



NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA • COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
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Probationary Youth Learn “Your Start is Not Your Finish”

*Life Turning Points Spotlited at 2017
Passport to Life Career & Education Expo*

A nationally known criminal defense attorney who grew up on the wrong side of the law will tell his story to youthful offenders during the 8th Annual *Passport to Life Career and Education Expo*. Orange County attorney Jimmy Cha hopes to motivate and inspire hundreds of young people whose offenses have placed them in the juvenile justice system. The goal of Passport to Life is to show youthful offenders that they can change the path they are currently on. The annual program provides probationary youth information, tools, encouragement, education and career resources to help them transition into productive adulthood.

Passport to Life is open to youth, 14 to 24 years of age, who are currently on probation or have a probation history. The event focuses on the importance of finishing high school, the value of obtaining higher education and of building work-readiness skills. The event will be held on **Friday, August 18, 2017 at the San Diego City College campus (1313 Park Boulevard) from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Cha, the 2017 keynote speaker, is a former Los Angeles gang member. Growing up poor, his parents lost their entire business in the 1992 LA riots. Cha spent his youth involved in gangs, and committing numerous crimes. By the time he was 24, his family had had enough and his brother convinced him to go back to school. He went to community college, received a

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partial scholarship from UCLA and then attended law school.

Cha is now a highly successful criminal defense attorney who has been recognized by numerous legal organizations. He is also a certified gang expert, which means other attorneys often seek his advice on gangs and understanding gangs. He has testified in court as an expert on gangs, prison inmate classification and the perils of gang life.

Passport to Life is a collaboration between the San Diego Superior Court and the County of San Diego's Probation Department, along with numerous public and private organizations.

"It is always inspiring and uplifting to see the *Passport to Life* attendees. They have such potential and ability to succeed. These young people may not always recognize that in themselves but once they do, it is exciting to watch it unfold. They are appreciative of the efforts by our court and our community in showing them support, compassion and opportunity," says San Diego Superior Court Judge Carolyn M. Caietti.

"We are excited to once again team up with the Juvenile Court and Judge Caietti to host this important event," said the County of San Diego's Chief Probation Officer Adolfo Gonzales. "Passport to Life embodies the mission and goals of the Juvenile Court system, and we hope it will again expose and inspire youth in the system to seek educational and work opportunities they may not have known existed."

The program kicks off with the opening session followed by multiple breakout workshops with topics such as:

- *College the Great Equalizer*
- *Science the New Millennium: Jobs for the 21st Century*
- *Emotional Literacy Skills*
- *Why You Should Care about your Digital Reputation*
- *Overcoming Barriers & Sealing Your Record*

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Approximately 80 organizations representing schools, careers, training services, and other resources will staff informational tables and provide opportunities for one-on-one interaction.

Passport to Life is a collaborative effort of the following organizations:

- San Diego Superior Court
- San Diego County Probation Department
- San Diego City College
- San Diego County Office of Education
- San Diego Workforce Partnership
- San Diego County District Attorney's Office
- San Diego County Public Defender's Office

Note: Up to 800 young people between the ages of 14 and 24 are expected to attend. Some youth attending the event will be available for on-camera and print interviews.