

Sunday, September 18, 2011

Youth Speak Collective Hosts the Inaugural Youth–Led Gala Celebration to Raise Funds for At-Risk Students in Pacoima, California

Wells Fargo Foundation's Jonathan Weedman, Along with Community Leaders, to be honored

ANS NEWS STORY

By Dan Wooding

Founder of ASSIST Ministries

LOS ANGELES, CA (ANS) – Youth Speak Collective (YSC), the Pacoima-based non-profit organization will host its premier Gala Celebration on Saturday, September 24 at 7 p.m. at La Plaza de Culturas y Arte at 501 North Main Street, Los Angeles. The event will be celebrating the half decade of inspiring youth through academics, creative expression and leadership development.

According to a news release, the "Imagine. Inspire. Ignite: Celebrating Five Years of Youth-led Action" Gala Celebration will honor youth leaders and community partners who have demonstrated significant commitment and dedication to the local community. The awards will recognize outstanding leaders whose work results in substantial contributions and leadership through philanthropy, educational and mentorship.

The 2011 YSC's Awardees are:

* Youthful Funder: Jonathan Weedman, Wells Fargo Foundation

* Youth Advocate: Norma Cardenas, YSC Board Member

* Athletic Advocate: F. Patrick Escobar, LA84 Foundation

* Student Leader: Agustin Flores, San Fernando High School Student

* Founding Youth Leader: Evelyn Gomez, Harvard University, 2011



"Our Gala Celebration is YSC's first annual major fundraising event, so we're especially eager to make it a success by bringing awareness to the critical issues faced by the youth in our community," said David Andrés Kietzman, YSC Executive Director. "The evening promises great entertainment, a chance to socialize with like-minded community leaders from local government, education, and most importantly the opportunity to contribute to a cause that directly impacts our future."

YSC focuses on transforming the physical and economic neighborhoods in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Some of the Youth Speak Collective's signature programs include Academic Support Services, Youth Development and Creative Expression programs, Project Youth Green (PYG) and Futbolito Pacoima. Currently, YSC serves approximately 500 youth a day and over 3,000 students last year through school based and community centered events.

The evening will be hosted by Josefa Salinas with Hot 92.3 (www.hot923.com) and Mario Solis-Marich with www.MarioWire.com. Tickets are \$75 per person and can be purchased online at <http://youthspeakgala2011.eventbrite.com/> or by calling (818) 890-2928 or visit the web site at www.youthspeakcollective.org.

Founded in 2006 by a handful of high school students and the current Executive Director, YSC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to empowering at-risk youth and their families with the skills necessary to pursue higher education and create strong communities. YSC annually helps more than 3,000 individuals, including some of the most disadvantaged youth and families in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. The organization provides a broad spectrum of integrated direct services designed to strengthen families, build self-sufficiency and guide them towards productive futures.



David Andrés Kietzman

About David Andrés Kietzman, YSC Executive Director: David grew up in the City of Pasadena, California, where he went through the public school system and had the opportunity to explore, participate and learn to value his community and the city of Los Angeles as a whole. He attended Pasadena City College and then Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego where he graduated with his B.A in Graphic Design and his teaching credential for secondary arts. In San Diego he led various social justice and community service groups that served undocumented youth and homeless individuals in San Diego and Mexico.

Out of college David started his own graphic design firm, AK Design focusing on design, art and marketing projects for emerging businesses. Handing this business over to a friend, David received a job offer to teach art and coach soccer in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. For the next two years he was able to explore, work and live in Honduras and Central America. After returning to the states David settled down in the community of

Pacoima, in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Here he taught art and ran youth services for various charter school and non-profit organizations.

When asked how he came to Youth Speak Collective, Kietzman said, "We founded YSC back in 2005. The journey to start YSC started back in college when I began leading community assistance and social justice groups to various parts of San Diego County and parts of Mexico. My worldview expanded a lot and led me to work abroad for two years in Honduras teaching art and coaching soccer. During this time I made the commitment to travel and get to know the people. Since then I have traveled to various Latin American countries including; Mexico, El Salvador, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Brazil and Peru.

"On returning to the states, I found the Northeast San Fernando Valley and worked as an art teacher in various charter schools and directed youth services for other non-profits in the Valley. Through this experience we realized the need for more youth-driven, violence prevention programs and started Youth Speak Collective. "

What is your role at Youth Speak Collective?

"I'm the Executive Director and my job is to lead the organization forward in a sustainable, passionate, organized, competitive and effective path," said Kietzman, a grandson of missionary statesman, Dr. Dale Kietzman, the founder of Latin American Indian Ministries (www.laim.org). "My job requires me to every day think about how I can better serve our youth and their families, to think about the strengths and needs in our community and how we can assist in empowering more youth to become community leaders. To accomplish that I try to empower our team to all organize around our core beliefs, to find the funds necessary for us build up our programs while raising awareness of YSC to our great city of LA and to the world. I attempt to make decisions based on what is best for the youth and our organization, and they usually go hand in hand. "