



**The Storehouse**  
OF COLLIN COUNTY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **The Storehouse Of Collin County's Inaugural Youth Leadership Council (YLC) Gained Valuable And Unexpected Leadership Skills As Group Adjusted To Meet Growing Community Needs**

*The Storehouse is now accepting applications for YLC Class of '23 through April 22*



36 Student Leaders from ten different high schools participated in the inaugural Storehouse Youth Leadership Council.

**PLANO, TEXAS - April 11, 2022** - The Storehouse of Collin County recruited 36 student leaders, 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades from ten different high schools across Plano and North Dallas, for its inaugural Youth Leadership Council (YLC), launched in 2021. The group began meeting monthly in September with a final meeting on March 26, 2022. Each YLC service day, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., begins with volunteering at The Storehouse's Seven Loaves Food Pantry and concludes with a council meeting to discuss their experiences serving the neighbors. During this group's one year of service, the number served at The Storehouse's Seven Loaves Food Pantry doubled, providing the group with valuable and unexpected skills, enhancing their overall experience.

"Student volunteers have been a big part of The Storehouse's volunteer base since we were founded in 2009, and our staff remains passionate about developing our next generation of leaders by providing them with important skills to address challenges in our community," said Candace Winslow, executive director, The Storehouse of Collin County. "By formally establishing the YLC, we knew The Storehouse would be better positioned to provide high school students with leadership experience while fulfilling our mission to feed, clothe, and care as neighbors in one community. Little did we know the breadth of skills this group would learn during their year of service."

When the YLC members began serving in August 2021, The Storehouse's food pantry was serving, on average, 250 to 300 neighbors at each 2.5-hour food distribution. Since August, the food pantry numbers have been climbing steadily with the most recent distributions peaking at 550-650 neighbors served.

“The YLC Members have not only responded to the rising needs serving as volunteers, but they have also learned valuable lessons on operational design and scaling processes to meet increased demand,” added Winslow. “These types of firsthand learning experiences requiring flexibility, adjustments, and problem-solving are ones they will carry with them throughout their careers.”

“One of the most important things I have learned is when you are serving this many neighbors in the same amount of time, every person in the system has to do their job with excellence,” stated YLC Member Noah Ziegelbein. “One mistake or accident, which may not seem like anything big, can influence the entire process. For example, if a bottle of juice falls off the cart and a new one must be retrieved, this creates a chain reaction which includes a backup and disruption for multiple people, affecting efficiency and altering the time it takes to complete service to neighbors.”

In addition to monthly volunteer sessions and council meetings, the YLC members also had the opportunity to flex their problem-solving skills by addressing a specific need for neighbors who visit The Storehouse’s Seven Loaves Food Pantry. The problem-solving project started with a month-long neighbor assessment surveying the most needed toiletries. Once the results were tallied, the YLC members worked on sourcing and distributing toilet paper to pantry visitors in January and February. In total, 4,846 rolls of toilet paper were distributed across four food pantry distribution sessions.

“I enjoyed being assigned a problem to solve, knowing that I am contributing, and being a part of a solution that helps our neighbors,” said YLC Member Nora Dufresne.

Groundwork for the YLC was laid by Plano West student Emmalee Mohler as part of her Girl Scouts Gold Award Project. From 2020 through 2021, during the midst of the pandemic, Mohler and her classmate David Huerta, worked on establishing YLC bylaws and expectations with support from The Storehouse’s Executive Director, Candace Winslow.



YLC Member Noah Ziegelbein serving as a hospitality volunteer during a food pantry distribution at The Storehouse.



Left: YLC Members Katrina Lam and Vivianne Farlander volunteering in the pantry to assemble food bags.



Right: YLC Member Katherine Happe handing a kids' snack bag to a neighbor at pantry distribution.

All 36 membership spots for the inaugural class were filled within two weeks. Student members were eligible to receive five service hours to accredit to other high school organizational requirements as needed for each completed session for a total of 35 service hours. The students were asked to complete seven monthly service days from September through March with all council meetings held on The Storehouse campus.

“After a year of classes on Zoom, it was great to get together with my peers and to also meet students from other schools,” said YLC Member Blanton Priebe.

Following each volunteer session, students had the opportunity to encourage their peers by nominating them with a note in the Hustle Bucket. Three notes are pulled from the Hustle Bucket, and the specific positive feedback and nominee is recognized.

“Encouragement is one of the core values of our organization,” added Winslow. “The Storehouse team was recognized as one of the top 100 Best Places to Work by the Dallas Business Journal last year, and we were very intentional about transmitting our work culture and values to these student leaders.”



In addition to monthly volunteer sessions, the student leaders also held meetings to discuss their experiences serving the community, practicing critical thinking and problem skills to address neighbors' needs.

The theme of “wanting to contribute” was a repeated theme in the feedback from members.

“Our students are hard workers and committed to serving with excellence at each volunteer shift,” said Sandy Weissinger, adult advisor for The Storehouse YLC. “During our meetings and discussions, they are insightful, curious and eager to contribute.”



**The Storehouse**  
YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

*Sign-ups for the YLC Class of '23 are open now through Friday, April 22 or until all 40 spots are filled. Interested students may apply by completing the form on this page:*

[www.thestorehouseecc.org/ylc](http://www.thestorehouseecc.org/ylc)

*There is a \$25 membership fee to cover Council t-shirt, nametag, and miscellaneous expenses during the year. Membership fees can be waived if needed. Student and parent signatures will be required on the application.*

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**The Storehouse of Collin County** provides short-term assistance and long-term transformation to residents of Collin County in need through the **Seven Loaves** Food Pantry, **Joseph's Coat** Clothing Closet, and **Project Hope**. The nonprofit was founded in 2009 under the name of Seven Loaves Community which provided only food pantry staples and grew over the years to meet a variety of needs. Over 1,600 families on average access the Seven Loaves Food Pantry each month. The Storehouse also provides an opportunity to receive clothing at no cost through Joseph's Coat as well as holistic assessment, counseling, goal setting, and referrals to community resources through the Project Hope relational program. Visit [www.thestorehouseecc.org](http://www.thestorehouseecc.org). The Storehouse EIN: 27-1883333