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Contact: Tyler Maffia
Ph: (559) 732-4194 ext. 659
email: tyler.maffia@cset.org

CSET's Sequoia Community Corpsmembers Learn Green Job Skills While Helping Neighbors Save Money and the Environment

VISALIA, CA – December 15, 2009 — New training funds will help prepare local youth for jobs in the fast-growing green jobs sector while also providing 70 area homeowners with renewable energy systems to increase their home's energy efficiency and reduce energy costs. Funding for the project comes from the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD), which receives federal funds to install weatherization and other energy efficiency measures in the homes of low-income Californians to reduce heating and cooling costs.

CSET currently contracts with the Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) as a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provider, and has weatherized 3,426 homes since 2001 while providing Sequoia Community Corpsmembers with the opportunity to develop skills through on-the-job training in weatherization while under the supervision of a state-certified contractor. CSD's new "*Solar for All*" program expands these efforts by providing funding for installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems on the rooftops of low-income homes, while providing workforce development training opportunities in solar installation, a fast-growing sector of the emerging green jobs industry.

The new Solar PV Installation course builds upon CSET's career-track green jobs curriculum, open to all members of the Sequoia Community Corps, CSET's, certified local conservation corps. The Green Jobs program also offers coursework in Green Construction, Energy Efficiency/Weatherization, and Urban Forestry. The Solar PV System installation curriculum will follow the weatherization model, also including an on-the-job training component that will enable students to acquire first-hand experience in industry best practices.

The goal of CSET's Green Jobs program is to prepare students for a range of post-secondary opportunities, including careers in traditional and alternative green industries, such as energy auditors, weatherization technicians, solar PV technicians, green construction workers, and environmental technicians. Classroom instruction takes place at CSET's Visalia headquarters in the John Muir Charter School, an accredited high school that enables students to earn a diploma. Instruction also includes a life skills component, case management services, and post-program support including job placement.

According to "*Many Shades of Green: Diversity and Distribution of California's Green Jobs*", a report released earlier this month by the non-partisan *Next 10* and *Collaborative Economics*, the green jobs field continues to grow, with employment in "Energy Generation" expanding 61 percent between 1995 to 2008, at nearly 10,000 jobs, with solar making up the largest portion and strongest growth at 63 percent.

The California Solar Initiative was conceived in 2004 as part of Governor Schwarzenegger's *Million Solar Roofs* Program, which officially launched on January 1, 2007. Solar and other renewable energy sources are key to the State's Energy Action Plan, whose goal is to "...ensure that adequate, reliable, and reasonably-priced electrical power and natural gas supplies . . . are achieved and provided through policies, strategies, and actions that are cost-effective and environmentally sound for California's consumers and taxpayers."

About CSET

CSET, a nonprofit Community Action Agency, seeks to strengthen youth, families and communities through education, employment training, youth development, mentoring, leadership building, job creation, housing, environmental stewardship and other strategies that support self-reliant families and caring communities.

About Sequoia Community Corps

CSET's award-winning, certified local conservation corps, the Sequoia Community Corps is a comprehensive green jobs program incorporating academic, life skills and employment training for at-risk youth. Focused on preparing workers for the 21st century green economy, the Corps sets youth up for success by providing students with education, targeted training, mentoring and on-the-job skill building opportunities. In operation since 1986, the Corps offers a variety of in-demand job training programs, as well as access to CSET's John Muir Charter School, an accredited high school that offers Corpsmembers the opportunity to advance academically by earning their high school diploma while also developing leadership qualities and acquiring vocational skills while doing exciting and valuable work for the community.

312 N.W. 3rd Avenue • Visalia, CA 93291
Phone: (559) 732-4194 • Fax: (559) 733-3971

www.cset.org
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