



**Opportunities for
Technology
Information Careers**

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ANTIOCH COUNCILMEMBER SIMONSEN TO HONOR JOB TRAINING GRADUATES

ANTIOCH, Calif., July 25, 2005 – Antioch City Councilmember Arne Simonsen will be the special guest speaker at the Class 17 Graduation ceremony at Opportunities for Technology Information Careers (OPTIC), 3102 Delta Fair Boulevard in Antioch on August 5th at 6 pm. The job training class celebration includes an appetizer reception and is free and open to the public.

Simonsen has been a strong supporter of OPTIC and its programs that help low-income residents become economically self-sufficient, and he attends every graduation ceremony. "I feel inspired by the changes these graduates are making in their lives and by the program staff who help them do it," remarks Simonsen.

"As a retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer and after owning a small business, I know the value of hard work." Simonsen explains. "OPTIC's graduates may not have been dealt the best cards to start out with, but they are working hard to turn things around for themselves and their families, and that's what matters. I consider it an honor to be included in this ceremony."

Simonsen has served Antioch on the City Council since December of 2000, following years of community service in Contra Costa and beyond. During his tenure on the Council, the City of Antioch has provided major funding for OPTIC's job training program, enabling low-income participants to receive not only training but paid work experience that can be key in securing living-wage jobs with opportunities for advancement.

OPTIC, which also runs an evening adult education program in English as a Second Language and computer basics, and which serves as a free tax assistance site for low-income families, is committed to helping low-income residents reach economic self-sufficiency. The job training class graduation is an opportunity for the community to see the results of its investment in this East County-based nonprofit.

Also on the agenda for the ceremony is a presentation of a ceremonial check by OPTIC funder Wells Fargo Foundation. Wells Fargo expanded its support of OPTIC this year, because "we want to invest in the community where we can have a deep impact," says Tim Silva, a Wells Fargo Senior Vice President and Regional Community Development Manager. "When

job training moves graduates into high-wage career paths, everybody benefits.”

The official check presenter for Wells Fargo will be Darien Louie, who will be witnessing what for many graduates is their proudest professional moment. Many OPTIC trainees had never touched a computer before being accepted to the program, and a significant number have not graduated from high school, according to Alissa Friedman, OPTIC’s Executive Director. “Helping our participants change their life story and gain self-esteem is one of the most important jobs of our case management and life skills team,” she explains.

This will be OPTIC’s 17th graduating class since the organization began running its model job training program in 2000. The group of 11 trainees who make up Class 17 has grown close over the course of the 12 weeks of full-time computer and life skills training. “When the going gets tough, we know we can count on each other for motivation and support,” explains Rashanda Deloney of Antioch. “Of course, the staff is fabulous and compassionate, too,” she adds with a smile.

Area residents who are committed to gaining living-wage employment but who need additional experience, confidence or credentials to qualify can apply for OPTIC’s full-time program in computer applications and life skills. Applications will be accepted August 15th through September 1st for the class starting September 12. More information is available from Natalie Georgia, Program Coordinator, at 925-776-1133 or on the OPTIC website at <http://www.optic-cc.org>.

Major funders (\$10,000 annually or more) of OPTIC’s programs include the California Consumer Protection Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation (Anonymous Fund and Antioch Area Community Fund), the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, the Pittsburg Adult Education Center, the California Consumer Protection Foundation, the Community Development Block Grant programs of the City of Antioch, the City of Pittsburg, and Contra Costa County, the Contra Costa Employment and Human Services Department, Keller Canyon Landfill Mitigation Fund, the United Way of the Bay Area, the Vodafone-US Foundation, the Wells Fargo Foundation, the Y & H Soda Foundation, and Chevron.

OPTIC is located at 3102 Delta Fair Boulevard in Antioch, Calif. For more information, please visit <http://www.optic-cc.org> or call (925) 776-1133.

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