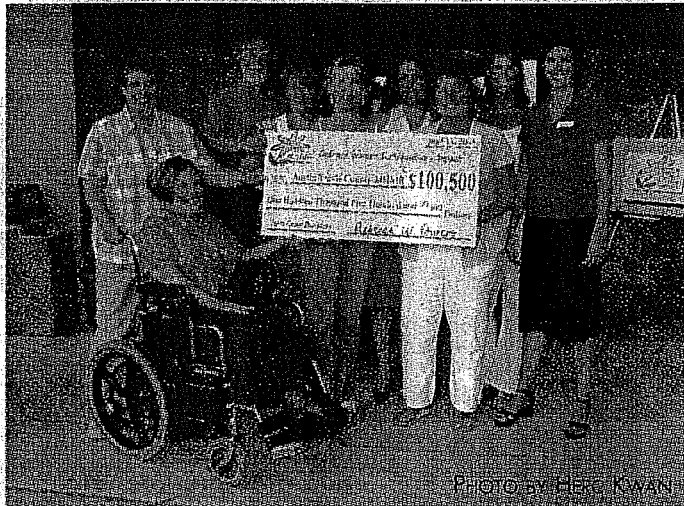


# Impact Austin awards two \$100,500 grants



(From left) Debbie Webb, Mildred Vuris and David Evans of Austin Travis County MHMR accept a check from Impact Austin, represented by Glenda Holmstrom, Phyllis Donelson, Karen Frost, Rebecca Powers, Lisa Lyons and Melissa Gray.

**By Yvonne Lim Wilson**  
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to imagine life now without cell phones, but what about voice mail?

One man in search of a job relied on his friend to take messages for him. The friend checked and erased each message without uttering a word about them to the job seeker.

In another scenario, a battered woman may be desperate to contact help, but a call back from the help agency could lead to more trouble.

There are many stories that illustrate how impor-

tant voice mail is for the many Austinites struggling without it, said Mildred Vuris, director of government and community relations for the Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation Center.

Now, thanks to a grant from Impact Austin, the center can provide 1,000 voice mailboxes to those in need through 49 local partner agencies.

Last Sunday, Impact Austin awarded two grants of \$100,500 each to two Austin-area charities. Communities in Schools received the second grant

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# Philanthropic group for girls launched by daughters of Impact Austin

**By Yvonne Lim Wilson**  
STAFF WRITER

girls.

The daughters of several members of Impact Austin founded Girls Giving Grants in February. Currently, membership is at 13 girls, ranging from grades 8 to 12 from throughout the city.

Last Thursday was a big evening for Impact Austin. Not only did the women's philanthropy group give \$201,000 in grants in its second year, but the annual dinner also introduced a new philanthropy group for Miriam Kalk, a

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PHOTO BY HERC KWAN

Claire Powers, a founding member of Girls Giving Grants, with her mother Rebecca Powers, founder of Impact Austin, display the new logo for Girls Giving Grants. Claire is a student at St. Stephen's Episcopal School.

# Impact

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founder member of Girls Giving Grants, said her family has always emphasized the importance of helping others. Kalk's mother Sarah Swords is a member of Impact Austin.

"This is a really good opportunity to get started in philanthropy and one day join an organization like Impact Austin in the future," Kalk said. Kalk, 16, attends Westwood High School and lives in Northwest Austin. The concept is similar to Impact Austin. Each member donates \$100. This fall, the

girls will solicit grant applications. Members will evaluate applications during the spring, conduct site visits and by the end of the school year will be give away the grant money.

"The most important thing they will get from the process is learning about the needs in the community," said Lisa Lyons, who serves as a liaison between the Impact Austin board and Girls Giving Grants. "This is part of their education in being a good citizen." The girls are assigned advisors, who can not be mothers of any of the girls, said Rebecca Powers, founder and president of Impact Austin. Rebecca's daughter, Claire, is a found-

ing member of Girls Giving Grants.

"We wanted it to be their money and their choices to make," Powers said.

So far, the girls have developed a logo and are working on a web site for their organization. The process is teaching the girls critical business and life skills, Lyons said.

"They're learning a lot of life lessons and business skills they can take with them as they go to college and into the world," Lyons said. "So often we see things that pull at our hearts. But is it sustainable? They get to dig deeper and look at finances... they get to use their heads and their hearts." The girls attended the

Impact Austin dinner and saw the awards process firsthand.

"It was really a great experience to see how Impact Austin operates and look forward to what we're going to get to do," Kalk said.

The girls are in a pilot phase of their organization. Eventually, they hope to open membership to the Austin community at large, not just daughters of Impact Austin members, Lyons said. "I'd like to encourage anyone who's eligible to join," Kalk said. "When you're young, you start setting your priorities. If you start early to start caring for others, it will be an important part of your lives."

# Grants

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for their XY Zone project.

For 20 years, Communities in Schools has worked to help prevent school dropouts. The organization addresses root causes by providing counseling, crisis intervention work and home visits.

The XY Zone started as a pregnancy prevention program aimed at young men. But the program touched on so many other issues including goal setting, teaching responsibility and academic achievement that it developed into a more comprehensive program for young men, said Eric Metcalf, director of programs for Communities in Schools.

This year, 200 young men were helped by the program. With the Impact Austin grant, the program will expand to include Lanier and Crockett High Schools, benefiting an additional 100 young men.

said. "Impact Austin will continue to reverberate in how they deal with their girlfriends, wives and other women they come into contact with."

Impact Austin is a women's philanthropy organization that has grown from 126 women in its first year, 2004, to 201 members this year. The concept of the organization is simple. To join, each member must donate \$1,000 per year. At the end of the year, members vote on grant recipients.

Rebecca Powers, Impact Austin founder and president, explained that many women who want to make a difference often don't have the time to invest. With Impact Austin, you pay your donation and can choose further involvement with the grant process or simply show up and vote at the end of the year.

Impact Austin aims to add 100 members to the organization every year for five years, eventually awarding \$100,000 grants to five local charities.



PHOTO BY HERC KWAN  
**Communities in Schools (CIS) will help 100 at-risk young men with the Impact Austin grant. From left: Suki Steinhauser of CIS, Karen Frost of Impact Austin, Michael**

al success measures for the program, including sexual abstinence increasing from 48 percent to 77 percent, problems with the law decreasing from 20 percent to under five percent and every participant staying in school.

Powers said the voice mailbox project impacts all parts of society, something that strongly appealed to members. And Powers remarked on the significance of a women's group helping an all male program.

"We understand the value in helping an at-risk group of male adolescents learn how to treat women well, make safe choices and stay in school," Powers

It is such a passion for our women," Powers said. "For me, this is a labor of love, and I never tire of telling our story."

Vuris of the Austin Travis County MHMR said she was extremely impressed with Impact Austin, adding that even without the grant, the process of working with such supportive, professional and enthusiastic women was enrichment enough.

"Impact Austin proves the sum of the whole is great than its parts," Vuris said. "They are so committed and really want to impact Austin. The name could not be more appropriate."

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