wanted to have something stable for the future of my family," says McCauley, who has a son and two daughters.

Even though McCauley was originally hired as a laborer, within a year, he was promoted to a crew supervisor after his company observed his drive, reliability and hard work. With his painting business now in motion, he feels like he's finally fulfilling the vision he's always had for his life. Says McCauley, "Working with PVJOBS helped me understand that if I can build a future, I can be the future."

# PVJOBS Community Partners

## APPRENTICE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Century Community Training (Ms. Clinkenbeard) 310/673-3941  
Los Angeles Technology Center (Ms. Kerr) 323/732-1053  
Testimonial Community Love Center (Mr. Hammond) 323/296-2082

## WORKSOURCE CENTERS

Career Transition Worksource Center (Mr. Fernandez) 562/570-3736  
Community Centers WorkSource Center (Mr. Ruvalcaba) 323/752-2115  
Compton Career Link WorkSource California (Mr. Smith) 310/605-3050  
Hollywood WorkSource California (Ms. Gardner) 323/960-1300  
L.A. Urban League W. Adams/B.H. WorkSource (Mr. Parham) 323/732-7867  
Marina Del Rey WorkSource Career (Ms. Waters) 310/309-6000  
Wilshire Metro WorkSource (Ms. Shakoor-Akbar) 213/365-9829  
WLCAC Southeast/Watts WorkSource (Mr. Alexander) 323/563-5669

## YOUTH AND ADULT PROGRAMS

Chrysalis/New Directions (Ms. Fontaine) 310/914-4045  
Chrysalis/Santa Monica (Ms. Slayton) 310/392-4117  
Communities in Schools (Ms. Arredondo) 818/891-9399  
Community Build (Mr. Bektamba) 323/789-9950  
CRTD FaithWorks (Ms. Russell) 310/673-0287  
DARE U TO CARE (Ms. Parker) 323/756-3208  
Employment Development Dept. S.M. Branch (Ms. Thomas) 310/576-6431  
FAME Renaissance (Mr. Collier) 323/730-8354  
Housing Authority of L.A. (WtW Division) (Ms. Rasheed) 213/252-1800  
Jobs of the Future/Homeboy Industries (Father Boyle) 323/526-1254  
Joint Efforts Inc. (Mr. Twain) 310/821-2358  
IAM Care Carson (Ms. Kimbrough) 310/518-8235  
L.A. Family Housing Corporation (Ms. Ramirez) 818/982-4091  
Mar Vista Family Center (Ms. Diaz) 310/390-9607  
Nabsio/The Cutting Edge News (Ms. Moore) 323/756-8032

## YOUTH AND ADULT PROGRAMS continued

NO GUNS (Mr. Marroquin) 310/695-7438  
Public Allies Los Angeles (Mr. Gonzalez) 213/251-2777  
Radio Sin Fronteras (Mr. Magallanes) 213/250-3319  
Santa Monica Barrios Unidos (Mr. Lares) 310/453-9492  
Save Our Future (Mr. Jordan) 323/544-0039  
South Central Projects With Industry/SCRS (Ms. Williams) 310/345-5713  
The WorkPlace (Mr. Solis) 213/386-1994  
Union Rescue Mission (Mr. Hopkins) 213/347-6300  
Unity One (Mr. Taylor) 213/963-5843  
U.S. VETS (Ms. Harris) 310/348-7600  
Walden House Inc. (Mr. Medina) 213/763-6238  
West Angeles Community Development Corp. (Ms. Welch) 323/291-1472  
WtW Partnership Bizlink L.A. Program (Ms. Samuels) 213/251-1436

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services (Mr. Gutierrez) 213/736-5456  
Boyle Heights Youth Opportunity Movement (Mr. Burks) 323/260-4796  
CCEO YouthBuild (Mr. Starks) 310/225-3060  
Covenant House of California (Mr. Sterle) 323/957-7455  
Goals for Life (Mr. Berry) 562/698-1501  
L.A. Youth at Work (Ms. Hererra) 213/580-7505  
PACE YouthBuild (Mr. Leonares) 213/580-0020  
Peacekeeper ARK (Ms. Adams) 310/276-9046  
United Friends of the Children (Ms. Raphael) 213/580-1850  
VCHC YouthBuild (Ms. Murphy) 310/399-4100  
YES YouthBuild (Mr. Whelchel) 323/567-0091  
Watts Youth Opportunity Movement (Mr. Burks) 323/789-2773

*For more information, call PVJOBS at 310/448-4684.*