Cooking toward a future

By RAY GELLMAN

APRIL — Former gang member Gabe Garcia, now a Cabrillo College culinary student, said he sees cooking as a way out.

"It’s just a breath of fresh air," said Garcia, a 35-year-old Agana resident. "I’m getting out of my home to do something new, to start my life over. It’s going to put me back on my feet.

Garcia, along with three classmates — a ruptured kidney, a cooking school dropout and a formerly homeless Navy veteran — will be featured on "The Freshman Chef: Santa Cruz," a Cooking Channel eight-part series premiering next month.

Garcia said when he joined the gang at 12 years old, he didn’t see a future.

"I was in and out of prison or I was going to end up dead somewhere," he said.

In 2003, days before his Agana High School graduation, Garcia was arrested for second-degree robbery, for which he eventually spent a year in county jail.

WHAT: A reality TV show following Cabrillo College culinary students.

SCHEDULE: 9 a.m. Tuesdays, starting March 11 on Cooking Channel, channel 223 on DIRECTV, 162 on Comcast and 450 on AT&T U-verse.

Cabrillo College Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management program instructor Eric Carter joins students Gabe Garcia and Matt Sticht in the school’s kitchen. The Cabrillo program will be featured in a reality TV show on the Cooking Channel. Sticht was recovering from four months of chemotherapy for a rare blood vessel disorder during shooting of the series. He’s not one of the four main characters, but will be featured in some episodes.

CABRILLO COLLEGE CULINARY ARTS AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR ERIC CARTER JOINS STUDENTS GABE GARCIA AND MATT STICHT IN THE SCHOOL’S KITCHEN. THE CABRILLO PROGRAM WILL BE FEATURED IN A REALITY TV SHOW ON THE COOKING CHANNEL. STICHT WAS RECOVERING FROM FOUR MONTHS OF CHEMOTHERAPY FOR A RARE BLOOD VESSEL DISORDER DURING SHOOTING OF THE SERIES. HE’S NOT ONE OF THE FOUR MAIN CHARACTERS, BUT WILL BE FEATURED IN SOME EPISODES.