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An education in philanthropy

Program lets teens pick how to give \$11,000

By ALFA GARCIA
STAFF WRITER

What would you do if you were given \$11,000 to help fix the world?

Twenty-four students got to answer that question during the newly launched Teen Philanthropy Institute, a six-month program organized by the JCC on the Palisades in Tenafly.

The eighth- through 10th-grade students underwent a lengthy application process to join the pioneer program, which instilled the Jewish principles of *chesed* (Hebrew for "kindness"), *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). They pooled \$11,000 and decided where the money would go, formally presenting their donations to representatives of the charities at a final banquet.

"I liked it a lot because most of the work was done by the students," said 15-year-old Brooke Zingler, a sophomore. She now plans to join the philanthropy club her fellow institute members are forming at Tenafly High School.

The institute intended to help a single organization, but when this proved difficult for students passionate about other groups, the donation was split among six: Chai Lifeline, Supplies for Success, Eva's Village, Jenna's Rainbow, Pony Power and Youth Consultation Service (YCS). Funds were raised from a \$250 required donation by each participant and a \$5,000 donation from an anonymous member of the JCC board of directors.



ELIZABETH LARA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Seventeen of the 24 students who participated in the Teen Philanthropy Institute getting together with Judi Davidson Nahary, youth services director for the JCC on the Palisades in Tenafly.

"Without the program I wouldn't have had as much knowledge about what to do and how to do it," said Tenafly Middle School eighth-grader Harrison Kashkin. "[The program] really encouraged me to stay involved." After the fall admissions process, selected students met in January and attended seminars with charity workers, lay leaders and other students. In March they met with potential beneficiaries.

In June they volunteered with one of the organizations, Eva's Village — a Paterson program that helps the homeless, single mothers, substance abusers and others in need. The group will remain intact for the next two school years, raising funds and

choosing a new batch of organizations to support each year.

"The goal is to see this grow into a thriving program that speaks to a great need in our culture to encourage our youth," said youth services director Judi Davidson Nahary.

The teen institute is partnered with Areyvut, a Bergenfield-based agency that promotes community involvement for students in Jewish schools. Areyvut developed the program's curriculum, which was administered by agency founder/director Daniel Rothner and Nahary at the JCC.

"People think [the students] are future leaders, but I think they're current leaders," said Rothner. "How many eighth-graders to sophomores are giving

of their own money, giving of their own time and making the decisions that adults make?"

Thanks to many sources of funding, including JCC funds and a \$10,000 grant from the Jewish Teen Funders Network, the institute will be able to make this an annual project, bringing in a new group of students next year.

"I think what you have in young kids that age is that they're not jaded about the world and life," said Rochelle Lazarus, public-relations and communications director at the JCC. "They feel like they can be given a chance to make a difference and really believe that passionately and take it on."

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