

These Scottsdale leaders find ways to make a difference

Sometimes, a simple sentence can really help put things into perspective.

That was the case with a group of people who participating in the current Scottsdale Leadership class as they considered what their big service project would be.

“I just can’t get over the fact that there are children in our community who are hungry.”

That sentence, as it turned out, propelled the group to form Project CANdo — an effort to help Vista del Camino stock its food-bank shelves this spring as it enters a typically slow period for donations.

Group members recalled how one of their teammates said this after they did some research on how prevalent hunger can be among people who live close by — even in a place like Scottsdale, where displays of wealth aren’t too hard to find.

Project CANdo was among five Lead it Forward service projects that were pursued in recent months by the Scottsdale Leadership Class 28, which broke up into teams and had a friendly competition to see whose project was most effective. Scottsdale Leadership is a non-profit group dedicated to training individuals for leadership roles that can make a difference in the community.

I was among five people who served as judges April 4 at the project presentations event at the Hotel Valley Ho in Scottsdale.

I wrote down that sentence about hunger in the community during team CANdo’s presentation because it says so much in so few words. The idea that something like this was so bothersome — the inability to “get over” this. How many more variations of this could we — or should we — ask on any given day about our community when it comes to a host of problems in our midst: “I just can’t get over the fact that ...?”

Each of the five projects presented April 4 were worthy contenders in that they tried to take on a problem that is real — and every day — in our community:

» Tavan Digital Literacy Program, which held a technology fair at Tavan Elementary School, showed children, their parents and teachers how technology can help them succeed in education.

» Quest for College, which produced an informational packet prepared on a flash drive and in print that consolidated all of the useful information high-



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school students at the Paiute Neighborhood Center need to know about preparing for college.

» Victorious Secret, which developed a program for the Foothills Caring Corps in north Scottsdale that will partner the agency with numerous businesses throughout the Valley to supply an

ongoing stable of volunteers to assist in its mission of reaching out to homebound seniors.

» Amplif(i) it Bash, a free event was held for 120 area schoolchildren and 70 parents at Scottsdale Gymnastics, in partnership with notMYkid, to draw attention to issues surrounding bullying and positive life choices among middle-school children.

» Project CANdo partnered with Salt River Fields and the Arizona Diamondbacks to present a canned-food drive at a spring-training game that featured a pyramid stack of donated cans, all donated to Vista del Camino.

All of the judges agreed that the issue each group was attempting to address was worthwhile. The level of passion displayed by the class members as they explained their efforts was incredibly impressive.

The “winner” of the competition was the group that worked with Foothills Caring Corps, in large part for the way their effort established an ongoing program that should be able to benefit the agency for a long time down the road. A \$2,000 prize will go to Foothills Caring Corps to help further its efforts. (This project also was the audience choice in a vote taken during the awards reception Friday evening).

It sounds hokey, I know, but in the end there really wasn’t just one winner. Every group that benefited from these projects was a winner. Everyone who participated in the projects was a winner — as evidenced by the passion they demonstrated for their cause. And the larger community was a winner as well, as another group of people primed for leadership roles are much more in tune with answering that question that begins, “I just can’t get over the fact that ...”

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