

DESIGN FOR ALL

**CREATING PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND
SPACES TO ACCOMMODATE ALL RESIDENTS**



CHINO TEENS POWER IN ACTION

By Daniel Koster, City of Chino

In the City of Chino, civic engagement doesn't just happen in council chambers—it starts with the passionate voices of the city's youth. These youth voices are exercised through the Teen Advisory Committee (TAC), which is a dynamic volunteer program for middle and high schoolers that serves as a launchpad for leadership, creativity, and real-world impact. TAC's bylaws state that the purpose of TAC is "to provide vital input on teen issues, while promoting greater involvement of youth in the community and municipal government." Not only do the TAC members fulfill this obligation, but they also go above and beyond to shape city events and build meaningful connections within their community.

These young leaders are responsible for three service projects throughout the year. To promote these projects, they rely on their innovative use of social media. Social media is one of TAC's most powerful tools, and they know how to use it. The very first Instagram reel that the City of Chino ever posted was created by TAC members. The current members continue to utilize social media, bringing a peer-to-peer authenticity that resonates with the Chino community.

Among these leaders are Ximenia Tapia Lugo, Jazzlyn Sanchez, Flor Hernandez, and Karisia Rojas—four standout TAC members who have helped define what it means to serve with heart, purpose, and innovation.

For Ximenia, the journey began with curiosity and a drive to do more. "I saw what TAC was about and wanted to be part of the community," said Ximenia. "I want to work in city

council one day and help people. You gain real skills—you influence other teenagers in the community to do good things."

Jazzlyn's entry into TAC was sparked by a single video she saw on Instagram. "I saw a reel about TAC and thought, 'That looks cool!'" she said. "It's a great way to get more involved with my community. I love to volunteer and be part of something bigger."

Karisia shared that she was inspired after seeing TAC members in action at a community event. "I like volunteering and learning new social skills," she said. "It's filled my schedule in the best way, and I've made amazing friends. TAC gives you opportunities you wouldn't get at home or school—helping people you might never meet otherwise."

And for Flor, the personal connections are what made it all



stick. "What kept me going was the friends I made here," she said. "Why wouldn't I show up when I love being around these people?"

At its core, TAC is about belonging—a space where teens from diverse backgrounds feel seen, heard, and valued. "It's not just volunteering—it's a hangout too," said Ximenia. "We build bonds that go beyond events."

With every event, social media post and service project, TAC participants gain more than service hours—they



develop professional skills that aren't always taught in school. "You don't fear adults as much anymore," said Flor. "You talk to people of all ages," added Karisia. "School can be a bubble. TAC broadens your perspective."

Working alongside city staff and volunteers, teens learn how to adapt and collaborate in a professional environment. "You learn how to push yourself to help others and make real friendships," said Ximenia. "You see the impact of your work face-to-face—it's not just a title or donation."

The teens' social media skills came in extra handy for one of this year's service projects, a Halloween clothing donation drive. "We realized there was a need for costumes, for both children and adults," said Karisia.

They got to work creating a reel, promoting the donation drive. It worked wonders, netting them over 90 costumes to provide to families in need. Reflecting on the experience, Jazzlyn said, "Our social media campaign was fun and interactive—that's why it worked." Ximenia added, "We influence other teens by sharing what we're doing. Social media helps spread the word fast."

Flor also saw the power of digital outreach when she starred in the city's Fourth of July Fireworks safety campaign. "During the fireworks campaign, I got to speak on something serious," she said. "I felt like people might actually listen."

Their ideas are fresh, creative, and rooted in lived experience. When asked about future reels, they had plenty of ideas. "A day-in-the-life, volunteering, grabbing Starbucks, then volunteering again," suggested Karisia. "It's fun and shows our bond."

And they know what makes content stand out. "Reels need to get straight to the point—teens have short attention spans," said Ximenia. "Bold text and transitions really catch our eye." Behind every reel, post, and comment is a deeper mission: inspiring the next generation of changemakers.

For the teens, TAC is also a springboard to bigger things. Jazzlyn credits TAC with helping her gain admission to UC Santa Barbara, where she plans to continue volunteering and staying connected to her community. "I wrote about TAC in my college essays," she said.

"It opened doors and introduced me to people I wouldn't have met otherwise. I can't wait to come back to Chino and see how everyone's grown."

Ximenia's accomplishments speak volumes about the power of early civic engagement. A future political science major at UC Berkeley, she's already secured a summer internship with Congresswoman Norma Torres and plans to serve her hometown in government one day. "I'll volunteer through College Corps and hope to return to Chino to work in local government," she said. The College Corps program gives students the opportunity to get hands-on experience serving their communities through work in public and non-profit sectors, perfect for a civic minded student.

Flor was able to build up her confidence, stating, "I used to be nervous, now I can talk to a whole class!" Karisia had a similar experience, stating, "TAC showed me there's more to learn beyond school. I've grown so much." She added that "it has also helped my job applications." ■

