

## Bay Area Student Relying on Himself through Economic Crisis

Tim Vantress

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"I gotta do what I gotta do to get where I want to be."

Cameron Campi, an 18 year-old student-athlete in Saratoga, is now providing his own health insurance because his parents are unable to provide it for him.

In the fall of 2009, it was reported that 10% of the American work force was jobless, and more than likely without health insurance. Cameron was forced to join that group, except he did it at roughly half the age.

Although that percentage has gone down to 9.7% as of February, and Cameron has found health insurance with Safeway, he is still relying largely on himself as he pushes through West Valley College.

Cameron's mother, Christy Yohanan, has been the owner of Avalon Labels for the past 20 years. Her company provides various labels to an assortment of different companies. Through those 20 years, her company has remained relatively small. During the recession, she couldn't afford to have her sons, Logan and Cameron, and her daughter, Désire, on her health plan.

So, she asked Cameron's dad, Bill Campi, to put him on his plan. Unfortunately, Bill had been out of work since August because of an injury and has been unable to find work since, so he couldn't afford it either.

Unable to play baseball at West Valley without insurance, and unhappy with the pay and hours at Abercrombie, Cameron saw the opportunity – and the risk – to look for another job.

"I was only getting maybe one shift a week," said Cameron. "Because of that, I was only earning about \$120 a month."

Last fall, there were about 16 million people out of work, and only roughly 2.5 million job openings, according to CNNMoney.com. That means there were on average more than 6 applicants per job opening. He quit his job at Abercrombie once he learned that Safeway put him on the payroll.

The safety net that he acquired from Safeway may even become stronger over time, depending on whether or not President Obama's health care proposal falls through.

President Obama's plan does not make it necessary for employers to provide health insurance. However, if companies have more than 50 employees and do not provide insurance to them, they are fined \$2,000 annually for each employee.

Over time, this proposal will have an interesting side-effect. Smaller companies will need to downsize in order to afford health insurance for all their employees. As for the jobless market, there will be more jobs that include health insurance, but less jobs and job openings overall. More people will be put out of work, and fewer openings will be available. But if someone is lucky enough to find an employer, there is a great chance that they will get cheap, affordable health care.

Cameron now has both a job and health insurance; therefore, he is secure at the moment, unless Safeway decides to decrease their work force.

Cameron's parents, however, still have work to do. Christy, with her company Avalon Labels, is considered an entrepreneur. According to Amy M. Wilkinson of CNN.com, entrepreneurs and small businesses shall be the biggest reason why America's economy eventually recovers.

She goes on to explain that companies like Burger King, Microsoft, and Disney all started during periods of economic downturn. Since then, they all have thousands of employees in the books around the world.

As for Cameron's father, Bill, his situation has been made slightly more difficult due to Republican Senator Jim Bunning's filibuster on the new \$10 billion dollar jobs bill. Although Bunning has recently ended his filibuster, unemployment benefits for 100,000 Americans have expired, according to the New York Times. Bill needs to find work to help him survive this dry spell.

Recently, the economy's GDP has been showing positive growth, but the job market is not following suit yet. According to CNN.com, job creation at the beginning of an upswing is usually slow due to the hesitation of businesses to begin hiring. Once businesses are sure that the fragile economy is back to normal, they will start hiring again. Cameron Campi is optimistic.

"I'm confident because it has to get better sometime."