

Bank of America donates total of \$400,000 to 2 Austin nonprofits

By Emily Glazer

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Bank of America Charitable Foundation announced that two Austin nonprofits, College Forward and Community Partnership for the Homeless Inc., will be awarded \$200,000 in unrestricted grants as part of its Neighborhood Excellence Initiative.

The foundation also awarded five community leaders \$5,000 to give to a charity of their choice and recognized five area high school students for their contributions to the community.

The grants allow the nonprofits to use the money however they see fit, said Nikki Salzillo, market development manager for Bank of America in Austin and San Antonio.

"It gives them a little more freedom," she said. "We really feel we're making an investment in these nonprofits."

About 35 organizations applied for the grants, Salzillo said.

College Forward works with a targeted group of young people to ensure they make it to college. The nonprofit has served 902 students in seven high schools across three coun-

ties in Central Texas, said Lisa Fielder, executive director of College Forward.

"My hope is that we can give this money to serve more students," she said.

Frank Fernandez, executive director of Community Partnership for the Homeless, said the nonprofit will invest the money in its staff, information technology and programming to bring the organization "to the next level."

"The best thing about these funds is that they are unrestricted," he said. "So much of the money we receive is tied to specific uses so you (usually)

don't have a lot of flexibility."

About 30 adults and about 60 students applied to the Neighborhood Excellence Initiative in Austin, and the 10 people honored are volunteers at a variety of charities. The adults are: David Garcia, who volunteers with the Hispanic Scholarship Consortium; Jim Perry, who volunteers with Foundation Communities' Community Tax Center; Dick

Rathgeber, who volunteers with groups that serve children and low-income people; Kenneth Snyder, who fights for basic services on behalf of his low-income neighbors in Northridge Acres; and Allen Weeks, president of the St. Johns Neighborhood Association.

The student leaders are Ashley Rogers, Michelle Walters and Alejandro "Alex" Canepa

of Austin; Christina Simpson of Georgetown; and Amber Makhani of Round Rock.

"These people were really chosen because of the selfless nature of the volunteer work they're doing," Salzillo said.

This is the third year of the initiative in Austin.

So far, the bank has committed \$1.2 million in the Austin area.

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