

An Open Letter to My Son

Dear Ryan:

This month I got to feel like a hero. I had the privilege of serving 93 people who had no place to sleep. They had been ordered to evacuate their homes. I volunteered to assist them in an evacuation shelter in Thousand Oaks while the Woolsey Fire was threatening their neighborhoods.

As an employee of the County of Ventura, I am a Disaster Service Worker. It is an obligation I am required to fulfill. It is also an honor.

As you know, Ryan, for the past two seasons, our county has been ravaged by end-of-year fires. Our home in Moorpark has been spared both times; not so fortunate, however, for our fellow county citizens in neighboring cities. Since I work in the Human Services Agency, I am tasked with promoting our Agency's mission, "the safety, health and well-being of our neighbors."

Want to know a secret? I didn't have to wait for a fire to feel like a hero. I feel like one every day. Though I do not consider myself one who performs heroic deeds, I support many who do. As the manager of training and development, I collaborate with my colleagues on building their communication skills to their highest potential. They are the true heroes who interact daily with our customers and clients.

There are many types of work at the county — over 1,000 different kinds of job positions, in fact — performed by 9,000 employees. And we all work together to help our neighbors enjoy "the benefits of a safe, healthy and vibrant community." We are reminded of those words from our county's mission statement every day at work. We try to live by them.

Your mom and I are very proud of the Bachelor's Degree you earned last spring. And we know you have many options and will succeed at whatever career you choose. We are also aware of the lure that the private sector offers. Bright shiny new jobs with onsite spas, car washes and gourmet lunches are hard to compete with. But please allow me a moment to try.

In addition to the administrative support-type human services work of which I am a part, the county offers career opportunities for virtually any young person's interest. From public protection, including fire, police, watershed, environment and animal regulation, to criminal justice to health care to agriculture to recreation to public works and information technology.

Have I mentioned benefits? Millennials will find health care insurance plans, educational incentives (for which you would qualify with your degree), bilingual premium pay, merit pay increases, opportunities to promote, paid time off for vacation and sick leave, and retirement (good luck finding that last benefit in the private sector).

One big perk about choosing a career with the county is the luxury of acquiring a wide variety of free training — the thing that millennials not only say they want, but the very thing that is crucial to a young person moving up the ladder in any organization. What's more, developing new professional skills through training is quite expensive in the private sector (your dad should know because he earned his living for ten years delivering it). In fact, the county is about to roll out an exciting new learning opportunity: All workforce members will have access — 24/7 — to 9,000 online courses available through LinkedIn Learning. County employees will be able to take courses in business, leadership, finance, IT and soft skills to achieve personal and professional goals.

At the County of Ventura, we are encouraged to experience different departments and agencies, each with a unique set of meaningful work challenges. Someone once said millennials want a "career jungle gym," which turns experiences into a career. I think that is an apt description of county workforce members.

I will close by suggesting to you, Ryan (and your cohorts), that you needn't be a superhero to join the County workforce team, but if you have an empathetic attitude and wish to serve, you might just feel like one. There is no hiding that fact that your long-term, successful career has been hiding in plain sight. Go grab it at:
<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/ventura>

Love,
Dad

Gary Butterworth, Moorpark