

100+ Women salute ICAN with major donation

BY ANGIE RAMIREZ
Contributor

Families living on incomes below the federal poverty level can be subjected to negative influences that can have immediate and life-long effects for their children.

These influences include gang activity, substance abuse, food insecurity and inadequate access to health care. Youth in these families often struggle in school and lack opportunities to develop life skills to overcome these challenges.

For these families, community programs that offer free support and opportunities can be life changing.

ICAN: Positive Programs for Youth serves these low-income families in Mesa and Chandler, offering a nationally recognized youth development program.

It provides youth with a powerful combination of life skills training, literacy and homework support, STEAM education, recreation, social-emotional learning, and workforce development opportunities.

ICAN provides free programming for youth ages 5 through 18 after-school during the school year and full days during summer and breaks.

For parents struggling to make ends meet and to afford basic needs such as food, housing, and health care, having access to free after-school and summer programming for their children can be a dream come true.

ICAN believes every child and family should have access to after-school (out-of-school) programming; therefore, they prioritize schools where the need is highest.

Their approach ensures all youth, regardless of where they live or their family income levels, can access quality enrichment, academic support, career exploration, and positive role models.

ICAN staff facilitates program activities rooted in 21st century learning skills critical for success, which consists of:

Learning skills. Youth learn skills such as collaboration and communications.

Literacy skills. Youth get reading, math, and STEAM enrichment as well as education support, such as homework help.

Life skills. Students learn skills to help them make better life choices.

Additionally, youth in their program are given age-appropriate career skills and development resources to help them succeed in the future, beginning in kindergarten.

ICAN was twice named "Outstanding After School Program" by the Arizona Center for After School Excellence and was recognized as a top summer camp nationwide by the National Summer Learning Association in 2022.

The ICAN program runs Monday through Friday year-round. It provides free transportation to the ICAN main site and picks up from area schools, providing daily snacks and dinner.

Participants must attend programs at least three days per week and parents are required to attend an orientation.

ICAN serves over 560 East Valley youth at its three Chandler sites and two Mesa sites and over 85% are minority populations, primarily Hispanic.

Over 85% of enrolled families report incomes below the federal poverty level and 82% of parents say access to ICAN's program had a positive impact on family finances and have seen a positive impact on their child's social-emotional development over the past quarter.

In August, ICAN was chosen to receive a quarterly donation from the East Valley members of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun.

The group of women meets quarterly to learn about local nonprofits, then votes on which organization will receive their quarterly donation.

Each member donates \$100 to the chosen charity. 100+ WWC has donated over \$1 million since its inception.

It donated \$11,250 to ICAN this quarter. Upon receipt of this donation, CEO Shelby Pederson stated, "We are so



Celebrating the generosity of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun to toward ICAN: Positive Programs for Youth are, front left: Erica Lizarraga, Kara Medlock, Nicole Szymkowski, Katherine Katz, Crissy Haidos and Rachel Williams. (Special to SanTan Sun News)

thrilled to be the recipients of the 100+ Women Who Care giving circle! Our out-of-school programs are growing quickly, and these donations will help allow us to engage more youth!"

100+ WWC East Valley meets at the Fo-

rum Event Complex at 2301 S Stearman Drive, Chandler, each quarter. Its fourth quarter giving circle will be held at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 23.

Learn more: 100wwcvalleyofthesun.org and icanaz.org. 

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