

YOUTH MAKING MUSIC

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Youth from different nearby cities are benefiting from a musical program a La Mirada resident helped develop.

As Joey Arreguin was raising his three children, he realized that he wanted to provide them with a positive environment with positive outlets.

As a result of his own personal struggles in raising teenagers he began to envision a program for at-risk youth. In most cases, the youth that need the most attention get the least help.

As a member of the Christian Latino Association of Music and Arts (CLAMA), Arreguin saw the opportunity to develop Project RYTMO. CLAMA started out by having summer workshops for 8-10 weeks. At that time the program was loosely defined. Over time they found that there was a need to produce an environment where at-risk youth, primarily Latinos, could come and learn about music and all its facets. Project RYTMO was birthed.

Project RYTMO was developed by CLAMA with the help of a federal sub grant from the Department of labor and the Latino Coalition. CLAMA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to utilize music, arts, and media technology in the advancement of the Hispanic and other minority communities.

Joey's dad, Jose Arreguin, now 87, was a musical inspiration in Joey's life. Arreguin Senior was the first to translate Handel's Messiah into Spanish. Musical Talent has run strong in the Arreguin family. Arreguin has recorded albums for many artists. He has recorded music that is featured in the Sopranos and Soap Operas. Joey's wife, Lisa also contributes to the wealth of musical talent and background. She has provided lyrics for music in One Life to Live, and other Soap Operas. The wealth of talent and knowledge is bountiful.

Arreguin uses his talents and experience in helping further Project RYTMO. RYTMO's purpose is to expose at-risk and adjudicated youth who demonstrate artistic potential to a positive professional environment where they can explore and develop a variety of musical skills.

At a studio initially purchased in Anaheim to continue his profession as a recording artist, Arreguin along with instructors and mentors teach youth various facets of the music industry. Initially they contacted different local agencies to attain names of at-risk, adjudicated youth to enroll in the program. However, testimonials of current students are now serving as advertisement for the program. According to Mike Anderson, Public Relations for the program, kids are telling other kids and it's spreading like wildfire. The huge response has deemed the program a success. It is a program youth are hungry for.

There are 3 workstations for the kids to use for their hand-on training. Two of the workstations are used to produce beats for rap and hip hop music and the other is used to produce music. During the 6 week program students learn everything from music history, business of music,

sound of music, music technology to recording. The group meets 2-3 times a week after school on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for Lab work.

This program is a great exposure to the youth. It has made a great impact on them. They have never been exposed to anything like this. More than likely they wouldn't get another opportunity like this one. These kids wouldn't have another opportunity like this unless they had money to pay for such classes.

Ian Miller, Senior Engineer, told Arreguin when he first shared the idea with him, "I don't think these kids are going to get it," but he was proven wrong. "They are shockingly good at this," stated Miller.

The youth understands the technical programs used and are able to do things that most adults are learning in the music industry. They use ProTools, a program widely used by professional recording studios. These teenagers are learning from professionals, who have been in the field and have experience recording music. Arreguin and the rest of the staff draw from real life situations and share it with the youth.

Arreguin's vision is to have other locations in different cities in Orange County and Los Angeles County providing the same courses to thousands of youth. He hopes that other studios will get involved in RYTMO and offer their studio to be the classroom for the youth.

The first 6-week session has ended and they are currently in their second 6-week session. First graduates of the RYTMO program gathered in February to receive their certificates of completion, which will be useful for their resumes. The youth shared that this program has taught them so much, skills they never imagined. The program has helped the youth in school and kept them out of trouble.

A small studio behind a home hidden behind a wooden gate is the magical place that is transforming youth ages 14-21.

Since RYTMO is funded for 3-6 week sessions, sponsors are being sought to continue touching these young lives. For further information, please visit them online at www.rytmo.org or contact them at (714) 776-0467.

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