

Council Update: High school students empowered by unique grant-making project

Source: **Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County**

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Boynton Beach – High school students from Belle Glade and Pahokee became leaders in their communities as grant designers and makers thanks to a unique project funded by Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

Participating in the grant-making project through the Student ACES organization changed students' lives, they told the CSC board Thursday, by helping them find their voice and empowering them to make change.

"I didn't know I was going to get asked questions – that someone was going to ask me, 'What do you think?' I didn't expect that," said Veranza "Trey" Vereen.

"It helped me be a leader," Madeline Moore concurred. "Our ideas turned to actions."

Through the Glades Student Grant-Making Association (GSGA), 12 teens were tasked with designing a grant-making opportunity for local nonprofits. The teens researched the grant-making process as well as the needs in their community, outlined criteria for the application and then determined which nonprofits would receive funding. In all, they awarded \$35,000 to seven nonprofits focused on supporting a healthier, more youth-centered community.

The students told the council they learned how important it was to understand the different demographics in their community, get to the root causes of problems and work together as a team – even dispelling the perceived rivalry between Belle Glade and Pahokee.

"I learned how to work better with others," said Delonus "Scooter" Kabir.

The project also inspired Madeline Moore, Chaniya Dowers and Ramyia Johnson to start their own nonprofit to mentor middle school girls in their community.

"I never even knew what a grant was before this program," Ramyia Johnson said, amazed that she and the other girls are now organizing their own mentoring program.