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## Santa Ana Youth Now a Voice for Disadvantaged Teens

### National Guard Youth Foundation ChalleNGe Ambassador Selected to Serve on National Council of Young Leaders

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Santa Ana resident Humberto Palacios, former high school dropout who is now a 4.0 college student, has been chosen to represent the National Guard Youth Foundation on [YouthBuild's National Council of Young Leaders](#).

"We are delighted to have Humberto Palacios join the Council representing the National Guard Youth Foundation," **said Dorothy Stoneman, Founder and CEO of YouthBuild USA.** "His passion and experience regarding how to improve the public school system so that other young people will not leave without a diploma will add to the effectiveness of the Council in communicating the realities faced by low income students."

As a member of the National Council of Youth Leaders, Palacios will speak with policymakers, corporate leaders and elected officials about the issues affecting low-income youth and advocate for policy changes that will expand pathways for disadvantaged youth. According to a [recent study](#) by the National Center for Education statistics, low-income youth are six times more likely to drop out of school. Palacios will join a diverse, national group of young adults who have faced significant barriers to success but have emerged as a result of their own dedication and assistance from a variety of pathways.

As a graduate of Sunburst Youth Academy, one of 35 National Guard Youth ChalleNGe programs across the country that offer second chances to school dropouts, Palacios can vouch for the importance of providing pathways for disadvantaged youth. Palacios describes his decision to attend Sunburst Youth Academy as the greatest decision of his life, "I went from getting into trouble with law enforcement and using drugs to a 4.0 college student with two jobs. I would have never imagined I'd make it this far," **said Palacios.**

"NGYF is proud to partner with organizations like YouthBuild that work to resolve issues that face our nation's youth," **said Lou Cabrera, President of the National Guard Youth Foundation.** "We can leverage the experiences of young people like Humberto for ways to improve the quality of life for low-income youth and high school dropouts, and improve their prospects for the future."

Humberto will attend the [Citizen University Annual National Conference](#) with the National Council of Young Leaders on March 20 & 21, 2015, along with hundreds of activists in Seattle, WA.

Palacios also currently serves as a National Guard Youth Foundation ChalleNGe Ambassador and has participated in Senator Lou Correa's Young Senators program.

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#### **About the National Guard Youth Foundation**

The National Guard Youth Foundation is a nonprofit that is dedicated to addressing the nation's dropout crisis by giving youth a second chance through the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, a proven program that helps over 9,000 youth each year improve their life skills, educational attainment and employability. NGYF advocates for and supports ChalleNGe, run by the National Guard; raises awareness of the impact that the school dropout crisis has on our society, economy and national security; and provides ChalleNGe graduates with scholarships and career support to help them continue on their path of success beyond graduation day. For more information, please visit [www.ngyf.org](http://www.ngyf.org).

#### **About YouthBuild USA**

YouthBuild USA was started informally in 1988 and incorporated in 1990 to guide the process of replicating and scaling up the YouthBuild program with quality in the United States after the program succeeded in five neighborhoods in New York City. There are now 264 YouthBuild programs in 46 states, Washington, DC, and the Virgin Islands. Over 120,000 YouthBuild students have built over 22,000 units of affordable, increasingly green, housing since 1994. For more information, please visit <https://youthbuild.org/>.

#### **About the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program**

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program is operated in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Defense, National Guard Bureau, state governments and local sites. The program consists of a 5 1/2-month residential phase framed around eight core components: academic excellence, responsible citizenship, physical fitness, leadership/followership, job skills, service to the community, health and hygiene and life coping skills, and a 12-month post residential phase during which mentors continue to provide guidance and support to graduates.

Helping more than 130,000 teens to date turn their lives around, ChalleNGe is recognized as among the most cost-effective, highly rated programs of its kind for youth who have dropped out of school.

- An independent, multi-year study of the program by MDRC shows that high school diploma/ GED attainment increased by 29%; college attendance increased by 86% and annual earnings increased by 20%.
- An independent cost-benefit analysis by the RAND Corporation shows a 166% return on investment in the program – every dollar spent yielded a return of \$2.66 in benefits to society.