

uVoice Students Award \$2,500 to Two Local Charities

In its inaugural year, the uVoice Youth Health Philanthropy Board presented grant awards totaling \$2,500 to Amanda the Panda and Children's Cancer Connection.

Following its application process, uVoice awarded grants to two Des Moines organizations whose missions closely aligned with the grant cycle's focus on youth stress reduction. Katie Foley, chair of this year's board and a 2015 graduate of Dowling Catholic High School, said the group chose these organizations based on certain initiatives they are working on. Amanda the Panda offers grief counseling to children that have lost a family member, while Children's Cancer Connection is starting a youth philanthropy summer camp.

uVoice developed out of a youth advisory board formed in 2013 in a collaboration between Mid-Iowa Health Foundation and Community Youth Concepts. This board gave high school students the opportunity to learn about community health and advise Mid-Iowa Health Foundation and other area organizations on health-related issues and initiatives. To celebrate Mid-Iowa Health Foundation's 30th anniversary in 2014, this advisory board transitioned to become the Youth Health Philanthropy Board.

"We wanted to include the voices of those we are ultimately hoping to serve, so having youth involved in our foundation has been incredibly valuable. They have unique insights to the health issues high school students face, and they have brought fresh perspectives to our grant making priorities," said Suzanne Mineck, president of Mid-Iowa Health Foundation.

The concept of youth philanthropy is a relatively new idea which began to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s. According to the philanthropic education program [Learning To Give](#), this came about due to concerns about the future of the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors and the need to ensure workers in the industry. Engaging youth in the activities of nonprofits and philanthropic boards began as a way to insure the future of these sectors.

"Service learning through a grant making role such as uVoice can link the business skills to the community engagement, which ultimately keeps [youth] engaged in their communities as they head off into their careers," said Tess Hunting, the Community Youth Concepts advisor for the uVoice Youth Philanthropy Board.

Throughout the year, students involved with uVoice have developed unique skillsets for themselves and had fun along the way. When asked what they hope will come out of this youth philanthropy board, the uVoice high school students want to expand the opportunities for youth to learn about philanthropy and nonprofits. Foley is hopeful that other foundations and corporations will see the value of having youth input, while Otto Gunderson, a sophomore at Roosevelt High School, is hoping more nonprofits include youth in their executive boards. As for the uVoice board, it hopes to double in size in the coming years, expanding this unique opportunity for Polk County youth to learn about community health and philanthropy.

If you know a Polk County student that would be interested in serving on the uVoice youth philanthropy board, please contact Tess Hunting at tess@cyconcepts.org.