
"HELPING HOUSTON"

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Partnership with Business Project

Stockbridge High School - Stockbridge, Georgia

Future Business Leaders of America
2017-2018
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Partnership Goals Involving Stockbridge High School’s FBLA Chapter and the City of Houston, Texas

In August of 2017 Hurricane Harvey wreaked havoc on the City of Houston, Texas. Kids were unable to attend school, parents were unable to go to work, and many families could not live in their own homes because of the flooding and wreckage. Over 300,000 homes suffered catastrophic damage. In some areas water covered rooftops of homes and businesses. Stockbridge High School’s FBLA chapter wanted to do something to help, so, we seized the opportunity to deploy business and technology skills in helping ‘s victims salvage essential government documents, like birth certificates, property deeds, driver’s licenses, passports and social security cards. To accomplish these tasks, we contacted the Office of Vice Mayor Pro-Tem Jerry Davis, Houston City Council, District B and forged a partnership with the city of Houston, Texas – the nation’s third largest city.

To be sure our project would qualify under the FBLA heading, “Partnership with Business”, we researched FBLA guidelines to be clear with certainty that the City of Houston is considered a business. It is entrepreneurial and branded as one of the nation’s most populous cities and attracts consumers from around the world as any prosperous business would. In talking with the Vice Mayor’s Office and through our research, our team was assured that Houston is indeed a business – a big business. Therefore, we proceeded with our partnership with the City of Houston, Texas.
Directly following Hurricane Harvey and to this day, we communicated and worked closely with the Vice Mayor’s Director of Community Relations, Bilal Khan and Director of Communications, Diana Caicedo. The Mayor of Houston, the Honorable Sylvester Turner and District B’s State Senator, Borris Miles (District 13), along with Senator Miles’ Assistant, Kathy Daniels were instrumental in helping us comply with the innumerable regulations and political connections necessary when partnering and collaborating with such a large city business entity. Their expertise helped our chapter work out the logistics of assisting the residents in District B and meeting our goals.

This “Partnership with Business” project helped to better serve Houston, Texas’ Vice Mayor Pro-Tem’s and the Mayor’s efforts in restoring and improving communications with the constituency of District B – the most distressed of all the communities in Houston. After the hurricane, people were relocated to shelters, some moved to other areas of the city, and some left the state of Texas altogether. The population of District B is 54% African American and 44% Hispanic. Of that number, 67% are elderly. Forging partnership with the City of Houston opened doors for us and access to any number of city services essential to the success of our mission.

Specifically, the city of Houston collaborated with our FBLA chapter’s assistance with three major projects. We defined our goals and thoroughly discussed: how we would accomplish the needs of the city; what innovative ways could we come up with to accomplish those needs; how we could best exemplify the goals of FBLA as a whole; and address the educational standards of our school district’s initiative of exposing all student to real-life personalized learning.

After the conversations with Vice Mayor Davis’ officers, Bilal Khan and Diana Caicido, we worked out a plan to help the City of Houston with three initiatives and the following goals:

1. Find the un-accounted for, displaced residents of District B.
a.) Stockbridge High School’s FBLA chapter will bring 40 laptops to Houston, Texas to register residents for social media and email accounts;

(2) Use the 40 laptops to retrieve pertinent and important government documents such as drivers’ licenses, banking information, medical records, social security cards, etc.

(3) Expose, introduce and educate the students at Francis Scott Key Middle School to digital technology coding and how to heat press t-shirts so that they can run a profitable, self-sustainable T-shirt printing business with the goal of potentially solving local problems in innovative ways.

Once the goals were set, the next step was to plan how the goals could become sustainable and scale up for the future. The plan was to focus on key areas including alleviating communication disconnects, and economic empowerment. We also sought the guidance from our school principal, Mr. Eric Watson; the District’s Board of Education Representative, Dr. Donna McBride and two of our school system’s Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Aaryn Schmuhl and Dr. Brian Blanton. Mr. Schmuhl is the school system’s Chief Administrator for Teaching and Learning and Dr. Blanton is Chief Administrator for Information Technology.

**Future Activities to Further the Work Started**

From August through December 2017, we met with the administrators and community leaders at our school several times. They listened to our plan wherein we could not only help the people of District B during our 5-day stay with boots on the ground in Houston, but, how we could continue to communicate with the residents once we returned home from Houston. Our plan allowed our work to be sustained and scaled up for the distant future. Through social media, personal contact, word of mouth, and other ways of communicating, our plan would spread the word that our FBLA club helped residents sign up for social media and retrieve lost documents, as well as to help students at Key Middle
Partnership with the City of Houston, Texas  Stockbridge High School, Stockbridge, Georgia

School runs a successful T-shirt business. Francis Scott Key Middle School is an impoverished, 100% Title I school which would create sustainability and scalability for each of the three future activities listed below:

(1) Set up a call center staffed by FBLA members on our school campus operated on a bi-weekly basis. The Vice Mayor would send out “Neighbor Next Door” announcements, robo-calls and use social media. Assistant Superintendent Blanton offered to set the call center up at our school and thought it would be a great way for FBLA to practice alternative use of technology. A customer calling center can provide the Vice Mayor’s office with deep insight on issues embedded in District B that his office might not otherwise be aware of. The center can also help Houston understand its constituents and hence help them and FBLA better serve the customer.

(2) Although the 40 laptops will travel back with our FBLA club, Houston has an IT lab equipped with computers in the Kashmere Multi-Purpose Center. On a bi-weekly basis, our FBLA chapter would continue to educate residents and assist in the retrieval of important documents.

(3) FBLA members introduced Key Middle School to creating their own FBLA chapter. FBLA also started a T-shirt business enterprise with Key Middle School where students from Stockbridge High School instruct the students at Key Middle School on how to heat-press T-shirts. Our club uses Skype visual technology as well as email and postal mail methods. On FBLA meeting days (bi-monthly) we will Skype the middle school students to instruct and observe how they are proceeding.

At the end of our Digital Literacy Event at Key, our FBLA club presented them with a brand-new heat press that was donated by one our sponsors so that they could continue their work for many years to come. These
activities changed the young students’ lives by introducing them to technology and a self-sustainable business idea. We hope their t-shirt business will address the social issues and stigma of being a 100% Title I school and empower and challenge the students in creative ways. We hope they will earn profits and manage their business in such a way as to positively impact the community while solving problems in innovative ways. Hopefully their minds will be opened so they will think about being business leaders themselves in the future. Our mentorship through Skype, expectantly, will keep the student excited about the possibilities ahead. Already the students have created a “T-Shirt club” that meets Monday through Thursday from 3:00pm – 5:00pm.

**Responsibilities of the Business and Chapter Leaders**

While in Houston, many businesses assisted us in achieving our goals. The Partnership with Houston was widely recognized and publicized by City Officials. Many businesses, contacted our team wanting to help the City of Houston help us achieve our goals. The team was aided by businesses and individuals including, but not limited to: the Stewart Foundation, Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), Mayor Sylvester Turner, Southwest Airlines, Vice Mayor Pro-Tem, Jerry Davis, Ms. Thelma Johnson (Shell Oil), Frenchy’s Chicken, Mary Praxiteles, Senator Boris Miles – District 13 and Kathy Daniels, J & J Restaurant, Debra Bateman, Reggae Hut Caribbean Restaurant, Bilal Khan, Joyce Owens (Owens Management, LLC), Diana Caicedo, Annette Edwards, the Double-Tree Hotel and many more. Without these businesses and individuals, the project would not have been possible. They helped with things such as food, transportation, housing, logistics and old-fashioned kindness. They made the overall trip wonderful for teenagers who basically had never done anything so grand.

Another person who was a huge help was Dr. Donna McBride. She is on our school system’s Board of Education and helped connect us to many of the businesses. For example, Dr. McBride initially
connected us to Hank Stewart of the Stewart Foundation, who connected us to Thelma Johnson (Shell Oil), who knew the Vice Mayor Pro-Tem, Jerry Davis, who conferenced called our adviser, Dr. Atkinson. Mrs. Annette Edwards, another Henry County Board of Education member also rolled up her sleeves to be of great help.

Dr. Joyce Elliot Atkinson is the advisor of our FBLA chapter and one of the main persons who reminded us to stay focused and believe that we could manage this project, contact important people, solicit donors, and build a network of vendors who could help make our vision come true. She took on the role of guide on the side, assuring us that the decisions we made were appropriate and within the guidelines of the school system and FBLA. In addition, Dr. Atkinson got us connected to Southwest Airlines who donated sixteen airline tickets and enabled us to save money for other tasks.

Jaidi Dubose and Elleese Sutton, co-chair, worked tirelessly with the executive team to manage our operation. Our FBLA chapter pulled together and worked countless hours in and out of the classroom to work out every detail of the trip. While our co-chair and executive team provided information, and answered questions about the trip, our chapter stayed well informed. Our student accountant, GaDore Butts, was especially dutiful and kept up with all donations, expenditures and our bottom line.

Dr. Donna McBride connected with vendors and top-quality restaurants who provide us with free food every day. With all the help we received, we are most grateful for the people who played a role helping us get there. Further, UBS bank provided personalized portfolios to help residents keep up with personal documents such as wills, deeds, and accounts, etc. Upon arrival to Houston, the DoubleTree Hotel gave us reduced rates that included a daily, excellent breakfast. Houston also treated our group to a free visit to the Houston Zoo.
Mayor Sylvester Turner held a press conference and photo op with the team. A land developer, Ms. Joyce Owens of Owens Management System, help finance some of our trip with a surprise $500 VISA card. These businesses were a huge help in our goal of “Helping Houston”, which was an amazing partner.

Planning, Development and Implementation of the Project

Following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, Houston could not locate and/or contact many of the 200,000 residents in District B, the poorest and most underserved district in all of Houston. It includes more than its share of overgrown grass, abandoned houses and illegal dumpsites. Grocery stores are rare. Jobs are hard to come by and less than a third of the district's adult residents have high school diplomas. Sixty-seven percent of the residents are elderly and are not computer or technologically literate. The medium income is under $12,000 annually. As the rest of Houston thrives, District B’s needs stand out even more sharply. As the team drove around, we were baffled and shocked to see how few drainage sewers were available. This helped us better understand how that part of the city suffered so much damage; the water had no place to go but up. We also better understood how critical our role would be in helping the city locate residents so that they could be aware of city, state, and federal services available to them.

Meanwhile, our FBLA club wanted to do something to help. As FBLA members, our job was to implement one of the FBLA goals which is to “Develop character, prepare for useful citizenship, and foster patriotism.” After establishing a partnership with the Vice Mayor’s Pro-Tem’s office, one of his main concerns was to sign people up on social media such as Twitter or Facebook, etc. and to get
residents to create an email account. This was so that the city could be sure that essential services and help could reach the people. To this end, we looked for ways to help District B residents communicate with their loved ones. We understood the recovery for the residents would go long past the initial impact of the storm – for months and years to come.

Therefore, we traveled to Houston three months later - after Hurricane Harvey- to set up a Digital Literacy Event to help citizens communicate with their loved ones and receive help. In the process of developing the “Helping Houston” project, one of the goals was to find a way for the citizens of Houston to communicate with loved ones, recover the documents lost in the flood and sign up for email and social media accounts so that they could be informed of essential services and benefits rolled out by Houston.

While researching how to help, we discovered that without proper documents, citizens are ineligible for FEMA or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA’s mission is to support citizens and first responders to nation, work together locally and as a nation to build, sustain, and improve the team’s capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. In District B, 44% of the citizens are Hispanic, 56% are African-American, and 67% of the total number of residents are elderly. Over 200,000 residents live in District B. Huge numbers of District B residents could not apply for FEMA because their records were lost in the flood. To solve the problems that Houston faced, with the assistance of our Board of Education personnel, the team developed a process to digitally connect the 40 laptops loaned to us, to the needs of the citizens over 790 miles away from our school.
Planning Activities Put Into Action When Arriving in Houston

Our planning steps are as follows:

“I can” goals

I can help the elderly set up an E-mail and/or Facebook.
I can help students become entrepreneurs.
I can teach the students on how to make a game by coding.
I can help the hurricane victims recover lost documents.
I can show students how to print graphic images on T-shirts.
I can help students create a business of their own that is sustainable and scalable for the future.

(1) January 4, 2018 at 2:00 - set up of convention pull-up poster stands as well as logistic of computer stations.

(2) Test run of wall projector that will display numbers so that residents can be served in numerical order.

(3) Set up a room so that we can have lunch away from our workstations and the public. We will eat lunch in shifts.

(4) Can log into Wi-Fi. Chromebooks are set-up on our main computer, once plugged in and connected, will allow all the Chromebooks to be able to print to our main printer.

(5) Serve the citizens on Friday and Saturday from 9:00am until 4:00pm

(6) We will not need to leave the computers at the facility, however, we would like to leave our pull-up posters and printer in place over night.
(7) We would like a “waiting room type set up” very similar to how the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is run.

(8) Our greeters will hand the residents clipboards where they can check off whatever services they may need.

(9) If residents do not have an email, the first step will be to sign up for a g-mail account which will allow them to have an electronic place to house their documents.

(10) Set up a digital literacy event at Francis Scott Key Middle School. We divided ourselves, and the middle school scholars, into three groups. The students were then able to rotate through the various training groups.

a. One group of students taught the children how to create and code a simple game.

b. The second group of students taught the children how to heat press Tee shirts.

c. The third group taught how to write a simple business plan and the day-to-day operations of a business.
Evidence of Publicity Received

During the development of the team’s project, we received recognition from Southwest Airlines. They generously donated 16 free tickets as a courtesy from their company for our project.

The partnership with the city of Houston had, in such an effective way, recognized FBLA and the motives for traveling all the way from Atlanta. From the very beginning, the city greeted us with warm hospitality and showed appreciation for conducting the service of assisting residents of District B.

The first day we arrived, we traveled to the City Hall of Houston and were treated to a press conference with the Mayor of Houston, the Honorable, Sylvester Turner. The team met with the Mayor, his Director of Council Relations, Mr. William-Paul Thomas, and the Director of Communications for the Vice Mayor Pro-Tem, Mr. Bilal Khan and Jerry V. Davis, Vice Mayor Pro-Tem, Representative Councilman for District B.

The City officials were not the only ones to recognize us within City Hall. On our visit to Francis Scott Key Middle School, members of the Board of Education for District B greeted us and showed their appreciation for our visit to the school. Key Middle School showed their appreciation for our visit with gifts of backpacks filled with useful school items.
Our project made front page news in The Henry Neighbor and on the Stockbridge High School Homepage. Of even greater pride, Houston recognized January 8, 2018 as Stockbridge High School Day. The Proclamation was signed with Jerry V. Davis, Vice Mayor Pro-Tem, District B, Houston, Texas. Each FBLA team member also received their own personalized proclamation.

Take a look at the video of our partnership with Houston. It was produced by Edwin “Alex” Garcia (right front row above). VIDEO: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WW_T8gRtJohVdx33B3tJm8k0DF_FsPMF/view
Benefits and Concepts Learned from the Project and the Degree of Impact on the City of Houston and Stockbridge High School’s FBLA

Many people in Houston, Texas (including a large percentage of African Americans and 44% Hispanic) because they do not understand how to use a computer or have access to one to fill out forms to receive help are sadly living in mold-infested houses. This project in Houston made a huge impact on the citizens in District B. Over 250 of the citizens were aided during the team’s stay in Houston. Some of the District B residents that received our assistance shared with us that they felt blessed they were that we came. The goal was to help the community get online so that they could receive help. The plan was to help the people of Houston and we stuck with that plan. The students learned that helping others was a life-changing experience and many of the students were encouraged to help others in their own community. Others were proud of how well all their hard work paid off. At the end of our trip, the impact that we brought to people was tremendous and empowering because, we, as students, handled the entire project. We felt like we could do anything we set our mind to do, and that infinite possibilities exist once we are focused on a goal.

Concepts Learned from the Partnership

1.) Helping others is a great experience. It is a social responsibility of all people, not only individuals but for corporate giants as well.

2.) If people are not coming to you then you go to them. When people go through devastation they may or may not trust what has been put in place – especially when they have been denied help.

3.) It is important to connect with people, reach out to them, and with caution and wisdom, offer help.

4.) Hard work pays off.
We also learned that we had a general understanding of how bad the devastation was and how the local neighborhoods needed serious repairing. Listening to victims situation from victims of the hurricane when they came to retrieve their lost information helped us understand even more about life. A quote from one of the students is, “If I only had one word to describe my experience, it would be gratitude. The immense feeling of helping someone and expecting nothing in return will live with me forever. It encourages me to continue to give back... I am more than thankful for the opportunity...” Jaidi Dubose, Co-Chair.

**Evaluation of the Project**

The team’s work in Houston made a huge impact on the people there and on our team. Two Hundred fifty + citizens were helped. Many people did not come out to the workshop at first, so we took the initiative to go out in the community and tell people what we were doing. At the end of our trip, the impact that we brought to people was incredible. Our FBLA team handled the entire project and our goal of helping the community get online so that they can receive help was met. We have put in place a means of continuing that plan since leaving Houston. We learned that helping others is life changing and many team members were encouraged to help others. We are proud of how well all our hard work paid off. We are also proud of the young students at Francis Scott Key Middle School who have decided to continue their T-shirt business so that they can practice business leadership as entrepreneurs with a self-sustainable business. It is our hope that their business will impact their community, empower the disadvantaged and have the potential to solve local problems in innovative ways. It is also our hope their venture will turn into a way for the students to earn money for whatever they made need.