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Surf's Up for Watts!

Catch a wave and you're sitting on top of the world! This might be the mantra for students from the OneSource YO! Watts Youth Opportunity Center. Summer is over, but surfing's still on their minds. In July and August young people from YO! Watts learned how to surf and boogie board at the Surf Academy at Dockweiler Beach.

It was their first time at the beach for many. "Coming from the community I live in, people barely have hobbies other than basketball and music, but being exposed to Surf Academy has given me a new found pastime to love and hopefully share with my friends," said new surfer Jessie Bassett.

This unique program exposes youth from low-income communities to a new sport and beach safety. They each get a wet suit and learn from instructors who "hit the waves" with them. There's always a CPR certified instructor present. "Many people don't learn to stand on a surf board until their 4th or 5th time out. The YO! kids were naturals," said instructor Brandon Gates, "able to stand on boards after 3 or 4 tries. It's an amazing thing to see!"

Although formal instruction ended, you can bet the newly minted surfers will return to the beach to ride the waves. "It's just as important to expose local youth to new things as it is to teach them Job Readiness and Life Skills," said James Wade, a YO! Watts staffer. "Our future leaders need education plus varied experience. Surf Academy offers hands on learning rather than watching TV shows about the beach. This is real and it opens the possibilities in life."

World-class surfers from Watts. Imagine that!

The Community Development Department's OneSource Youth Opportunity (YO!) site in Watts provides a wide range of services that include remedial classes, GED preparation, computer literacy, life skills and employment assistance and recreation and social development activities to help young people become productive adults.

