



**Kaiser HEAL Youth Share their Vision for Healthy Communities with Legislatures in Sacramento
May 19-21, 2013**



Wendy Siguenza from Hollywood High School with Assemblymember Richard Bloom

Wendy Siguenza is a sophomore at Hollywood High School and the incoming President for the F.A.M.E. (Fit, Active, Motivated and Empowered) Health Club. She traveled with her classmates Dulce Gutierrez, Yemi Familoni and Kimberly Molina to share their vision of a healthy, sustainable community with local representatives in Sacramento.

They were joined by their peers from the Long Beach and Ontario HEAL Zone communities and worked side-by-side with youth from Oakland, Sacramento, Santa Ana, and Fresno to address transportation, land use, food access, and education disparities in their communities.

The Statewide Youth Advocate Network for Sustainable Communities (YANSC) conference is organized by the California Center for Civic Participation (CCCP) to empower youth to be vital participants in the decision-making processes at all levels.

The three-day convening prepared the youth to present to elected officials at the State Capitol through interviews with expert policymakers, statewide advocates, and visioning exercising. "It was a really great experience and I learned a lot. It gave me courage and helped me understand that we [youth] can make a difference in our community," said Wendy.

The youth were accompanied by their adult coordinators and are grateful to have such supportive mentors to guide them in their work at the local level.

Following their presentation to policymakers, all participants had the opportunity for face-to-face meetings with their local representatives to offer their perspectives on the challenges, strengths, and opportunities in their communities to improve access to healthy foods and beverages and opportunities for physical activity.

Assemblymember Richard Bloom met with the students from Hollywood High School and Senator Ricardo Lara met with the youth from Long Beach.

As a former teacher of 25 years, meeting Ontario High School students Carla Rowley and Lynh Nguyen, was an especially exciting moment for Assemblymember Jose Medina. He attentively listened to their concerns on park safety and its effect on walkability and physical activity.

Following their meeting, the Assemblymember invited the students to a web conference with youth from Riverside. When asked how education and opportunities for sports can be improved, the Assemblymember echoed the CCCP mission for the youth to be active participants in the decision making process, participate in school board meetings, and share their concerns with him at his local office.



(Left) Long Beach youth (Wendy J. Garcia, Jennifer C. Perez, Noely Y. Flores, and Christopher Zermeno) with Senator Ricardo Lara. (Right) Ontario youth with Assemblymember Jose Medina.

The youth are now tasked to recruit their peers and meet locally to work on healthy eating and active living issues in their HEAL Zone communities.

A follow up regional convening will be held in Los Angeles on July 23rd. High school youth from all Southern California Kaiser HEAL communities are invited to participate, connect with their peers, and learn how to take action on the issues that matter most to them in their local communities. For more information, contact Arpiné Shakhbandaryan at 213-346-3280.

For more information on the Kaiser HEAL Initiative, please visit www.HealZones.org.