



## Riverside, California

POPULATION 247,800

**F**OUNDED IN 1870 as a cooperative joint-stock venture by an abolitionist judge and a group of reform-minded colleagues, Riverside enjoys a rich tradition of civic involvement that continues today. Located only 62 miles inland from Los Angeles, Riverside has been isolated from its more populous neighbors to the west by mountains, which allowed the city to develop its separate and unique civic character.

By 1885, Riverside had emerged as the capital of Southern California's citrus industry, and was the richest city per capita in the United States. For many years, the city remained a prosperous, if isolated and homogeneous, agricultural community until the second half of the twentieth century when the city's population began to grow rapidly. Riverside's economic potential drew immigrants from the eastern seaboard and the southern United States as well as from Mexico and Asia. Today, Riverside is the eleventh largest city in California and the county seat of Riverside County. It is the home of four colleges and universities, including the University of California, Riverside. The city's downtown is undergoing a revitalization of historic buildings and the development of an emerging judicial center.

Riverside has many of the same challenges faced by other large cities, including youth violence, low educational attainment for many children, deteriorating neighborhoods and the need to provide a high level of local government ser-

vices with diminishing fiscal resources. With a strong spirit of voluntarism, Riverside citizens pride themselves on their ability to face these challenges proactively.

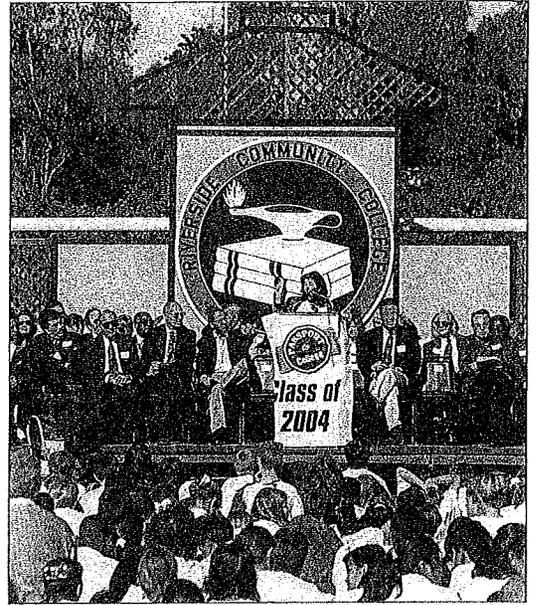
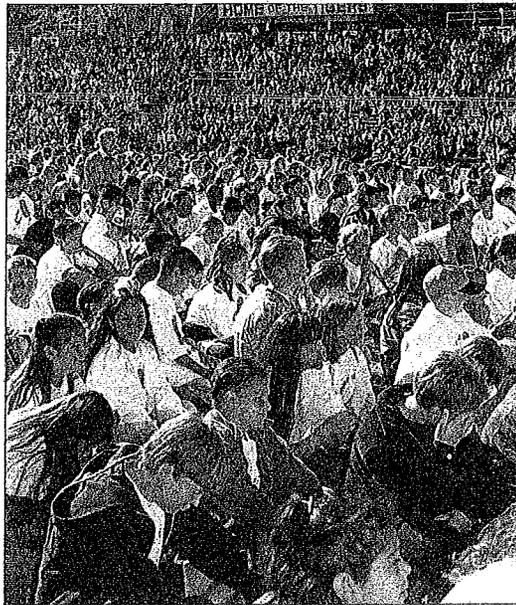


### Passport to College

Although there is no shortage of colleges and universities in Riverside, only 34 percent of the region's high school graduates continue their education beyond twelfth grade. Concerned about this disparity, the President of Riverside Community

College convened a two-day session of more than 50 local educators, business leaders, parents and teachers to study the problem. The group determined that while many factors probably contribute to this low college-going rate—including rapid population growth, high unemployment, juvenile crime and teen pregnancy—the one factor they could do something about was even more basic.

For many families in the region, college had not been a part of their culture, and this lack of understanding about the value and attainability of higher education kept parents from even considering college as an option for their children. So the community pulled together and devised the Passport to College program, which aims to expose Riverside students and their parents to a range of college-related experiences, while creating an endowment to ensure that college could be accessible for all.



Seven thousand students and parents attended the launch celebration of Passport to College.

Initiated in 1996 after a year of successful pilot testing, Passport to College targets the 11,500 Riverside-area students in the class of 2004 because research has determined that students and families start thinking about college

and the future when children reach the sixth grade. The program includes a range of college-related activities for both students and parents—offered as the students journey from fifth to twelfth grade—including campus

tours, classroom presentations, financial aid workshops, teacher training, academic preparation and parent meetings both in English and Spanish.

To date, 60 percent of eligible families have enrolled in Passport to College, which is truly a community-wide effort. While the program's school- and college-based activities help get teachers, students and parents working toward

the same goal, Riverside's higher-education community has launched an effort to raise funds for tuition. The Riverside Community College Foundation has initiated a \$1.5 million campaign to



Passport to College—the Class of 2004.

support program activities and guarantee a two-year scholarship to RCC for every student that completes the program. In addition, the University of California-Riverside, California Baptist College, La Sierra University, and the University

of Redlands have all agreed to offer additional scholarships to transferring Passport to College students to complete their undergraduate degrees. Riverside's business leaders have contributed significantly as well, helping to raise over \$1 million so far and actively participating in a mentoring program and a classroom speakers' bureau.

Passport to College has recently received national recognition as one of ten early-outreach models that are working. More importantly, the program has effectively gotten the entire Riverside community on the same page about the critical role of educational attainment, and about how, working together, the community can assist an entire generation to get a college education.

### **University/Eastside Community Collaborative**

Three homicides involving youths in Riverside's Eastside community within a three-month period in 1995 prompted city officials, school-district representatives, social service agencies and faculty from the University of California-Riverside to come together to do something about the problem of rising youth crime rates and gang activity. The group, which came to be called the University/Eastside Community Collaborative, determined that the upsurge in youth crime was directly related to conditions of poverty. They worked together to implement a unified solution addressing issues including low educational attainment, the dearth of safe places for children to spend time after school, diversion from gang recruitment, the need for adult men-

toring and peer support, lack of employment opportunities and health needs.

The UECC is a coalition that continually looks for new ways to serve Eastside youths. Its Board of Directors—which is composed of Eastside residents (including young people), school district representatives, city employees, service providers including the County Department of Mental Health, and volunteers from the University and the community at large—meets regularly to foster collaborations, pool human and financial resources, find facilities for programs, and enlist volunteer support and in-kind contributions.

The first thing the UECC Project accomplished after it was initiated was to open three schools and a community center to children during after school hours, using student volunteers from the University to work with the kids. In addition, the University administration contributed by creating 50 after-school jobs for high-risk adolescents and by making recreational facilities available for program participants.

When the after-school programs opened, they served 480 children two days per week. Thanks



*An AmeriCorps group organized through the University/Eastside Community Collaborative.*

to a state AmeriCorps grant and a surge in community interest and involvement, the program now operates four days per week. To date, Uni-

iversity of California-Riverside students have logged more than 18,000 volunteer hours for the UECC, mentoring children one-on-one and staffing the community centers. More than 2,000 Eastside children have participated in UECC activities since the inception of the collaborative, and the monetary investment for services to high-risk adolescents in Riverside has more than doubled.

### Mayor's Youth Action Plan

In 1994, Riverside held the dubious distinction of leading the state in teenage births—despite the fact that the community had nine organizations trying to reduce teen pregnancies. Surprisingly, some of the organizations were unaware of the efforts of other organizations working on the same issue and had never met to discuss ways of coordinating their efforts. Community leaders recognized that it was time for groups and individuals to come together to meet the needs of youth and children. Mayor Ron Loveridge convened a summit of 18 community leaders to hammer out a long range master plan—the youth action plan—to set specific goals for programs that provided services to youth.

Published in 1996, the youth action plan recommends that the community focus on five major goals: making Riverside a family friendly community; creating support networks for every neighborhood in the city; creating greater opportunities for youth to be involved in leadership, service and decision making within the community; providing access to information and activi-

ties for all families within the community; and supporting youth in their development of career goals. In 1997, a Youth Action Coordinator was hired by the city and a 35-member Youth Action Family Coordinating Council was created. The council is responsible for coordinating resources within the community.

Last year, the city's newly created Youth Action Office hosted a day-long event for local youth service providers. More than 240 representatives of the public, private and nonprofit sectors convened to map all existing youth and family service programs by neighborhood. The Youth Action Family Coordinating Council used information from this Day of Collaboration when it compiled its resource guide, "Family and Youth Information." This 72-page magazine-style publi-



A Youth Action "Community Event—Paint-the-Wall for Children and Families" at the Orange Blossom Festival.

cation—a guide to family services, sources of information and recreation activities—was distributed to every school child in Riverside in February of 1998.

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