

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation Announces \$200,000 Grant  
to CommUNITY En Acción Young Achievers Forum*****Investment supports longstanding program that encourages middle school  
students and their families to set their sights on postsecondary education***

**EL PASO, TX** – Today, the [Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation](#), announced a \$200,000 grant to CommUNITY En Acción (CEA), an El Paso nonprofit dedicated to advancing the economic, civic, and social well-being of Latinos. The funds support CEA's Young Achievers Forum (YAF), an annual event designed to encourage middle schoolers to pursue postsecondary education and to help them and their families better understand how they can attain a college degree or certificate.

YAF invites middle school students and their families to the campus of their local university. Over the course of a full day, students get to explore possible courses of study and learn what life is like on campus. At the same time, parents and guardians learn how to help their child's higher education aspirations become a reality.

"CommUNITY En Acción is committed to supporting young El Pasoans and Southern New Mexicans on their journeys to educational and career success," said Anna Alemán, Executive Director of CEA. "We are incredibly grateful to the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation for believing in that mission and helping make it possible."

More than 9,000 middle school students from El Paso and Southern New Mexico have participated in YAF since it launched in 2011. Past surveys show that for about a third of participants, YAF marks their first time ever on a college campus, and that before attending YAF, only half of participating students had considered pursuing a postsecondary education. By the end of the day, nearly every student reports that YAF has motivated them to attend college.

"We are very grateful to the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation for their generous gift. This gift will enable us to greatly scale our initiative. We will be able to pursue and implement strategies that will allow us to reach a far greater number of youth in our communities, said Raymond Palacios, CEO of Bravo Auto Group and Cadillac and founder of YAF.

“Exposing students and their families to the career opportunities that higher education can unlock for them is important because it instills a notion that college is possible for them and that together they can make it a reality,” said Woody L. Hunt, Chairman of the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation. “Our foundation has always believed that investing in the education of our students and helping them pursue a college education is how we build a strong and sustainable region, and we’re proud to support the Young Achievers Forum for their work to introduce the idea of college to families across El Paso.”

The 11th annual YAF was held on Saturday, October 21, at the University of Texas at El Paso. The event featured speakers that emphasized the benefits of determination and hard work and programming that illustrated both the importance and the attainability of a college degree. 650 students from YISD and EPISD schools in the El Paso region attended the event.

150 parents and guardians also attended the event. They attended information sessions, offered in both English and Spanish, that aimed to demystify the process of applying to university, enrolling in a course of study, and paying for it. Past surveys find parents and guardians virtually unanimous in their belief that YAF prepares them to better help their children address common challenges in the pursuit of higher education.

Since its launch in 2011, approximately 9,000 middle school students and their families have benefited from the YAF program.

For more information on CEA or YAF, please contact Anna Alemán 915-667-8932 or at [aaleman@communityenaccion.org](mailto:aaleman@communityenaccion.org).

For media inquiries regarding the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation, please contact Laura Rodriguez at 915-209-2230 or [media@huntfamilyfoundation.com](mailto:media@huntfamilyfoundation.com).

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### **About CommUNITY En Acción**

The purpose of CommUNITY En Acción is to instill Latino/a pride, unity and leadership and have a positive impact on the El Paso region by engaging in “value-driven” initiatives through a cohesive network of Latino/a community leaders.

### **About Young Achievers Forum**

The Young Achievers Forum is a region-wide event that gives at-risk students and their parents the college experience for a day to introduce post-secondary education to families who may not otherwise have exposure.

**About Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation:**

The Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation is one of the Borderplex's private family foundations focused on creating a globally competitive region. As of September 2023, it has made grants and commitments of over \$152.6 million to institutions working to transform education, improve healthcare, advance regional economic and cultural development, and create a greater quality of life for all Borderplex residents. Almost 89% of the Foundation's total giving has supported organizations and initiatives in the Borderplex region.