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Jun 18, 2006 11:10 pm US/Central

# Cover Story: Impact Austin



**Kim Miller**  
Reporting

(CBS 42) AUSTIN When one thinks of large gifts to charities, it's often in terms of highly publicized gifts by the very wealthy -- by established, rich families or individuals -- very often men.

But there is a group in Austin that's changing the profile of philanthropy.

The group consists of individuals -- women -- who each write a check for \$1,000.

This week's Cover Story is about the giving circle called Impact Austin.

Rebecca Powers read in a magazine one day about a giving circle in Ohio, and in May 2003, she started Impact Austin.

"I knew that I did not personally know a hundred women who could contribute \$1,000," Powers said. "But it was my contention that I knew enough women who knew enough women who knew enough women -- that if we all went looking for them, we could find them."

They found 126 women in the first year, and the group decided \$100,000 would be their minimum grant. Any charity in the community can compete for the grant. Each member of Impact Austin would get one vote, they decided.

The first grant was to Lifeworks Ben and Jerry's to pay salaries for young people learning job skills -- young people who had been homeless or aged-out of the foster care system.

Jasmine Sheppard was one of the original employees.

"When I got into Lifeworks it was really great to meet people who show you they care," Sheppard said. "They are there to be your support network, and

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that if you do have a problem, you can come to them, and they can help you."

Powers tells the story of one of her visits to the Lifeworks Ben and Jerry's when she saw a young man trying very hard to do a good job in his new position.

"To see that determination in a kid who nobody's ever really cared about...

Well, I sent a note to him and said, 'I'm just so proud of how determined you are,'" Powers said. "And he carried it around in his hip pocket... because he didn't know how to read. And so, here he's got this opportunity to better himself."

The XY Zone is a mentoring program for young men that also won a \$100,000 grant from Austin Impact.

The money paid to put licensed social workers on local campuses with XY Zone programs.

LBJ Senior Detren Scales said the program helped him learn "to be a real man, take care of business -- responsibility, and respect, role modeling."

He said the experience was life changing.

"It made a big impact on my life, really. I changed big time," said program participant Daniel Romo. "Like, before, I was always disrespectful, cutting class, then when I joined XY Zone, they showed me different things..."

"They talk about life, what's going on with you, your family, your friends, your girlfriend," explained participant Oscar Valenzuela. "You say, well, I want do this -- go my own way -- they help you find the right path."

The women of Impact Austin are part of a national trend in philanthropy.

Experts say in the next 40 years, more than \$40 trillion will pass from one generation to the next, and since women outlive men by an average of seven years, women will be in charge of millions of charitable donations.

"Women typically give to churches and their families, and not necessarily to the community," Powers said. "So it's important that we educate women on the needs that are in the community."

There are now 324 members of Impact Austin, so this year's grant winners each got a \$108,000 grant. The lucky organizations are Literacy Austin, the Children's Wellness Center, and Emancipet.

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