



The S.O.C.I.A.L. Club was established through a grant from the Caroline Gose Memorial Fund through the Alamo Heights School Foundation

Club goes past cliques

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No one is left outside the circle at the biweekly meetings of the Alamo Heights High School SOCIAL Club. The plastic chairs are pushed back to make room for the latecomers and the hesitant. The students who rode in on the bus sit next to those who drove Range Rovers.

"Last year I never would have talked to these people," said junior Mariah Luna.

Last year Luna spent most of her time with the JROTC club. Now she proudly wears the T-shirt advertising a dance the SOCIAL Club hosted, and she talks to everyone.

Seniors Becca Katz and Ali Gwin started the club as a way to do something different with their last year at the school and to honor graduate Caroline Gose, who died in a car accident in 2004. Katz explained that they were tired of the same students always being involved with the service clubs and wanted something that would reach a broader audience.

"We have grown up with the Student Council being all the same people," Katz said. "We wanted to get more involved."

The year-old club's name stands for Serving Our Community In Acts of Love and has the goal of broaching the stagnation of the school's cliques by organizing activities that extend outside the high school. Besides the dance, the members have gathered teddy bears and served food at a shelter and are organizing a food drive.

Gose graduated in 2003 and was known for making friends with those who felt ostracized.

Lauren Walch, an algebra teacher at the school and one of the club's sponsors, graduated with Gose and does not stop smiling when she thinks of her.

SOCIAL CLUB FOOD DRIVE

Who: The Alamo Heights High School SOCIAL Club is sponsoring the drive.

What: Students will go door to door in the neighborhood to the west of the school collecting donations. The San Antonio Food Bank will have a truck at the school for those wishing to drop off nonperishable food items.

When: 10 a.m. to noon, April 19

Why: The summer puts the most strain on food banks in San Antonio, and the nonprofit organization needs to stock up now for the demand.

In 2002, Walch transferred to Alamo Heights as a senior. She remembers walking the halls feeling ignored because everyone had already made friends.

"All schools have their cliques," she said. "But I feel it's a little more extreme at Alamo Heights."

For Walch's birthday, Gose left a card on her desk. It was one of the first acts of kindness Walch had received at the school from a student. The two became friends.

"I don't know how she knew it was my birthday," she said. "That card mattered so much to me."

At a high school where 96 percent of the graduating class is college bound, there is acute awareness that serving the community will be a bonus for college applications, and the club meetings consistently draw 30 students, Katz said.



(Gloria Ferniz/Express-News)

But Katz believes there is more going on than resume building. At the shelter, the students came back shocked at how polite those they were serving were and that many were younger than them.

Robin Luna paints posters for the Alamo Heights High School SOCIAL Club food drive. The year-old club honors graduate Caroline Gose, who died in a car accident in 2004.

For Luna, it's all part of the fun. When she sees club members in the hall she will now go up and talk to them.

"You don't expect people to come up to you and accept you automatically," she said.

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