

Free Minds Helps Mom Achieve College Dreams

Crystal Luna dropped out of high school when she was 16 to take care of her new son, Mikey. She returned to school nearly ten years later because she wanted to set a good example for him and change her life. As a single parent, she worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. Despite the challenging circumstances, Crystal wanted Mikey to see and understand the value of a college education.

"I want him to be much further in his life at the age of 30 than I am now," Crystal said. Crystal will turn 30 this summer and Mikey is in 7th grade.

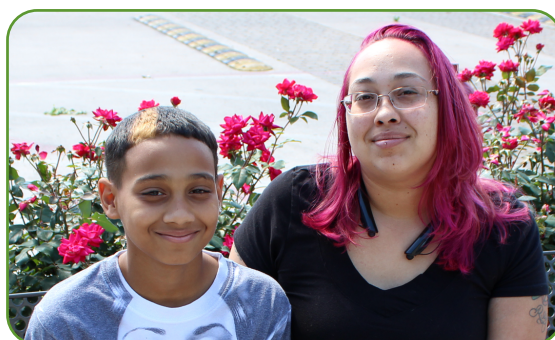
Once Crystal set her mind to returning to school, she earned her GED. She also decided to get a jump-start on her college career by applying to our Free Minds program.

Free Minds is a free two-semester college humanities course for adults living on low to moderate incomes. The rigorous program is run in partnership with UT Austin and Austin Community College (ACC). After being accepted into the program, Crystal has spent the last year studying literature, American history, philosophy and writing.

Her favorite assignment so far has been reading Plato's *The Republic*. Crystal overcame her apprehension about the dense classic early on in the course and proved to herself that she could, in fact, succeed in Free Minds. Besides exploring new literary worlds, Crystal said Free Minds has taught her how to

successfully balance her life's competing priorities: raising her son, working full-time and completing her education.

One of the reasons Crystal was able to enroll in the program and commit to its demanding schedule is because Mikey can come with her. While Crystal is hard at work in discussion groups, Mikey participates in a Creative Action class. Creative Action is one of our nonprofit partners and the class is free for children of Free Minds' students.



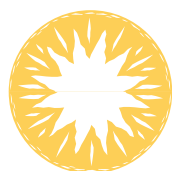
"Being able to bring Mikey made it so much easier as a single parent," Crystal said. "He loves his class with Creative Action too."

This month, Crystal and her fellow Free Minds students will graduate with six college credits. Crystal has already applied for financial aid at ACC and plans to enroll for the summer and fall semesters. She will be pursuing an Associate's

Degree in Music Business, Performance and Technology in order to live out her dream of working full-time in the music industry.

Newly minted with a degree, Crystal envisions many more doors opening in her and her son's future. "Free Minds prepared me for what comes next," she said. "The program helped open those doors."

To learn more about our Free Minds program, please visit www.freemindsaustin.org.



Summer of Service Volunteer Kick-Off

Want to help us make a difference in our community? Our annual Summer of Service Volunteer Kick-Off is right around the corner! It's a great opportunity to learn more about our many different volunteer programs and how you can get involved with us year-round. We're currently recruiting new volunteers for financial coaching, ESL classes, supper clubs, and learning centers. **Join us Wednesday, June 10 from 6:00 – 7:30 PM at our Sierra Vista Learning Center.**



RSVP by June 3 at <http://foundcom.org/get-involved/volunteer>

Running Buddies Train for 5K Race



Our second annual Running Buddies program is off to a great start! The program matches students in our after-school and summer learning programs with an adult running buddy to train for a neighborhood 5K race. The buddies meet three times a week for nine weeks to work on strength, speed and endurance training. The program helps students learn about good sportsmanship, goal setting and perseverance – all while having fun and staying healthy! The big race will take place May 23 at our Sierra Vista Fitness Camino.



3036 South First Street
Austin, TX 78704
512.447.2026
FoundCom.org



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Foundation Communities provides attractive, affordable homes and free on-site support services for thousands of working families with kids, as well as veterans, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. We offer an innovative, proven model that empowers our residents and neighbors to achieve educational success, financial stability, and healthier lifestyles. We own and operate 18 properties all over Austin and in North Texas.

Foundation Communities Updates

Eco-Smarts Program To Begin At Learning Centers

We are excited to announce a brand-new addition to our summer learning program – Eco-Smarts! Eco-Smarts is an environmental education program that will be taught at all 10 of our Learning Centers, reaching students in Austin and North Texas. The program, created by our nonprofit partner EcoRise, educates students on water and energy conservation, waste reduction and indoor air quality. Beginning in June, students enrolled in our free summer learning program will learn how to apply greener and healthier habits in their lives and at home. We hope Eco-Smarts will encourage students to act as environmental stewards. Stay tuned for updates!

Big Thanks to KDK-Harman Foundation

A heartfelt thank you to KDK-Harman Foundation for its recent grants, totaling \$97,500, in support of our after-school and summer learning programs. This funding will help us greatly increase STEM education at our on-site Learning Centers, providing our students with valuable skills for the future.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

Thank you to everyone who attended our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at Hill's Café last month! It was a memorable evening, complete with delicious food and inspiring stories. Our 2,000+ volunteers make our work possible and continually amaze us with their unwavering commitment and enthusiasm.



10th Tax Season Sets New Record!



Mayor Steve Adler visited our Community Tax Center in April

Our 10th tax season proved to be our biggest and best ever. Thanks to 552 incredibly devoted Community Tax Center volunteers, we filed more than 20,400 tax returns for hard-working low-income families. This free citywide program generated over \$34 million in refunds for our residents and neighbors, many who will use their refund to put food on the table, pay bills and save for their children's future. We wouldn't be able to provide this service for so many folks in the community without our dedicated volunteers. Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2015 tax season so stellar!