



## A New Path Forward: LACTC Fire Camp Celebrates Inaugural Graduation



On Monday, November 18, 2024, the Los Angeles County Training Center (LACTC) Fire Camp celebrated a historic milestone as its inaugural class graduated after a rigorous year of training and preparation. The ceremony honored 10 graduates, each receiving certificates recognizing their dedication, resilience, and successful completion of the program.

The event featured remarks from prominent County leaders and community advocates, including: LA County Third District Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, JCOD Director Judge Songhai Armstead (ret.), LA County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone, Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program (FFRP) Chief Royal Ramey and Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) Program Manager Luis Venegas.

“These cadets came from diverse backgrounds—many were formerly in foster care, involved in the justice system, or returning veterans,” said Judge Armstead (ret).

“Some had previously served in fire camps and aspired to become firefighters, but no clear pathway existed. Now, we’ve created that pathway.”

In partnership with various County agencies, JCOD transformed Camp Gonzales—a former juvenile detention center—into a pioneering residential training facility. The LACTC Fire Camp program offers participants hands-on fire services training alongside comprehensive support to help them succeed.

Key program features include:

- Fire services training and job readiness preparation On-site room and board
- Life skills development
- A monthly stipend
- Continuous support services tailored to individual needs

The success of this program reflects the dedication and collaboration of numerous partners. Special thanks to Third District Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, LA County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone, FFRP Chief Royal Ramey, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) and Amity Foundation.

And most importantly, congratulations to the graduates—their hard work and determination have laid the foundation for a future in public service, helping to strengthen and protect our communities. As the first graduates of LACTC Fire Camp step into their new roles, they embody the spirit of transformation, resilience, and hope for a brighter tomorrow. Watch a recap [here](#).

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## JCOD and West Coast Customs Partner to Empower Program Participants at LA Auto Show



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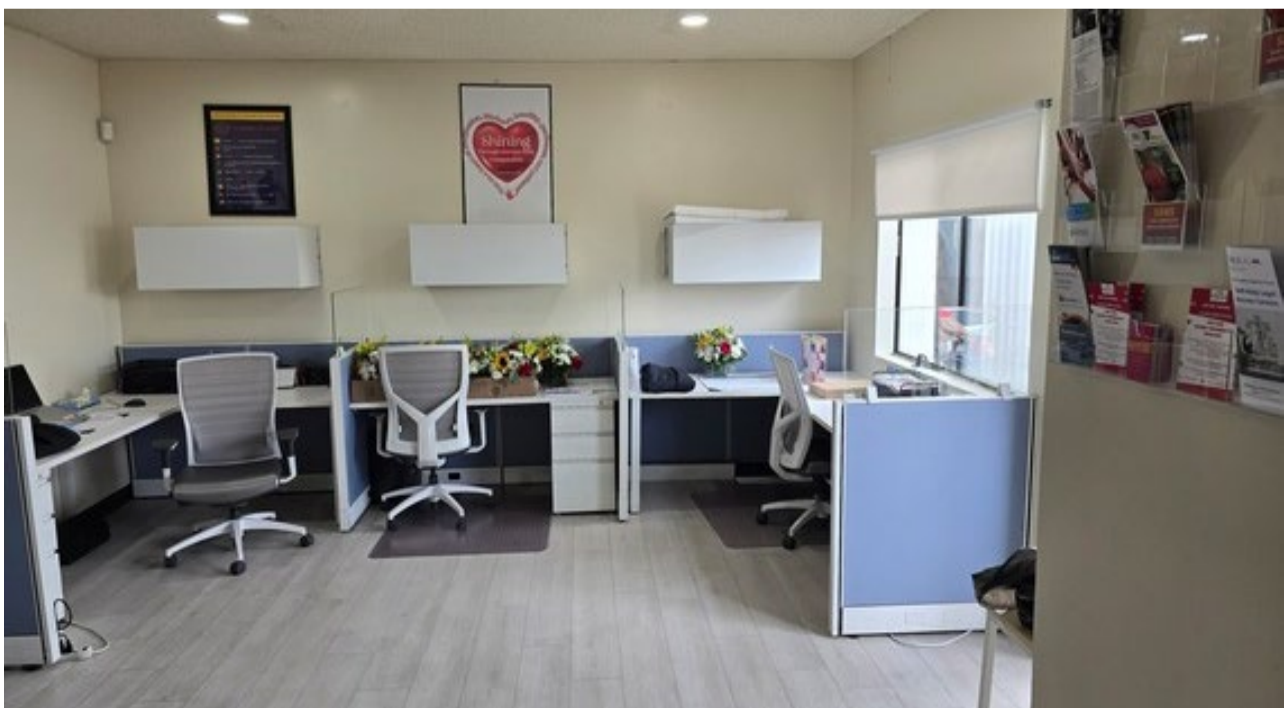
## JCOD Celebrates the Grand Opening of the HHH Community Resource Center



On December 11, Holliday's Helping Hands (HHH) in partnership with JCOD, celebrated the opening of a brand-new community resource center in South Los Angeles with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The resource center offers essential services for individuals who have faced barriers such as justice involvement or homelessness, offering housing navigation, financial literacy training and community assistance and even showers and laundry facilities for those in need. The center collaborates with faith-based organizations and social service agencies to ensure a holistic approach to stabilizing lives and working toward long-term success.

"Elie Wiesel, who was a Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, talked about the perils of indifference, and what indifference does to our hearts. We are here to celebrate not being indifferent. We're here to celebrate what it means for a community to step up and take responsibility for those in our communities who need us," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell.



“I’m so grateful to Supervisor Mitchell and the Board of Supervisors for the courage you all have to put this money directly into the community in the ways that you do, in large sums so folks can actually make something sustainable that lasts.” said JCOD Director Judge Songhai Armstead (Ret.).

The new resource center is located at 510 W. 53rd St. in Los Angeles and was made possible by support from JCOD’s Care First Community Investment Care Grant. The center is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. “Holliday’s Helping Hands - knows our clients; we are them. We want each person to feel they are not only a participant but seen as an individual,” said HHH Founder and Executive Director Katina Holliday.

This is the second ribbon-cutting event HHH has celebrated with JCOD since September, when HHH opened a 55-bed interim housing facility in Long Beach. The facility provides dedicated support for justice-impacted single women, trans women and women with children, while also offering services for men with children. Watch a recap [here](#).



As the year comes to a close, we want to take a moment to thank you for your support and partnership. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season filled with peace, happiness and prosperity. We look forward to continuing our work together in the coming year!



## Staff Spotlight

### Joseph Wise-Wiley – Program Director of Workforce and Housing



Joseph Wise-Wiley serves as JCOD's Program Director of Workforce and Housing, where he oversees several impactful programs, including Skills+Experience for the Careers of Tomorrow (SECTOR), Breaking Barriers Rapid Re-housing and Employment, Reentry Interim Housing and Emergency Housing. In his role, he supports a team that provides direct contract management to community-based organizations, identifies resources to expand programming, develops policies and procedures and

analyzes data to continuously improve these programs.

Joseph grew up in Yucaipa and attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he double-majored in history and English. He went on to earn his Master of Social Work, with a concentration in community organization, planning and administration, from the University of Southern California.

He joined the County of Los Angeles in January 2020, as a program manager in the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), where he oversaw contracts for the SECTOR program. He transitioned to JCOD when it officially became a department in November 2022.

"I was excited when our programs migrated over to JCOD because I believe that justice-involved individuals who do not have high mental health or substance use disorder needs are also deserving of care and support," shared Joseph.

Joseph finds the most rewarding part of his work to be helping community-based organizations navigate complex systems and equipping his team to make meaningful contributions. He also enjoys mentoring his team members and watching them grow in their roles as they assist organizations in delivering JCOD programs.

"Seeing the success stories from our community providers and the outcomes keeps me inspired. They are the backbone of the work and seeing how passionate they are and how they make the work happen with the resources they are given really inspires me."

Joseph's dedication to his work comes from a deep belief in creating opportunities for those who need them most and advises those looking to follow this career path to be open to fostering a culture of care and empowerment.

"You have to be open to the reality that it's more than giving a second chance. Sometimes it's about third, fourth, fifth chances," said Joseph. "The work is to provide the opportunities and the chances that justice-involved individuals did not get or maybe did not take advantage of the first time."



## Organization Spotlight

### Friends Outside in Los Angeles County



Friends Outside in Los Angeles County (FOLA) has been at the forefront of reentry support for over five decades, transforming lives for justice-involved individuals and their families through innovative and comprehensive services. The organization was founded in 1972 by Martha Jane Dowds, FOLA's mission is to break the cycle of incarceration through providing services such as employment readiness, family reunification programs and critical resource referrals for those impacted by the justice system.

As a JCOD Skills+Experience for the Careers of Tomorrow (SECTOR) provider, FOLA offers specialized programs in construction, transportation and logistics, and leisure and hospitality. This partnership connects participants with in-demand skills training, paid work experience and job placement assistance, empowering them to reenter the workforce with confidence and purpose.



Programs like FOLA's "Parole to Payroll" (P2P) exemplify its innovative approach to reentry employment. The 20-hour curriculum provides a safe, motivational space for job seekers to address unique employment challenges, while equipping them with job-readiness skills and guiding them toward sustainable employment. This approach delivers real results, including a recent SECTOR participant who overcame addiction and incarceration to secure employment as a security guard and is now on the path to pursuing a Class A driver's license to further advance his career.

"It is impossible to overstate the passion, dedication, hard work, and importance of the staff, from the direct services staff to those behind the scenes," said FOLA Executive Director Mary Weaver. "About 50% of our staff have lived experience with the criminal justice system. How our staff treats participants—no BS, follow-through, limited bureaucracy, and genuine care—is our secret sauce."

FOLA's partnership with JCOD has been instrumental in expanding its reach and impact, bringing new ideas and identifying possible gaps in service. From connecting participants to vocational training opportunities to streamlining recruitment through robust referrals, this collaboration has strengthened FOLA's ability to serve justice-involved individuals.



The organization also addresses profound challenges families face when a loved one is incarcerated. Programs like the Incarcerated Parents Project and Dads Back! Academy addresses issues including family separation, economic hardship and emotional stress by offering family-centric services, monitored visits and support plans that aid in family reunification and stability.

FOLA aims to expand its programs and services, including plans to acquire a dedicated building to house a Family Services Center and administrative functions. To learn more about FOLA and its services, visit [friendsoutsidela.org](https://www.friendsoutsidela.org).



## Upcoming Meetings & Events: Save the Date

### JCOD's Public Convening - Alternative Crisis Response-Best Practices for Coordination of Law Enforcement and Mental Health in Alternative Crisis Response

The next JCOD public convening meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 18, from 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

This meeting will be led by the Department of Mental Health's Alternative Crisis Response team.

You can join the public convening in Microsoft Teams or via phone:  
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

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