

Public Works Classes are Avenue for Career Advancement

Earning a certificate can increase job opportunities

By AnnMarie Librescu

Raul Leyva of Santa Ana works as a utility/street maintenance worker for the City of Garden Grove, a position he has held for two years. Throughout his employment, he's also been taking public works classes at Santiago Canyon College. "Some people stay in the same spot, but my supervisor encouraged me to take classes to learn more about my job and move up the ladder," Leyva said. Since beginning his employment as a part-time worker, he's advanced to full-time after improving his skills through classroom teaching and hands-on work in labs.

Leyva is currently just two classes away from completing both his public works and inspection certificates, where he's learning about street and highway construction, asphalt technology, plan reading, cost estimating, and project management. With these certificates under his belt, he hopes to make the transition from street repair to inspecting the concrete and asphalt work of other employees, making sure it's up to municipal code standards. "With so many retirements happening recently in public works, now is the time to prepare for promotion," Leyva explained. "That's why I'm planning to keep going to school to get my associate degree after completing these two certificate programs."

Life hasn't always been easy for Leyva, so he appreciates the wages and benefits he's earning at the City of Garden Grove. "Growing up, my family didn't have a lot of money," he said. "I dropped out of school and started getting into trouble before I straightened up and got my GED. So if I can succeed in Santiago Canyon College's Public Works program, anyone can!"

Leyva was married in December, and is excited about the bright future that lies ahead. "I encourage everyone who has the opportunity to continue their education to go for it!" Leyva said. "It's only going to help you in the long run. Thanks to my education at Santiago Canyon College, I can pass along my knowledge to co-workers and help make the community a better place. And best of all, my family's future is secure, which is a blessing."