



MAYA HIGH SCHOOL
3660 W. Glendale Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85051

November 4th, 2013

To: Best Intergenerational Communities Review Panel

Dear Experience Matters,

Programs like Ambassador of Compassion are very helpful and encouraging. They help us learn how to deal with feelings we never thought we had and take those feelings and do something positive with them. We met people that you never thought you had so much in common with and you learn how to overcome things together. Although the sessions were small (ten students total) it had a great impact in helping students open up and talk about their problems and find ways to get through it.

Coach J (Juanita) and Coach N (Nels) has been very supportive in helping me achieve my goals. I cannot even imagine how much work they have put in to help us. What I do know organizing businesses around our campus and helping us find jobs; has been incredible. Coach N organized interviews at Little Caesars and of 24 people interviewed, 12 were Maya students. There were 6 people hired and I was one of three Maya students that were hired. I am so thankful for all the coaches have done to not only teach me my potential but give me opportunities to live it out. They have been MAYA STRONG and so am I.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jessica Ayala', written in dark ink.

Jessica Ayala
11th grade student
Maya High School

Juanita Guidry Copeland, M.B.A.

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Date: October 26, 2013
To: Best Intergenerational Communities Review Panel
From: Juanita Guidry Copeland, former AmeriCorps Member – Experience Matters Program
Re: Ambassador for Compassion Program

I retired from a career as a training professional in the corporate and professional world and in the environmental field. It was difficult to adjust to not having a purpose after such a purposeful career. Therefore, I tried to identify opportunities where my skills, talents and education could be used to benefit others.

That opportunity was presented with the Experience Matters Program through information available on-line. Specifically, I found the program applicable to being a retiree, as seniors were sought who could share with young people.

My assignment was at Maya High School (MSH), a charter and alternative high school for young adults through age 21. Most of them face challenges and difficulties and MHS offers them opportunities to finish high school on a flexible schedule and with a faculty who can relate to them.

Based on my training and substitute teaching, I was asked to facilitate the Ambassadors of Compassion (AOC) program at MHS among a group of students who were recommended by their teachers. There was a weekly meeting and various topics were addressed. The students were able to address matters that once faced would prepare them for the world of work. The goal of AOC was to prepare students for the realities in the world of work. The program requires students to identify a volunteer opportunity in their community and/or their school. The MHS students selected to perform a waste clean-up project of their campus and the areas around the adjacent businesses. Some of these businesses are potential sources of employment for MHS students and graduates.

One of the students who attended each session is now employed in the schools front office as a part-time receptionist. She overcame her shyness and gained confidence and assertiveness through the AOC program.

It was privilege to make a difference in the lives of MHS students based on the experiences I gained over my lifetime. The students were impressed that I graduated from a high school in Chicago. There is a certain quality one gains from living in that environment, street sense, which helps one to maintain personal safety and protection. I was blessed with strong and involved parents as well as mentors who considered it their responsibility to prepare young people for success and survival.

I recommend this program as it offers mutual benefits. Seniors are enhanced when they help young people while the recipients learn from those whose lives have been lived successfully. These seniors have volumes of knowledge from formal and informal education.

Sincerely,

Juanita Guidry Copeland