



Media Alert
For Immediate Release

To: Newsroom
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VIDA Receives \$10,000 Workforce Development Grant from Union Pacific Foundation

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement recently received a \$10,000 Workforce Development Grant from Union Pacific Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to underwrite job training and comprehensive, wraparound services for students in the fields of commercial and residential electrical, welding, and civil and electrical engineering.

VIDA's philosophy is simple: A well-trained, well-educated population will not only be ready for tomorrow's jobs but will also live a more prosperous, healthy, and happy life. The ultimate goal is job retention, not job placement, as job retention results in strong citizens who are self-sufficient taxpayers, thus providing a clear return on investment for federal, state, local and private funding. VIDA graduates have not only helped the families they support and the businesses that now employ them, but their increased earnings have enhanced their contributions to our tax system and reduced their dependence on public welfare. VIDA has demonstrated a model for success by graduating participants into high-demand occupations, jobs normally left unfilled or filled by people from outside our community.

"We are excited about this new partnership with Union Pacific," said Priscilla Dinn Alvarez, executive director of VIDA. "Financial barriers historically plague individuals in the low-income bracket, ultimately suppressing their efforts to earn certificates and degrees that will allow them to rise out of poverty."

For over 150 years, Union Pacific has been committed to Building America, serving as an economic engine and improving the standard of life for millions across the country. Building upon this heritage, the mission of the Union Pacific Community Ties Giving Program is to build safe, prosperous, and vibrant communities by investing in high-quality nonprofits and programs in the cities and towns in which they operate and their employees live and work.

Through this UP-Skilling the Workforce grant from Union Pacific, combined with funding from local partners, VIDA will be able to provide tuition, books, tools, and certification fees for students in the qualifying fields. Tools, as well as licensing fees and certifications, are expensive, and the students VIDA serves normally cannot afford them, causing them to drop out of workforce training programs

VIDA's career counselors/case managers work closely with each student to address barriers that historically plague low-income individuals and ultimately quash their efforts of continuing education. Financial matters, family issues, and time management are but a few of the elements addressed through weekly counseling sessions. In addition, VIDA counselors infuse group sessions with soft-skills training, such as general employability, resume preparation and interviewing, financial management, and study skills. Guest speakers are invited for open dialogue about home buying, savings, investments, and retirement planning. Wraparound services, training, and counseling equip VIDA participants to enter the workforce with the skills and commitment necessary for success.

To learn more about VIDA, visit vidacareers.org.

VIDA is a community-based, nonprofit 501(c)(3) agency created in 1995 through a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private-industry leaders. The impetus was the need to empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education, and training needed to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of existing employers and recruiting new investors to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce. Since its inception, VIDA's mission remains constant—to formulate new institutional relationships in the Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high-wage jobs in the region. To learn more, call 956.903.1900 or 1.800.478.1770 or visit vidacareers.org.