

# The Struggle of Teamwork Makes us Stronger



*by Danit Schinagle, senior at Denver Jewish Day School*

People may think Rose Youth Foundation (RYF) is simply the mechanics of granting \$60,000. The truth is the journey of deepening our Jewish identities, uncovering disparities, and taking action were the greatest takeaways.

Consensus is a core principle of RYF. It seemed difficult to imagine that 23 passionate members could work in consensus to make big decisions. Instead of voting we relied on discussions, which ensured no one's perspective was left behind. We learned the importance of creating room for others and recognizing when our voice brings value. This was not always easy, we struggled to agree on our grant priority, which initially set us back, but we worked through it and as a result were more united.

Next, we developed a deeper understanding

of our funding options. Reading grant proposals is our first glimpse into the hard work of nonprofits. We read program descriptions, reviewed financial documents, and evaluated the overall alignment with our funding priority and Jewish values, in order to determine which organizations received site visits. Site visits provided real life insight into what these organizations do. We observed programs and services and spoke with key staff. It was the most crucial step we took to make funding decisions.

RYF blessed all of us with an opportunity to participate in real world philanthropy. We did not just grant \$60,000, rather, we experienced the highs and lows of teamwork, while creating the connections between our Jewish values and our community's needs.

# Giving Jewishly to Address the Education Achievement Gap

by Cailey Karshmer, junior at Cherry Creek High School and Ellianna Lederman, junior at Rock Canyon High School

At the beginning of the year, we were asked which problem in our community we, as Jewish teenagers, wanted to make a difference toward solving with \$60,000. All of us deeply value education and recognize that not all students in our community have the same opportunities for success, so we chose the education achievement gap as our funding priority.

The education achievement gap is the gap in academic performance between students of color and white students and between students from low-income families and their more affluent peers. The National Center for Education Statistics found that by 8th grade, African-American and Hispanic students were on average more than 20 points, or two academic grades, behind their White peers in their math and reading scores.



We decided to focus specifically on the third grade literacy gap. Third grade is an important milestone in a child's education: before third grade, students are learning to read, but after third grade, they must read to learn. A November 2014 report from the Colorado Legislative Council found that the "achievement gap

stays roughly the same as students age" from third grade through tenth grade. By funding work to close the achievement gap in early elementary school, we hope to provide students with the best opportunity for lifelong success.

Because we are Jewish teen funders working to give back to our community in a Jewish way, we based our giving on Jewish values that resonated with our group. Judaism teaches us *lo ta'amod al dam rei'echa*, do not stand idly by when faced with a wrong you can help to correct. As students, we have seen the impact of the education achievement gap, which is why we are standing up for the right of all kids to succeed as students regardless of their race or economic status.

We all try to live in a way where we care for those in need and treat everyone with kindness and respect. The Jewish value *chesed*, lovingkindness, means caring for another person's honor and dignity and utilizing every opportunity to benefit others. This value influenced our funding decisions. We funded efforts to make sure that each child has access to educational opportunities that allow them to learn and grow.

Finally, we were guided by the value of *tzedakah*, giving in pursuit of justice. The quality of education one receives should not be based on race or socioeconomic class. To give in pursuit of justice means to give to those in need in order to right the scales of justice. For us that meant giving to programs that build culturally responsive and inclusive teaching practices and high impact family engagement strategies empowering parents as partners in their child's education.

As Jewish teen funders, we hope our grantmaking enables students across the Denver and Boulder communities to reach their fullest academic potential and to thrive.



# Becoming Teen Changers

by **Teddy Schoenfeld, junior at Boulder High School**

When she was only 11 years old, a girl in Pakistan began speaking out against her country's ban on females receiving education. Her reasoning: "the thought that they won't be able to go to school in their whole life is completely shocking and I cannot accept it." A few years later, she was shot in the head by a member of the Taliban. After recovering, Malala Yousafzai became the youngest Nobel Laureate, receiving the Peace Prize at age 17.

More recently, after Hurricane María's devastating effects on Puerto Rico, Salvador Gomez Colon, a 16 year old, raised \$36,000 for disaster relief in four days, and doubled that in the subsequent weeks. His outlook: "one day should not go by that we don't remind ourselves of how we can make other people's lives better."

The power of teenagers is often a taboo topic in today's society. Teens inhabit two worlds; we are on the edge of legal adulthood and yet not far removed from adolescence. I understand how perceptions of 13 to 19 year olds are loaded and divisive.

In the age-old power struggle between young and old, children and parents, the views and values of the elder generation usually prevail. It is easy for those older to write teens off as ignorant, incompetent and even insignificant. However, as a teen, I am aware of how inaccurate these assumptions are. Throughout the past two years in Rose Youth Foundation, I have witnessed the determination of my peers. Rose Youth Foundation has shown me that changing the world as a teen is a viable dream and a feasible reality.



Teens are often stereotyped as apathetic. I know this to be false; as teens, we will be the ones to live with the fallout of today's actions or inactions. To adults, mistakes may seem temporary, an infinitesimal error in a much larger cosmic timeline. To youth, however, time stretches endlessly ahead, making us examine the impact of our actions.

It's no wonder that national campaigns to halt the recent rise in gun violence are led by young people. As the youth of today, this is what we are made to do. It is our job to recognize the injustices of the world, to be curious and learn more, and to form our own opinions.

I knew going into Rose Youth Foundation that my fellow members were Jewish teens who were interested in helping their community. What I didn't expect was to be inspired by them to take action and join together to amplify our voice. The youth of today are not only the leaders of tomorrow, we are also leading now. More than ever, I feel confident and even optimistic, that my generation will be able to change the world for the better. We already are.

## 2017-2018 Rose Youth Foundation Grants

# \$60,000

*Organizations and programs that close the third grade literacy achievement gap through culturally responsive and inclusive teaching practices and/or high-impact family engagement strategies that empower parents as partners in their child's education.*

### **DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION OFFICE OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DENVER)**

\$15,000 to provide interpretation services for the Parent Teacher Home Visit Program that builds strong, positive and collaborative relationships between families and schools.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION & BUSINESS COALITION (PEBC) (DENVER)**

\$15,000 to train a cohort of Denver Public Schools K through third grade teachers in PEBC's model of Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners, which increases instructional equity in learning for students.

### **PLACE BRIDGE ACADEMY (DENVER)**

\$15,000 to support trauma-informed teaching practices through the implementation of the social emotional curriculum Capturing Kids' Hearts and to provide multi-language literacy resources and health screenings for families at a summer literacy event.

### **UNIVERSITY HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (BOULDER)**

\$15,000 to support Kagan Collaborative Learning training for all classroom teachers in effort to close the dual language literacy gap for native and secondary language learners.



600 South Cherry Street, Suite 1200  
Denver, Colorado 80246-1712

## Empower the Community's Youngest Leaders for Generations to Come

We believe youth are not only tomorrow's community leaders, they are also today's, so in 2011, we began a campaign to endow Rose Youth Foundation. The ultimate goal is to raise \$2 million dollars to permanently fund this program. We want to ensure that future generations of young Jewish people will have the chance to serve their community as youth grantmakers and that our community will continue to benefit from their leadership and perspective. To date, more than \$1 million has been raised thanks to generous support from Rose Youth Foundation alumni, their families, individual donors and foundations. To learn more about how you can support the future of Rose Youth Foundation, contact Sarah Indyk at 303.398.7416 or [sindyk@rcfdenver.org](mailto:sindyk@rcfdenver.org).

### **ROSE YOUTH FOUNDATION 2017-2018 MEMBERS**

Austin Barish, Melanie Brown, Rebecca Chapman, Ari Diamond-Topelson, Charlie Downing, Sydney Gart, Sam Glaser, Andrew Goldblatt, Lindsay Herz, Asher Kark, Cailey Karshmer, Ellianna Lederman, Isabel Levine Clark, Max Makovsky, Macy Miller, Hannah Pederson, Joseph Reiff, Chanah Reznick, Danit Schinagel, Teddy Schoenfeld, Maddie Solomon, Eden Turnbow, Livy Zeitler

### **ADVISORS**

Sarah Indyk, *Director of Special Projects*; Zach Kiefer, *Volunteer*; Emily Kornhauser, *Initiatives Manager*

## About Rose Youth Foundation

Rose Youth Foundation is a youth-led Jewish collaborative giving program. High school students grades 10 through 12 use their Jewish values and the tools of strategic philanthropy to set funding priorities, meet with nonprofit organizations and collectively grant \$60,000 in the greater Denver community.

### **Volume 6, Issue 1**

Rose Youth Foundation's Report to the Community is published annually by:

Rose Community Foundation  
600 South Cherry Street,  
Suite 1200  
Denver, CO 80246-1712  
303.398.7400