

# The TXPOST 80 Percent Spotlight

The Lemonade Circle mentors young women of color in San Antonio to foster leadership, community engagement, and self-confidence

Classrooms are not the only places that kids learn, and academic learning is only part of the whole child development needed to help youth discover the interests and talents that lead to success in the classroom, career, and beyond. More than 80% of Texas students' time is spent learning outside of school. High-quality out of school time (OST), which includes afterschool, summer, and enrichment programs, provides hands-on learning opportunities that help kids develop critical life skills as well as nurturing mentor and peer relationships that accelerate academic learning and prepare youth for their futures.

Out of school time is a critical component of the functioning ecosystem of support necessary for whole child development and whole communities. Community-based providers have become an essential part of that ecosystem, offering in-person care and learning while also connecting families to critical services and resources, such as food, technology, and physical and mental healthcare. Strong partnerships between districts, schools, local leaders, and these community-based organizations are vital to our state's successful recovery and future.

Since 2017, [The Lemonade Circle](#) has been dedicated to empowering young women of color in San Antonio. Founded by CEO Brandi Coleman, the organization works to uplift and mentor girls from fifth grade through high school, fostering leadership, community engagement, and self-confidence.

Central to The Lemonade Circle's approach are its five "Empowerment Circles" – Identity & Wellness, Literacy & Arts, STEM, College & Career, and Civic Engagement. These circles provide safe spaces for exploration, skill building, and connection, cultivating confidence to turn life's challenges into growth opportunities. The program hosts events and activities, with each Empowerment Circle offering 3-4 specialized events annually. Programming is tailored to each circle, and, from mental health workshops to STEM exhibitions to literary discussions to career panels, the events immerse young women in enriching, hands-on experiences led by passionate experts and mentors. This model allows the girls to engage with the areas most relevant to their needs and interests.

The Lemonade Circle stems from Coleman's personal experiences and the impact of mentorship programs on her life. She wanted to provide similar support and guidance to young women. Beginning with a group of five sixth-grade girls, Coleman worked to broaden their horizons through outings to cultural institutions like the ballet and museums. As word spread of the program's positive impact, demand surged and led to its expansion and evolution into a comprehensive out of school time initiative now serving over 100 girls from 35 campuses.



## make LEMONADE

The Lemonade Circle's mission is to empower young women of color to make LEMONADE out of life's challenges.

- L**ead by example
- E**xcel beyond the status quo
- M**entor our sisters behind us
- O**vercome adversity
- N**etwork with the community
- A**ffect change within ourselves
- D**iscover the power of one
- E**xplore the world around us



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TEXAS PARTNERSHIP FOR OUT OF SCHOOL TIME



Understanding the importance of mental health and social-emotional development, The Lemonade Circle creates an environment where young women can develop self-love, emotional intelligence, and resilience and embrace their authentic selves amidst life's pressures. The Identity & Wellness Circle addresses this through workshops, counseling sessions, and activities like hiking, gardening, and artistic expression, allowing girls to develop healthy coping mechanisms and build mind-body connections.

The Lemonade Circle deepened its commitment to mental health and civic engagement when it launched the Mental Health Boxes initiative. Crafted to promote students' emotional well-being, each box contains carefully curated resources, including self-care items, mindfulness exercises, and coping strategies. Program participants prepare and share these boxes with local schools, with an aim to foster resilience and empower their peers to navigate the complexities of their emotions. This and other community outreach initiatives reflect the organization's commitment to service learning and holistic support, ensuring that young women have access to resources that promote their wellness.

Coleman emphasizes that prioritizing presence and building genuine relationships is also key to positive youth development. She believes that young people need caring adults who will listen to them and create space for them to be themselves. "When we focus on building relationships, the rest—academic support, enrichment, etc.—flows more naturally."

The impact of The Lemonade Circle extends far beyond its events and activities. Recent graduating cohorts have collectively received over \$1 million in college scholarships annually, paving the way to higher education and future success. Moreover, the program's young women are emerging as influential leaders and change-makers in their communities.

At its core, The Lemonade Circle exemplifies the power of nurturing environments, capacity-building opportunities, and belief in one's potential. The organization is breaking down barriers and ensuring that every young woman of color has the opportunity to thrive. Coleman insists, "It's about more than just youth development—it's about empowering these girls, engaging with our communities, and creating opportunities for growth and success."



## By The Numbers

**Youth Served:** 100 girls from 35 campuses

**Grades Served:** 5–12 and beyond

### Donations to the community:

- 200 hygiene care bags
- 200 children's books
- 300 mental health boxes
- \$2,000 worth of Black hair care products

### Scholarships earned:

- 2022 graduating cohort: \$1.4 million
- 2023 graduating cohort: \$1.2 million
- 2024 graduating cohort: \$1 million and growing



*“Any room that I walk in, I feel secure in myself. I don’t shy away. The Lemonade Circle played a big part in that because it exposed me to spaces and situations where I had to carry myself professionally from a young age. I’m extremely thankful because it’s something I will continue to use for the rest of my life.”*

–Fatimah Rasul, The Lemonade Circle alumna



The Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) is a statewide intermediary whose mission is to convene, educate, and advocate to improve the quality and increase the availability of out of school time (OST) opportunities, like those offered by The Lemonade Circle, for Texas youth. TXPOST works in partnership with vital local and regional organizations, which invest deeply in their own communities to offer professional development opportunities, engage in system-building work, advocate for the OST field, and support local programs.

## Contact Information

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