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SERVICE CLUB PARTNERS WITH DUARTE SCHOOLS TO HELP DEVELOP LEADERS

DUARTE – When retired educator Lydia Carswell picked up two Duarte USD students to drive them to their bus for a weekend Rotary –sponsored teen retreat, she noticed they were shy and apprehensive about the event they were going to attend.

No surprise there, given their age. But when Stephanie Gutierrez and Brandon Lou of Northview Intermediate School returned from the three days in Crestline, they exhibited newfound self-confidence and a desire to share what they learned with peers, family members, and the sponsoring Rotary Club in a presentation.

Leadership is the theme of several programs sponsored by the local Rotary Club and it has translated into positive results for not only the Northview students, but also those at Duarte High School and it is one of the district’s most successful partnerships.

“One of the avenues of service is building the new generation,” said Carswell, a former teacher, principal and administrator at DUSD and now president of the Rotary Club. “We believe these youth are our leaders of the future. If they can start learning about service at an early age, they will grow up believing in service to the community.”

Rotary sponsors the Interact Club on the campus of Duarte High School and more than 50 students participate in a number of community oriented projects.

Giselle Lopez is president of the Interact Club, and attended the same Teen Leadership Camp the two younger students did, but in a different role. She served as a counselor and worked with the group that included Stephanie.

Matthew Sangalang is also a senior at Duarte High School and has taken his belief in leadership to a very visible position. As president of the Student Body, he has a seat as the student representative on the Duarte Board of Education.

“Matthew has represented not only our school, but all of the schools in the district, and he’s modeling great leadership skills,” said Mark Sims, principal of Duarte High. “Giselle and the Interact Club have been involved in a lot of projects and understand the importance of giving of yourself to the community.”

The leadership connection runs from the adult service club, through the school board, district administration, to the school campuses, and has allowed the students to make their mark.

Sangalang, who hopes to attend UCLA and study nursing, said he views leadership “as a chance to be a role model, and to set a good example. When I graduate, I hope others will have seen the potential for leadership that they have.”

In addition to serving as president of Interact Club, Lopez also serves on the Mayor’s Youth Council. “We have helped the City Council study some of the issues that have been important to the youth in the community,” she said. “We’re going to start having more programs for the Teen Center in the future.”

Lopez hopes to move on to Azusa Pacific University and study human resources. She believes her leadership efforts “have helped others learn the importance of getting involved.” She particularly enjoys the projects where Interact Club has a chance to give back to the community, including blood drives, walks for hope and cancer research, and working on the City of Hope float for the Rose Parade.

Gutierrez and Lou are leaders at Northview, serving as Student Body president and treasurer, and already focusing on the future: They’ve identified Yale and Stanford as their possible college destinations in four years. As eighth graders, they are part of a leadership class, which Principal Rick Crosby says is an important part of the school culture.

“Every Friday we have an assembly, and our student leaders get to learn public speaking, getting up and addressing an audience,” he explained. “But more importantly, leadership at the middle school level means caring about more than yourself.”

Crosby has watched Gutierrez develop as a leader and sees her blossoming in the role. She was student body president at Andres Duarte Elementary School when he was principal there.

And further solidifying the link between Rotary Club and Duarte USD, there are now plans to start an Interact service club for the students at Northview.

“The more we work on the leadership pipeline, the stronger our community will be with these future leaders,” said Carswell, the Rotary president.

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