



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: Human Services Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2015

City of Oakland Receives \$922,216 Grant for Senior Employment and Training ***Low-income Older Adults overcome poverty and workforce re-entry barriers through on-the-job training***

Oakland, CA – The City of Oakland’s Human Services Department announced today that it was awarded a \$922,216 grant from Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI) for its ASSETS Senior Employment Opportunities Program. The grant will support wages and benefits to a minimum of 113 low-income older adults who reside in Alameda County and participate in the ASSETS workforce re-entry program. The grant funds awarded by SSAI originate from the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) administered by the U.S. Department of Labor.

“We are very pleased to continue our support of the City of Oakland for the 25th consecutive year,” said Tony Sarmiento, Executive Director of Senior Service America, Inc. “Many low-income older adults want and need paid work. By serving their community, older workers receive renewed skills as well as renewed hope. Older Californians are fortunate to be given the opportunity through SCSEP and the dedicated staff of the City of Oakland.”

Due to inadequate retirement income, many older adults need to remain employed beyond their 50s and 60s and often face barriers to employment exacerbated by age discrimination. The stress of age discrimination in the workforce can lead to poor mental and physical health, poverty and homelessness. The barriers for older adults to earn income, which are expected to increase with the growing senior population, can be insurmountable without intervention.

Denise Vaughnes, a recent SCSEP/ASSETS program participant found herself unable to work after a major car accident. “Returning to work after the accident proved to be almost impossible, which left me homeless, with chronic health conditions and with gaps in my resume,” said Vaughnes. “I found re-entering the labor market terribly discriminatory as an older African American female. ASSETS turned my life around by giving me on-the-job training.” In June, Vaughnes left the ASSETS program after being hired by the City of Oakland’s Human Services Department as an outreach worker connecting other seniors with information and referrals to support services. “Now I can feed, bathe and house myself, but most importantly, I once again feel empowered by belonging to the workforce.”

While employed as ASSETS participants, the older workers in Oakland and Alameda County are assigned to one of more than 50 local community, faith-based and public partner agencies. These partners include St. Mary’s Center, Bay Area Community Services and the City of Oakland’s senior centers, Public Works Department and City Administrator’s Office. While working at these partner agencies, the older workers receive on-the-job training to enhance their opportunities

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in the local job market. “This program is a win-win for all,” said Public Works staff member Kristine Shaff, a host supervisor at the City of Oakland. “The older workers help advance projects that might not otherwise be completed, while being rejuvenated, learning and being paid to contribute to our community.”

“SCSEP is an extremely valuable resource to the senior community and to the City of Oakland,” said Sara Bedford, Director of the Human Services Department. “I’ve seen seniors with inadequate retirement and severe barriers to employment double their income, transition out of homelessness, develop new skills and re-enter the workforce. The Human Services Department is proud to be able to deliver SCSEP for a 25th year. Not only has SCSEP proven to be a valuable job training and placement resource for the City of Oakland, it helps older adults remain independent.”

SCSEP is a major program of the Older Americans Act, which turns 50 this year. It is the only federal government program mandated to assist unemployed older adults seeking to rejoin the workforce.

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About the City of Oakland’s Human Services Department

The Human Services Department builds strong communities by enriching the quality of life for individuals and families in Oakland. We promote social equity, engage in collaborations that improve community health and provide first-rate programs for children, youth, seniors and other adults. For more information, visit www.oaklandhumanservices.org or call (510) 238-3121.

About Senior Service America, Inc.

Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI) is a national nonprofit organization that provides civic engagement and employment opportunities to low-income older adults. As one of 15 national SCSEP grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor, SSAI is based in Silver Spring, Maryland, and provides more than \$40 million annually to a diverse network of 80 local partner organizations in 16 states. For more information, visit www.seniorserviceamerica.org, call (301) 578-8826, email tsarmiento@ssa-i.org or follow @tsarmiento22 on Twitter. (Tony Sarmiento is available for phone interviews upon request.)