



Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

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Fresno Man Nationally Recognized for Life Changes & Contributions to Community

- Former gang member and EOC program participant honored with Corpsmember of the Year Award -

(Fresno, CA) Once again, a Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission's (EOC) Local Conservation Corps' participant has been selected to receive The Corps Network's Corpsmember of the Year Award – a prestigious award recognizing at-risk youth and young adults who have dramatically turned their lives around; only six Corpsmembers nationwide will receive this award. This year, the honor goes to Fresno's Alejandro Lopez – a former gang member who, since enrolling in EOC's Local Conservation Corps, has taken major strides in his life.

Lopez started his career with EOC's Local Conservation Corps in the fall of 2007 – shortly after being released from OH Close Youth Correctional Facility in Stockton; he served two years of a nine year sentence at California Youth Authority for his involvement in a gang-related activity. The now 20-year-old has since enrolled in EOC's Local Conservation Corps' California Gang Reduction and Intervention Program (CalGRIP), earned his high school diploma from EOC's School of Unlimited Learning charter high school, earned two AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$7,000, received on-the-job training, and became a husband and a father, as well as a first-time homeowner. He is also registered as a part-time student at Fresno City College earning credits toward his Associate in Science Degree in Electrical Systems Technology.

In his spare time, Lopez – an avid fisherman and member of the Central Valley Sportsman Club – participates in numerous community events and fundraisers for schools in the Fresno-Clovis area. Last summer, he helped raise money to provide recent high school graduates with college scholarships.

"I really am thankful for the opportunity The Corps has given me," says Lopez. "I plan on someday returning back to the Youth Authority as a motivational speaker to inspire others to change their lives. I would like to let others know that people can change for the better and inform them that there are programs and people that are willing to help young offenders such as The Corps and its staff."

Corpsmember of the Year have completed at least one year of service in their community and have worked on a variety of projects including: environmental restoration projects; disaster relief; green

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building; filed education and training; and landscape maintenance. These individuals also took leadership roles, acting as mentors, crew leaders and representatives of their Corps at other national gatherings. More importantly, these young men and women have performed at high levels of excellence, delivered valued contributions to their communities through services, and through their actions have also demonstrated qualities of character that make them outstanding representatives of Corpsmembers from across the nation.

Lopez, along with five others, was selected from among 30,000 Corpsmembers nationwide. He will be presented with his award in February in Washington D.C. He is the fifth Fresno Corpsmember in six years to be honored with this distinguished award.

To schedule an interview with Alejandro Lopez, or learn more about EOC's Local Conservation Corps and its California Gang Reduction and Intervention Program, please contact Yahaira García-Perea at 263.1024.

About Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)

For over 44 years, Fresno County EOC – a private, nonprofit agency – has helped low-income Fresno County residents become self-sufficient. EOC offers over 30 comprehensive community-based programs that develop an individual's capabilities and places them on the path toward financial independence.

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