

Building a green workforce



BACKGROUND

This case study explores how TCC dollars have helped Pacoima residents advance their career goals. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps offers paid work experience, on-the-job training, and federal, state, and industry recognized certifications. For more information about related projects, [page 43](#) covers the larger Workforce Development Plan and [page 56](#) summarizes the Urban and Community Forestry Project.

Interviews for this story were conducted in September and October 2021.

Corps members tie off a newly planted tree to provide added stability as it puts down roots in Pacoima in 2021. Photo credit: Los Angeles Conservation Corps

DULCE ROSALES is 23 years old and lives in Pacoima with her 4-year-old son. She is part of the LA Conservation Corps (LACC), which offers paid work experience, educational opportunities, support services, and job skills training for young people working on the TCC-funded Street Tree Planting project.

As a resident of Pacoima since 2016, Rosales has firsthand experience knowing that her community lacks the abundance of shade trees found in other more leafy, affluent parts of Los Angeles. She sees tangible impacts stemming from her work as a LACC Corpsmember: “The trees we plant through the TCC project will really cool down the city.”

Seeing the benefits of her work in the neighborhood makes the job very fulfilling. “It’s not just something I’m doing 9 to 5 to make money,” she says. “It’s affecting my community directly. That’s what I love about it and why I’m sticking with it.”

Before joining LACC, Rosales reported struggling to find satisfying work because she felt that she lacked experience and skills. The program brought her out of her comfort zone while building her resume and skills in everything from how to wield a shovel and Weedwacker to communications and writing skills, for instance.



Photo credit: Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Rosales says that LACC’s resources gave her the confidence and flexibility to go to school and work. Rosales is now also enrolled in a medical phlebotomy program to further her goal of supporting the health of her neighbors.

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DULCE ROSALES



Photo credit: Los Angeles Conservation Corps

JAVIER HURTADO is 23 years old and has lived with family in a close-knit neighborhood of Pacoima for 12 years. In high school, Hurtado struggled to manage work and school, and he chose to prioritize work. But without a high school diploma, he found his job options limited. Joining LACC’s job training program provided several opportunities.

“When the pandemic started, it was really hard to find work. LACC scheduled me for an interview the same week that I contacted them about a job. The staff helped me throughout the whole application, interview, and orientation process.”

Hurtado has since completed LACC’s extensive horticultural training, which covers site selection, planting, and caring for new trees. Hurtado works on a team of four, and together they plant roughly eight trees a day. Hurtado estimates that he has personally planted more than 100 trees in his year with the program.

Hurtado reports that the work with LACC gives him far more satisfaction than his previous role at a fast food restaurant. The camaraderie and respect on his team were a welcome change. He also reports getting positive feedback about the program from community members who ask, “Are you going to plant more? Can we get more trees?”

In addition to better working conditions, LACC helped Hurtado achieve one of his long-standing goals – to get his GED. “I’m trying to get as much out of this training as I can,” says Hurtado. “I already got several certifications. Next I want to get my driver’s license and earn a solar installation certification.”

Since this interview, Hurtado has been hired by the California Conservation Corps and is doing work in Lake Tahoe.

“When we’re out working, community members ask if they can get more trees”

JAVIER HURTADO