



MESA CONNECT

PG&E funds
student leadership
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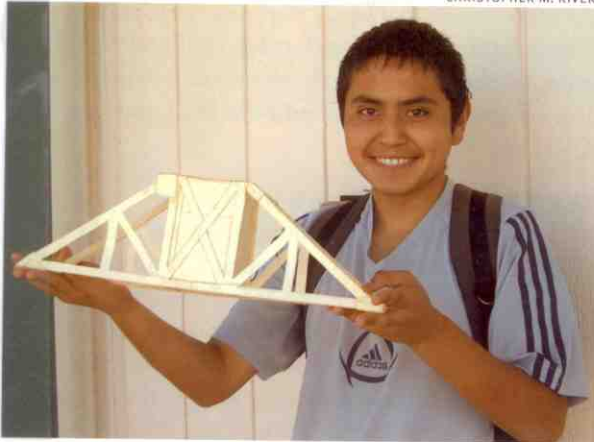
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MESA helps to send seven siblings to college

SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC preparation programs are often described as building a sense of family among participants because of the strong support network they provide. But in the case of MESA and the seven-sibling Lobato family of Watsonville, the comparison is quite literal.

CHRISTOPHER M. RIVERS



Alex Lobato, a MESA Watsonville High School junior, holds the scale model bridge he built from manila file folders that captured first place in last year's regional engineering design competition. He is the youngest of seven Lobato children who all participated in MESA. All his siblings went on to college and attribute their academic success to MESA.

The sons and daughters of migrant farmworkers whose formal schooling ended at the third grade, six siblings have completed the program and gone on to college and one is currently enrolled. Their cousins and other extended family members have been through the program. Friends, and friends of friends, have heard about the program, completed it and gone on to college and successful careers.

“Put it this way: if I had to write all the names of people in my community whose lives have been positively impacted by MESA, it would fill an 11-by-17-inch piece of paper and there would still be many more to write,” said Rudy Lobato, the fifth sibling. “If Alfonso (the eldest) hadn't become involved with MESA, or had been unsuccessful, none of the rest of us would have done it, period. MESA has helped bring our entire community to a better life.”

While the family's story is hardly unique in MESA, the Lobatos' is exceptional in its scope and impact. The Lobato parents, Watsonville High MESA teachers Grace Patiño, Barbara Sorensen and Kathy Anderson, and the school's administration all share credit.

The family's achievements include:

■ **Alfonso Jr.** (31) is a tenured math professor at Cabrillo College; he completed his bachelor's degree in math from top-ranked Occidental College in Los

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Angeles and his master's degree in math from Arizona State University.

■ **Maria de Carmen** (30) attended San Jose State University before accepting a position as a liaison with the Modesto Unified School District.

■ **Roselia** (29) works as a counselor and academic evaluator for San Jose State University (SJSU), where she earned her bachelor's degree in business management/information systems and is now pursuing a master's degree in education counseling.

■ **Martin** (28) works as a social worker for Monterey County while he pursues his teaching credential from CSU Monterey Bay, where he earned his bachelor's degree in math; he plans to return to Watsonville to teach math in the public schools, preferably using the MESA model.

■ **Rudy** (27) is a product introduction manufacturing engineer for KLA Tencor, one of the world's top 10 semiconductor equipment manufacturers, where he has worked for five and a half years. After travel-

ing to Asia and negotiating a successful contract with a Singapore supplier recently, he was chosen from among 400 employees to receive the company's General Manager Award, permitting him to donate \$1,000 to a non-profit organization of his choice.

He chose the Watsonville High School MESA program. "Even if I were a millionaire," he said, "I could never repay MESA for all it has done for me." Rudy earned his bachelor's degree from Santa Clara University in mechanical engineering after initially pursuing a computer engineering degree.

■ **Maria Amada** (26) works for Ostram Opto Semiconductors, the world's second largest manufacturer of opto-semiconductors for the lighting, sensor and visualization sectors, where she was just promoted to human resources specialist. The company is best known for manufacturing light emitting diode, or LED, lights found on many consumer and commercial products. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from SJSU and plans to return to college to pursue an MBA.

■ **Alex** (16) is actively involved in MESA at Watsonville High School and plans to attend college and

become an engineer; he recently took first place in the regional model bridge competition and is proving to be an outstanding student, says teacher Patiño.

"They are really a tremendous family to work with because they really want to work hard and be the best they can be," said Patiño, a former California Chamber of Commerce teacher of the year. "It's part of who they are, and MESA really brought it out in them."

"My biggest hope when I started high school was to graduate and get a minimum-wage job so I didn't have to work in the fields like my parents," said first-born Alfonso. But when then-MESA Advisor Kathy Anderson started keeping a list on the blackboard of her graduates and the names of colleges they were attending, Alfonso grew curious. "We didn't know what it was because we didn't know what college was."

"Enrolling in MESA started everything for me—all of a sudden I was grouped with other high achievers, and I realized doing intensive math and science projects wasn't just for geeks, that it was

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