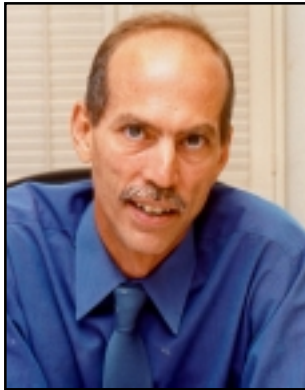


AEWC: At WVOC, It's Like A Family

By MICHAEL LeROY SPAUL

West Valley Occupational Center's AEW C fosters a family-style environment, according to Mr. Lauria, who joined the campus' AEW C team who was promoted to AEW C Coordinator for the entire

Mr. Lauria told the campus newsletter, *The Clipboard*, growth, while maintaining its unique quality and the staff. He went on to emphasize how their students receive typical high school environment. The ratio of students to that helps support the concept of a comfortable, "family words, "Our students are not faceless..." Staff and students The students assimilate better and become more motivated cases find it difficult to trust; the hope is, we can restore



Joining the AEW C "Family": Joe Lauria

The AEW C program early-on was referred to as one of the District's "hidden treasures." It began some 15 years ago when WVOC was chosen as one of the few sites for a pilot recovery program designed for high school dropouts. It serves students between the ages of 16 and 19 who have not succeeded in the traditional school setting. The program features competency-based independent study, flexible scheduling and individualized instruction along with an open enrollment policy. Once a prospective student has been tested to establish reading and math levels, he/she can prepare for the G.E.D. or take course work for their high school diploma. Students can even achieve course credit to enable them to return to their high school, or enroll in any of the vocational training courses available at West Valley.

In the years since that pilot study, WVOC has built its AEW C program into the largest and most successful of its kind in the District, with a yearly student population in excess of 250. The graduating classes—held each June in the school's lushly-landscaped Dellefield Park—average 50 young men and women who have become better equipped to deal with the world at large, and hopefully share in a brighter vision for their future. ■

A "Towering" Tribute



Bob Myers with His "Crystal Apple"

Instructor **Bob Myers** is an excellent example of the outstanding calibre of teacher in the AEW C program. A former principal, Mr. Myers has received a "Crystal Apple Award" in recognition of his accomplishments, working with young people to stay in school. He states that many teenagers who resist being confined within the traditional school system need an "extra push" from someone who believes in them. He goes on to say, "These kids desperately need someone to help them realize their potential and raise their self esteem. Through self-awareness, they can develop better qualities. That is my No. 1 goal."

With the first year anniversary of 9-11 fast-approaching, Bob Myers gave his History and Government class a broad and challenging assignment. His students were to do *whatever* they individually felt best commemorated the event. "I expected most of them to put their thoughts down on paper, in an essay or poem—the objective was to be creative, but never did I mention making a *model*. I was amazed to see what Jeff brought in!" The 3-dimensional scale model created by **Jeff Thomas**, 17, is just 36 inches high, but it stands tall as an example of one young person's deep feelings about 9-11. Some 15 hours in the making, Jeff used his experience as a shipping manager to construct the model with card-

board, packing tape, and—providing its emotionally-charged covering—the printed names, ages and ethnicity of *all the victims*.

Jeff has only been enrolled since June, but he illustrates how the direction of a teenager's life can be changed positively within a short time, given proper guidance and motivation. Jeff Thomas' story is not unlike many teenagers who, having been shuttled be-

tween numerous high schools, lack proper direction in their lives. A social worker referred Jeff to West Valley's AEW C, and the program's built-in flexibility has made all the difference to him. Jeff attends just an hour-and-a-half a day, but he is already on track to graduate next June. This now highly-energized youth told *The Clipboard* that he would like to become an Internet entrepreneur, perhaps operating an online auction site "to give *ebay* some real competition," he said with a broad smile. Such a display of ingenuity and resolve at this stage of life undoubtedly points to greater achievements ahead for young Mr. Thomas. ■

gram (Alternative Education Work Center) **Joe Lauria**, it's new outreach consultant. in July, is replacing Ms. Veronica Montes, District last February.

that his agenda is to "promote program personal caring" aspect of its instructors and more individualized attention than in the teacher is much lower within AEW C, and style" setting for learning. In Mr. Lauria's are encouraged to be on a first-name basis. to stay in the program. "These kids in many that basic quality in their lives."



Model Student: Jeff Thomas and His 9-11 "Twin Towers Tribute"