Make Your Voice Count
A Story of Student Leadership

Matias Rodriguez

BEFORE YOU READ: Learn some new words:

- Council: a group of people who come together to make decisions. They might be elected or chosen.
- Councilor: a person who serves on the council.
- PowerPoint: a software program that you use on the computer to design slideshow presentations. You can add pictures, videos, and text to communicate your message.
- Petition: a request or a demand. Often, many people will sign a petition to make it more powerful.

We Noticed a Student Missing in Class

Our night classes run from 5:30 pm until 8:30 pm. Most students attend classes at night because of their busy work schedules. One evening, a student leader named Francine Raymond was in her math class. She noticed that another student was missing a lot of classes.

We Found Out What was Wrong

When her classmate returned a few weeks later, Francine asked if everything was okay. The student explained that she got in a bike accident on her way home from school. (She has to ride her bike because the last bus leaves before her class is over.) She was hit by a car, and she got a head injury. Francine was sad to hear this terrible news. She asked, "If the bus ran later, would you take the bus instead of your bike?"

"Of course," she replied.

At the next Student Leadership Council meeting, everyone said they felt bad about what happened to the student. The members wanted to do something to make it safe for students to travel to and from school.

More Problems

While we talked, two other students came forward with other problems. One of them said that the bus stop across from the school had no shelter. While waiting for the bus, people have no protection from the sun or rain. (In Tucson, it can be very hot, and there are also heavy rains in the rainy season.) Another student came forward and said that there were no lights at another stop. She did not like waiting for the bus in the dark. She felt unsafe.

We Did Something About It

We decided to contact our city councilor. Her name is Regina Romero. We prepared for the meeting by practicing our public speaking. And we learned how to present information with PowerPoint.

At the meeting, we presented the concerns of the students. Ms. Romero was happy to learn

about what we had done. We got her support and the support of other city officials.

Now we have one new bus stop and lights at two bus stops! There is still more work to be done. The bus route hours are still too short. We started a petition, and the Student Leadership Council will continue to work on this issue. I'm so proud to be part of this project. It not only helps the community now, but will also help generations to come!

Matias Rodriguez was born in Tucson and is a GED student at the El Rio Learning Center of Pima Community College. He is an Ambassador for Adult Education and an AmeriCorps and Student Leadership Council member. He assists the Civics and Student Leadership Team and is also a representative for Pima Community College's Inter Campus Council (ICC). This article was originally published in Issue #43, "Transportation."

AFTER YOU READ: Matias and others on the Student Leadership Council organized themselves and others to make a change. Look back at the text. In the box below, write a list of the steps they took. This is called "organizing." Study the image in the box below. What does it say about organizing?

Thanks to the organizing work of student leaders at the El Rio Learning Center in Tucson, AZ, the city added this bus shelter to the bus stop across the street from their school. They are still fighting for a bus schedule that better meets students' needs.

Steps for Organizing

List the steps that Matias and the other students took to organize for better transportation:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

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