On my application to participate in Rose Youth Foundation (RYF), I wrote that I sought to affect meaningful, tangible change in my community. The grants we made this year helped me understand the many forms meaningful change can take.

We decided to fund organizations addressing homelessness. Our grant to support homeless teens in their efforts to earn their GEDs and find stable jobs is meaningful change. We decided to fund innovative programming for Jewish teens. Our grant to connect Jewish teens to one another and foster Jewish learning through organized bike rides is meaningful change. We decided to fund programs and services to help refugees living in Greater Denver and Boulder become self-sufficient. Our grant to provide refugees with computer literacy and English classes is meaningful change. We decided to fund...
As a teenager, I am often told, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” These powerful words from Mahatma Gandhi are easier said than done. The difficulty in this task lies not in knowing what to change, but rather how to bring that change about. This year, Rose Youth Foundation served as a springboard for 23 Jewish teenagers to make tangible differences in our community. I am grateful to have been part of this group and to have the opportunity to find my voice and have it heard.

I never knew how powerful my opinions and those of my peers could be until one site visit meeting with a potential grantee this year. Towards the end of our meeting, the potential grantee profusely thanked us for choosing to make Jewish teen programming a priority, and for the criteria we established in our Request for Proposals. She asked us why we thought this criteria was essential. To my surprise, she grabbed a pen and took notes as we answered her question, explaining that we felt that by engaging Jewish youth through meaningful programming, our community would be supporting the future of the Jewish people. Her action was puzzling to me because as a teenage student, I am accustomed to taking notes from those older and more experienced than I. It was a complete role-reversal that made me realize how much power RYF placed in the hands of youth and how my words, actions and decisions could directly benefit numerous other teenagers. RYF brought together a diverse group of young adults, who were collectively all experts on being Jewish teenagers in the Denver and Boulder area. In essence, we had taken much of the guesswork out of the process for adult programmers because we had given them a clear statement of what we, as Jewish teenagers, wanted to see in our programs. We knew how to judge the effectiveness of a program because we represented the population that these programs were addressing. This realization allowed me to clearly see the value of RYF and to understand how we, as teenagers, can “be the change.”

In the last 10 years, 157 Jewish youth have granted more than $460,000 to make our community a better place.
organizations reaching out to welcome and engage interfaith families and couples in Jewish life. Our grant to support monthly Shabbat dinners and a Shabbat retreat for interfaith families is meaningful change. Through our grantmaking, we achieved my goal of affecting meaningful change; but I also learned that the RYF experience is so much larger than that. As a group, we followed a few key rules with our grantmaking, one of which was that we had to grant our funds in a “primarily Jewish” way. At my first RYF meeting, I knew nothing about philanthropy, let alone Jewish giving. But I soon learned that the “change” I wrote about on my application didn’t capture what I truly wanted to achieve. What I should have written was that I wanted to participate in tikkun olam, the Jewish ideal of repairing the world. That is what we worked towards at our RYF meetings on Sunday evenings in the Rose Community Foundation board room. And that is what our grantees are working towards as they serve our community every day.

Get Involved
Rose Youth Foundation is accepting applications from Jewish teens who will be in grades 10-12 in 2011-2012. Rose Youth Foundation seeks members from diverse backgrounds. Members work together for eight months to award grants in a primarily Jewish way to help address issues they identify in the community. The online application and more information about Rose Youth Foundation can be found at rcfdenver.org/RyF, or contact Sarah Indyk at 303.398.7416 or sindyk@rcfdenver.org.
2010–2011 Rose Youth Foundation Grants

Innovative Jewish Programs to Engage Post B’nai Mitzvah-aged Youth

Hazon: $6,500 to create Denver and Boulder teen biking programs, offering a series of one-day rides combining biking with Jewish environmental education.

Jewish Student Union: $2,550 to create JSU Club Summer, a summer-long series of weekly social and educational gatherings for Jewish teens.

Keshet: $6,000 to support LGBT-inclusion training for staff and teachers working with Jewish teens, and LGBT-inclusion workshops for Jewish teens themselves.

Mizel Arts & Culture Center (MACC): $3,750 to support the Teen Film Board in developing activities for Jewish high school students at the 2012 Denver Jewish Film Festival. This is a matching grant.

Helping Refugees to Become Self-Sufficient and Adapt to Life in Greater Denver and Boulder

Colorado African Organization: $7,000 to support English as a second language, computer literacy, United States social systems awareness, parent engagement and citizenship preparation classes for refugees.

Growing Colorado Kids: $3,000 to support agricultural and nutritional education to train refugee youth to grow food for their families and the community. Colorado Nonprofit Development Center serves as fiscal sponsor.

Jewish Family Service of Colorado: $6,000 to support the International Kid Success program, providing counseling, school interventions, parent support and education for refugee students attending Denver and Aurora Public Schools.

Lutheran Family Services of Colorado: $3,000 to support a program to build community among refugee women and facilitate their transition to life in Denver.

Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning: $5,000 to support pre-employment and volunteer training and placement to help refugee youth build their resumes and become more involved in their communities.

Welcoming and Engaging Interfaith Families and Couples in Jewish Life

Stepping Stones: $6,700 to support Shabbat, No Experience Necessary, monthly Shabbat gatherings and a weekend Shabbat retreat for interfaith families.

Services for Homeless Youth and an End to Homelessness

Denver’s Road Home: $5,000 to support an end to chronic homelessness in Denver. Mile High United Way serves as fiscal sponsor.

Urban Peak: $7,000 to support services for homeless youth and youth at risk of becoming homeless.