

San Jose 10th Grader Hugs Her Way to Award

Crystal Carmona, a Girls For A Change Girl Action Team Member at San Jose High Academy, earns recognition as America Learns' "January 2009 America Learns Network Superstar"

Santa Clara, CA ([PRWeb](#)) January 15, 2009 -- Crystal Carmona, a San Jose High Academy tenth grader, was recognized today by America Learns as the organization's January 2009 America Learns Network Superstar. America Learns Network Superstars are celebrated monthly for creating innovative strategies that help volunteer-driven tutoring, mentoring and leadership development programs excel.

Carmona came to be recognized by America Learns through her participation with San Jose High Academy's Girls For A Change Girl Action Team. Girls For A Change is a national nonprofit organization based in Silicon Valley that empowers thousands of teen girls to create and lead social change. The organization uses the Web-based America Learns Network to track the progress of and provide ongoing guidance and support to its volunteer Girl Action Team coaches.

The Strategy

Last month, Carmona's team members found themselves with emotions running high. One of her team's girl participants and one of the team's coaches were leaving the close-knit group. Typical forms of saying goodbye weren't cutting it. Carmona recommended "Burrito Hugging" to the group, an activity that she and some of her Girls For A Change peers developed several years back.

Burrito Hugging involves lining up a team's members in single file order and holding hands. The person who is leaving stands still at one end of the line while the remaining team members wrap around her (still holding hands) into one tight hug. You can see pictures of the hug at <http://go.networksuperstars.net>.

While reflecting on how she came up with the activity, Crystal shared, "We were thinking we should just come up with something, and I said, 'Oh, a hug!' After a while, my teammates were like, 'How about a hug that actually means something?' We were just playing around and then we became all wound up."

"As a coach, I am constantly looking for unique ways for girls to express themselves beyond using words," said Angela Krumm, one of Carmona's Girl Action Team coaches. "Our society tends to struggle with saying good-bye and gaining closure, thus non-verbal expressions model an alternative method of showing caring for others. The burrito hug is a lighthearted way to allow the honoree to feel a connection with other team members."

Krumm has nothing but accolades for Carmona. "Crystal has developed into a clear leader on the team. I have watched her take increasing risks to voice her opinions even when they do not match those of others on the team. She applied for and was awarded a position on the Girls Steering Committee of GFC, has made TV appearances related to GFC involvement, and has volunteered to take risks to share her experiences with others."

"Every December and June, we see tutors, mentors and student teachers we support struggle with how to say goodbye to their students and mentees, and how to create a meaningful environment for the children and teens to say goodbye to one another," said Gary Kosman, Founder and CEO, America Learns. "Burrito hugging makes for a perfect part of a transition process for close-knit groups. We're thrilled that Crystal's coaches shared the burrito hugging activity on GFC's America Learns Network site, and can't wait to see the activity being replicated worldwide."

The strategy will be permanently available starting today at <http://go.networksuperstars.net>.

About Girls For A Change:

Girls For A Change (GFC), a national not-for-profit organization, empowers teen girls to create and lead social change. GFC provides the tools, resources, partnerships and support girls need to gain the voice, ability, and problem-solving capacity to realize their full potential. We welcome and serve all girls and focus our efforts on girls who live in low income communities. GFC was founded in San Jose in 2002 and expanded to Phoenix in 2005. They have just launched their newest site in Richmond, VA in January 2009. Their National Tour in fall 2008 trained 2,300 girls as social change agents in 6 metropolitan areas throughout the country. Learn more at <http://www.girlsforachange.org> and <http://www.girlsforachangeactionnetwork.com>, or by calling 408.515.8148.

About America Learns, LLC:

Los Angeles-based America Learns is a global educational performance and accountability firm reaching more than 20,000 students worldwide. The company's flagship service, the America Learns Performance Measurement & Learning Network, helps organizations to simultaneously collect their educators and mentors' best practices from the field, share those strategies with peers as soon as they need them, and measure educators and mentors' performance. Organizations using its services include universities (e.g., Girls For A Change, Duke University, UC Berkeley, and the University of Michigan), community-based nonprofits, after-school programs, and school districts (e.g., the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and the Minneapolis Public Schools). The company also creates and publishes high quality, meaningful, stress-free learning resources for children that are steeped in relevant research and practice. Learn more at <http://www.americalearns.net> or by calling 310-689-0542.

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