



**The Storehouse**  
COMMUNITY CENTER

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## **40 Area Teens Focus on Teamwork and Make a Year-Long Impact at The Storehouse Community Center**

*The 2024-25 Youth Leadership Council learns how to create successful teams from Google's landmark Project Aristotle study; contributes 1,655.5 service hours; and launches multiple impact projects*

**PLANO, TEXAS -April 30, 2025 -** Founded in 2021, the [Youth Leadership Council \(YLC\) of The Storehouse Community Center](#) was established to provide high school leadership experience while fulfilling the mission of The Storehouse to feed, clothe, and care as neighbors in one community. This year's group of 40 students from 19 area high schools in Carrollton, Dallas, Frisco, Plano, and Richardson took their service a step beyond, launching multiple impact projects while learning how to work best as a team.

This year's theme, "Creating Successful Teams," was built around Google's Project Aristotle—a landmark study that explored what makes teams thrive. Each month, student leaders facilitated interactive learning sessions on five traits identified in the study: psychological safety, dependability, structure & clarity, meaning, and impact. The research, a multi-year initiative, found psychological safety — where team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable — as the most critical element of team success.

YLC Squad Leaders **Abigail Muccio, Ava Henry, Blair Neumayer, Caroline Hathaway, Carter Jacob** and Assistant Squad Leaders **Joshua Montes, Nikhil Aluri, Nina Zucconi, Sophia Perez, Tessa Devasia** developed the meeting content alongside their squad members and implemented learning activities focusing on these characteristics.



Ben Skye, Director of Communications & Culture and Youth Leadership Council Advisor, recognizes the Squad Leaders for their dedication to supporting the YLC mission and their peers at the YLC Year-End Celebration on April 19.

“I was quite impressed with the creativity of squad leaders in coordinating these learning sessions,” said Ben Skye, director of communications and culture and YLC advisor at The Storehouse. “Through obstacle courses, skits, discussions, and more, each meeting brought the concepts to life in memorable ways, helping students build leadership and teamwork skills they’ll carry into their futures.”

“Last year, we spent a lot of time learning about our personality profiles and figuring out our individual strengths and weaknesses,” said Raghav Gupta, senior, Plano West Senior High School. “This year built on that foundation, and we got to really dig into what makes a team work. Leadership isn’t just about you — it’s about how you work with other people, and learning about Project Aristotle helped all of us understand how to do that better.”



The YLC planned and executed a coat drive benefitting Joseph’s Coat. The drive gathered donations from two local high schools, collecting over 300 winter clothing items that were distributed to families in need.

The group also came together in teams to launch a series of projects that would directly benefit The Storehouse. When Joseph’s Coat clothing closet needed warm clothing for the winter, the students created a marketing campaign with materials and served as liaisons for two large high schools whom they asked to launch drives: Plano West and John Paul II, which collected a combined 562 items. The council also closed out the year with a socks and underwear drive which resulted in 402 donations – a pressing need they learned about while volunteering.

Over the summer, YLC alumna and founding member Rishika Chimanji — now a junior at Texas A&M majoring in environmental science — returned to The Storehouse to complete the eight-week Nonprofit Management internship. While working in the food pantry, Chimanji noticed that damaged

packages of oats, though still safe to eat, were being set aside and left unused. Drawing on her academic background, she proposed a new YLC project: repurposing the oats into protein bites for neighbors attending The Storehouse’s Saturday morning Academy education classes. Made with oats, honey, peanut butter, chia seeds, and vanilla, the protein bites quickly became a popular and energizing snack for Academy students. Preparing them grew into an ongoing YLC team effort — a project that combined sustainability, creativity, and care for their neighbors. This year, the students prepared more than 1,100 protein bites.



Rishika Chimanji researched, tested, and led the first protein snack bites building session in July 2024. Following Chimanji's recipe and instructions, YLC members continued to assemble snack bites monthly throughout the school year. The snack bites (right) provided a healthy snack for neighbors attending ESL Classes on Saturday mornings in The Academy throughout the fall and spring semesters.

“We could not be prouder of our council and the impact they have made not only through their service hours but also through these multiple projects,” added Skye. “Rishika’s project is a prime example of what we hope our YLC members take away from their year or years of service at The Storehouse. For her to see a need, take the initiative, and apply what she has learned in college to her deep commitment to the YLC and our mission to care for our neighbors was extremely rewarding to watch. Not only that, her efforts and initiative launched a YLC project that will likely be continued in the years to come.”



Pictured from left to right: Nina Zucconi, Joshua Eappen, and Misha Kandukuri earned the David A. Huerta Student Volunteer Award for the most hours of service during the 2024-2025 YLC year.

As the 40 members of the 2024-25 Youth Leadership Council wrapped up the council's fourth year, they gathered to reflect on their accomplishments, recognize their leaders, and honor their graduating seniors. They also celebrated this year's recipients of the David A. Huerta Student Volunteer Award\* for the most hours of service: **Joshua Eappen** (79.5 hours, 11th grade, Frisco Memorial High School), **Nina Zucconi** (74.25 hours, 12th grade, Plano West Senior High School), and **Misha Kandukuri** (71 hours, 11th grade, Plano West Senior High School). Altogether, the 40 YLC students contributed an impressive **1,655.5** hours of service — averaging **41.38** hours per member, well above the council's 30-hour annual requirement.

Beyond their scheduled service days, many council members also volunteered independently across all four of The Storehouse's core programs, lending their time and talents to the clothing closet, neighbor care, education, and food pantry programs.

Twenty-one seniors were honored for their service, including founding members **Raghav Gupta** (Plano West Senior High School) and **Charlotte Bray** (Plano East Senior High School), who helped grow the YLC into the thriving program it is today.

"The YLC is one of the best experiences I have ever had," said Charlotte Bray. "I was very shy and introverted as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, and since being a part of the YLC,

I have become more comfortable opening up, talking, and being seen. This whole experience has shaped me into being more of a leader than I ever thought I could be. It's a cool thing to be a part of a group of leaders dedicated to helping people. If I hadn't joined YLC as a freshman, I honestly don't know where I'd be today."

"This is my third year leading the Youth Leadership Council, and it's been incredible to not only watch the growth of the council but also our individual members," added Skye. "After two years of developing the structure, this year's council stepped into their own - taking on projects that truly made an impact at The Storehouse. These were initiatives uniquely designed by and for the YLC."

While the YLC roster is complete for the 2025-26 year, The Storehouse welcomes all high school students to volunteer. To sign up, visit [www.thestorehousecc.org/volunteer-sign-up](http://www.thestorehousecc.org/volunteer-sign-up). To learn more about the Youth Leadership Council, visit [www.thestorehousecc.org/ylc](http://www.thestorehousecc.org/ylc).



Pictured from left to right: Charlotte Bray poses with the donation box she hand painted to support the YLC Coat Drive. Raghav Gupta smiles and poses for a photo with Candace Winslow, The Storehouse CEO, at the YLC Year-End Celebration.



The YLC offers students an opportunity to develop their leadership skills while helping their community with other service-oriented youth. YLC monthly meetings consist of leadership development, service opportunities, and service project execution.

“The Storehouse created the YLC to provide students an opportunity to serve our neighbors while developing life and leadership skills,” said Candace Winslow, CEO, The Storehouse Community Center. “And each year under the leadership of Ben Skye, I am overjoyed to see it develop into so much more. Students are not only learning more about themselves, but they are also seeing that they can create positive change in the world. We are beyond grateful for their many hours of service and the love and care they have shown to our neighbors.”

In her remarks at the council’s year-end celebration on April 26, Winslow highlighted research showing that high school students who volunteer and engage in leadership programs like the YLC are much more likely to step into leadership roles and stay active in community service throughout their adult lives. She shared with the students, “The work you are doing today is planting seeds for a lifetime of leadership and service.”

***DAVID A. HUERTA**, 22, the award’s namesake, began volunteering at The Storehouse at age 14 after he and his family arrived in Plano as immigrants from Venezuela. He volunteered weekly, helped found the YLC, and is a recent graduate of University of Texas at Dallas with a bachelor’s degree in finance. He is a YLC advisor and works part time with The Storehouse team.*

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**The Storehouse Community Center** (formerly The Storehouse of Collin County) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving residents of Collin, Dallas, and Denton counties through food, clothing, resources, education, and employment support. By creating strong partnerships and offering transformational programs, TSCC works to address the root causes of food insecurity and empower neighbors to achieve self-sufficiency. During its previous fiscal year, The Storehouse served 180,000 unduplicated neighbors with the support of more than 2,000 volunteers. Visit [www.thestorehouseecc.org](http://www.thestorehouseecc.org). The Storehouse EIN: 27-1883333