

Upstarts: Education for the Real World, Inc. Upstarts: Education for the Real World, Inc., founded in 2001, stimulates youth development and economic growth in rural communities by empowering at-risk high school students to strengthen their local economy while enhancing their own

academic success. Youth participants supplement classroom activities with real-world experiences as interns in local businesses and through community development projects. This way, classroom concepts transfer from textbook theory into actual workplace practice so that, upon graduation, these youth possess the specific market-driven skills they need to succeed in the workforce or higher education. To be certain these outcomes are sustainable for rural communities, Upstarts facilitates lasting partnerships among local schools, businesses, governments, and citizens designed to develop the potential in every young person, even those who have traditionally languished in jobs far below their capabilities. It is an investment today that will provide social and economic returns far into the future.

The Upstarts Communities Project in Luling got its official start in September of 2009 when the Luling Economic Development Corporation invested its initial grant of \$60,000.00 in the project. Their continued support of the project was demonstrated in May of this year, when they awarded another \$60,000 grant to support the Upstarts Summer Internships and develop the Project's Sustainability Plan and Technology Platform. The project's objective is to accomplish three key outcomes for three key beneficiaries simultaneously, leading to the overall goal of sustainable youth development, school success and economic growth for Luling and its citizens.

THREE KEY BENEFICIARIES and THEIR POTENTIAL OUTCOMES
Key Beneficiary #1: <u>LULING'S AT-RISK YOUTH</u>
Outcomes: REAL WORLD PREPARATION FOR SUCCESS IN THE
WORKFORCE

Upstarts' objective is to give at-risk high school students the real world skills they need for future success. In the last 9 months, the Luling project has provided over 700 hours of skills training to more than 115 Luling youth through varying levels of real world experiences in both the classroom and the community. This summer, Upstarts has partnered with the Luling EDC and the Texas Workforce to offer 14 lucky youth rewarding internships in local businesses and extensive skills training through our Community Development Projects.

Based on our findings to date, over the *next* 12 months,through the proposed partnership with the LHS Alternative Center, Upstarts plans to implement a strategy we believe can have the greatest social impact long term in Luling: offering 40 of Luling's at-risk high school students a full spectrum of intensive "real world" support that includes local internships, college prep assistance, classroom support, training for their educators and participation in a community development/skill building project that will contribute directly to local economic success. While Upstarts will continue to offer a broad spectrum of support for hundreds of Luling youth, they believe that this level of in-depth support is the surest way to impact lasting change for both the student and the community. This specific aspect of the Upstarts project has the potential each year to significantly impact the lives of more than 10% of the population of Luling High School, and over 25% of those deemed most at-risk.

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Upstarts is a registered 501c3 non-profit.



Key Beneficiary #2 : <u>LULING ISD</u>

Outcomes: DROPOUT REDUCTION; IMPROVED SCORES & RATINGS; AT-RISK STUDENTS RECEIVING RELEVANT, ENGAGING INSTRUCTION; EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER SUPPORT; COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT; IMPROVED PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

By creating an in-school program that offers traditionally disengaged students an opportunity to learn market driven skills through internships and community development projects, Upstarts addresses many of the challenges facing failing schools. Through this Upstarts/ALC partnership, the school's most at risk students are engaged and excited about their learning because it is meaningful to their lives. By giving kids a "reason to care" about school, they are motivated to succeed academically, as well. *Their* newfound individual success, along with the community-wide system of school and teacher support inherent to the Upstarts project, simultaneously addresses many of the issues that have caused schools to struggle in the past. In addition, through its professional development and teacher support, Upstarts has offers Luling educators proven strategies to incorporate real world skills into existing classroom instruction and TAKS prep. Over the last nine months, Upstarts

staff has trained, motivated and supported more than 85 of LISD's secondary educators and brought in thousands of dollars worth of classroom materials and volunteer support for your

Key Beneficiary #3: <u>LULING ECONOMY and LULING BUSINESSES</u>
Outcomes: BUSINESS GROWTH; NEW JOBS; IMPROVED PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY; STRONGER, CUSTOM DESIGNED WORKFORCE; REDUCTION IN LOCAL POVERTY; ONLINE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING PROGRAM FOR BUSINESSES

teachers and administrators.

The beauty of the Upstarts model is that it is not just a "kid saving" project, but one that *empowers* at risk kids to be the driving force behind local economic growth. Since Upstarts began its project in Luling more than 55 local businesses and agencies have contributed their support to the effort. Over the next 12 months, at least 25 Luling businesses will have the opportunity to develop their own custom trained future workforce by providing internships to these Upstarts supported youth. Businesses will also benefit from the online "Luling Marketplace" community development project that is used to train participating students. In that project, the Upstarts students research, design and create a web based promotional technology platform that offers broad based marketing opportunities to Luling businesses that were previously out of their reach. Finally, by contributing to the improved quality of local schools, the Upstarts project will encourage businesses and families to move to the area, directly impacting economic growth.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES developed by Upstarts for the Luling Project have brought in over \$400,000.00 that has directly benefited Luling schools, kids and the local economy: KDK Harman Foundation / Texas Pioneer Foundation / Luling Economic Development Corporation /The City of Luling / Luling ISD / The Texas Workforce Commission / This also includes Individual Donations, Corporate Contributions and In-Kind Support totaling over \$75,000 in just the past 9 months! An additional \$200,000+ is anticipated for Luling for the next phase of the project.



Watermelon Shop Intern



Upstarts at City Council



Community Focus Group



Upstarts as Community Volunteers



Summer Interns meet Dr.Seabolt



Luling Business Panel with Teachers





Interns at Magnolia T's & Suzanne's



Luling Math/Science Teacher Training



What people are saying about Upstarts in Luling!

"I believe this program helps kids with grades and getting them into whatever they need to be successful. It helps them work as hard as they can instead of being a nobody and dropping out and living with your parents the rest of your life. This internship was my first job ever and I have learned new and important things that you need to be a success in life."

Darion/Upstarts Summer Intern

"Having this internship has shown me what it is like to have a job and has shown me the responsibility it takes to do your work efficiently. It has shown me that I have the ability to do anything in the world as long as I put my mind to it."

Carley/Upstarts Summer Intern

"With so many of our youth 'falling through the cracks' in our society, all of us in Luling need to be creative in implementing programs that will help prepare our young people for successful futures. The Upstarts Program is just the kind of innovative initiative that will help us begin to address this pervasive situation and allow ALL of our young people to contribute to Luling's future."

Trey Bailey Executive Director, Luling EDC

"Huge thanks for everything! I really appreciate it all, and hope we can make you proud of us as we work together to increase student success in many aspects. Y'all are GREAT!!!!"

Alison Marrow / LHS Math Educator about Teacher Training & Donated Upstarts Classroom Tools

"Upstarts asked what my future goals were and when I said I wanted to get into the medical field they set up and internship for me at Seton Hospital. That's unbelievably amazing! Upstarts is a program that states a purpose, and sees that purpose through very successfully. If you feel like you are unprepared for the world after high school.... Upstarts is the group to join!"

Ramon/Upstarts Summer Intern

"The Upstarts project in Luling brings together a variety of community stakeholders to work together to prepare every student for success. I applaud the work of this outstanding organization, the community leaders who support it and the local businesses, teachers and students who make this program exceptional."

Texas State Representative Patrick Rose

"This was one of the two best workshops that I have attended in 23 years of teaching. Your vision and presentation takes us back to the reason for education: to make a difference with kids and to perpetuate a society of good citizens! You guys do really good work! "

Mike Barnett, LHS Science Teacher/Coach

"Upstarts helps kids get a look into life that most people have to wait for. It helps you think how it's going to be in the big world and helps you meet people you would never know otherwise. When you know people where you live you really get a head start in life!"

Anthony/Upstarts Summer Intern