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From: Gang Alternatives Program (GAP)

309 W. Opp Street

Wilmington, CA 90744

Contact: SueAnn B. Abena at (323) 567-5188 or [sueannabena@gangfree.org](mailto:sueannabena@gangfree.org)

**Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**  
**Farewell and Culmination Ceremony**

Wilmington, CA - On Friday, August 28, 2009, GAP held its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Farewell and Culmination event at the GAP Administrative Headquarters in Wilmington, CA. Under the umbrella of the Gang Alternatives Program (GAP), the SYEP began in the summer of 2006, through funds from the US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Weed and Seed program. With GAP's continued success and the community's need for more opportunities available for youths, GAP extended the program to be offered in the afternoon and hired an additional 15 youths. Additional funding support was provided from the City of Los Angeles, Office of Community Beautification. This summer GAP had 35 youths participate and complete the program this year.

SYEP youths between the ages of 15 to 18 years of age are hired to work for 4 hours, Monday through Friday. Job duties consist of community clean up projects, primarily weeding and planting projects in their community. GAP's agency *vision* is to prevent young people from joining gangs, and with the SYEP program in place, GAP is able to achieve its goals in helping young people to stay away from trouble, and at the same time give them the sense that this is their community and it is their responsibility to keep it clean. Youths build a sense of pride, leadership and discipline skills, which are necessary to become future leaders of tomorrow.

"This is an important program for youths, especially for a lot of them it's their first jobs", stated David Tynes, GAP's Director of Operations. "Many of them learn the value of hard work and they don't take it [program] for granted. It taught them responsibility and makes them better employees and students". Weed and Seed Steering Committee Members, Parents and Community Leaders were all invited to attend the event in support of the youths.

For photos of the SYEP event please visit the GAP website at [www.gangfree.org](http://www.gangfree.org).

To learn more about the US Department of Justice, OJJDP and its programs and services, please visit their website at [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org).