

2014 YOUTH PHILANTHROPY AWARD WINNER: WEST GROVE GARAGE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The West Grove Garage Student Advisory Council has been instrumental in the growing success of after-school programs.

This group of peer-led philanthropists is composed of 10 middle and high school students from Avon Grove School District who model leadership skills among their peers and demonstrate a strong commitment to their community and the mission of The Garage. The Garage is a facility that houses services like community assistance opportunities, youth groups, enrichment activities, and tutoring/mentoring for middle and high school students

The members of this Student Advisory Council including: Erica Lopez---President, Jairo Torres--- Vice President, Christian Torres---Community Service Coordinator, Karla Tenoria--- Events Coordinator, Diana Almanza--- Middle School Coordinator, Jazmine Cordova--- High School Coordinator, Jesus Garcia---Student Officer, Rafael Diaz---Student Officer, Mariana Castillo---Student Officer, and Karina Castillo---Student Officer meet monthly to identify and coordinate fundraising, community service and outreach events that benefit not only the Garage, but the greater community.

The Council equips students to be leaders and have an active voice and role in the ongoing development and implementation of the Garage's after-school program. Their involvement from inception to implementation empowers them to take ownership of our programs, which has proven to increase their participation and that of their peers. The students serve as a catalyst between Garage Staff, students and community members. They are our best advocates and the driving force behind all we do.

In 2013, the Council collaboratively raised over \$3,300 to support our after-school program activities through a variety of student-led fundraising activities including three Student Dances, a Garage Sale, a McDonald's fundraiser, an Applebee's Fundraiser, and a Cinco De Mayo Fundraiser. For each of these events, the students oversaw every detail including the budgeting for materials, marketing of the events, staffing the events, and coordinating the distribution of funds for field trips and other program related projects and activities.

The West Grove Student Advisory Council also contributed to the success of the Garage's annual fundraising banquet, which raised over \$25,000. The students contributed by voluntarily setting up and breaking down for the event, greeting and serving dinner to our guests, coordinating and making the decorations, and fearlessly sharing their stories on stage.

On a micro level, these activities are equipping students with the knowledge, skillsets, and passion to give of themselves for the greater good of others.

In addition to raising funds for the Garage, Council is committed to serving in the community and coordinating outreach events that help bring new students and families into the Garage and broaden our reach in the community.

The following outreach activities were coordinated and implemented by the committee over the past year:

- Tres Reyes Fiesta (Three Kings Party, a Mexican Christmas Celebration)
- Community Easter Egg Hunt
- Operation Christmas Child Drive
- Community Soccer Festival
- Mother's Day Dinner

- Thanksgiving Dinner
- Student Holiday Party
- Christmas caroling and hosting Mr. & Mrs. Claus
- Community Gardening
- Distributing Candy on Halloween
- Dia de los Muertos Altar

West Grove Student Advisory Council also organized a variety of service projects. The students recognizes that organizing service projects engages their peers in giving back and helps bridge relational gaps in the community.

Among their projects were:

- volunteering at Jenners Pond
- sorting and distributing donations at The Bridge Food and Clothing Closet
- tutoring elementary aged students at the Melton Center
- repairing homes for Good Neighbors
- packing boxes for Operation Christmas Child

Each of these projects has a lasting impact on both the community and the students themselves.

After a recent service project, one of our students commented,

“I realized I like helping people. It showed me I could do more for my community. I can help with my hands, rather than just donating money. I can make a family’s home safer to live in and add joy to their lives-----and I think that is amazing!”

Another student commented, “The Garage helps me see how much I love helping the community”.

These council members might be young, but they are mature and effective leaders. They have created a legacy of youth philanthropy in West Grove and know how to collaboratively influence change by not only giving of their own time and resources, but by also motivating and inspiring their peers, families and the greater community to give. Please join me in applauding these wonderfully inspiring humanitarians.