Jonah Gomez  
Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation Junior Board



When Jonah Gomez was seven years old, he noticed a homeless man sitting outside of a restaurant that he and his family were leaving. Jonah gave the man all of his family’s leftovers. That moment ignited in him a passion for giving to those less fortunate.

Jonah is currently a seventh grader at the[Pacific Collegiate School in Santa Cruz, CA](http://www.pacificcollegiate.com/). He has served on the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation’s Junior Board for the past year and is one of the newest members of the [Leadership Team for Youth Philanthropy Connect.](http://www.fcfox.org/ypc-story/ypc-leadership-team/)

On the Junior Board, Jonah explained, there are individual grants, and there are collaborative grants. Each year, the Junior Board collectively chooses a theme for their collaborative grant. The theme for 2015 was Life and Leadership Readiness. The Junior Board selects grantees based on the applicants’ ability to serve their communities within the theme’s scope. For the individual grant, each Junior Board member awards $2,000 to an organization of his or her choosing. The organizations that are selected for individual grants are then invited to apply to the Junior Board’s next collaborative grant cycle.

Jonah’s first individual grant was divided between t[he Digital Nest](http://digitalnest.org/), an organization that provides access to computers and education in an effort to close the digital divide in Watsonville, California, and The Davenport Teen Center which serves the youth of the small farming community in the northern part of Santa Cruz County, California. In the most recent individual grant cycle, Jonah was drawn to Santa Cruz Writes, an organization that teaches creative expression. His grant was directed to provide writing workshops for at-risk youth. As a teenager, Jonah knows the importance of an outlet for expression during these formative years: “Writing is a way for young people to express themselves more naturally, instead of relying on negative outlets such as drugs and violence” he said.

[](http://www.fcfox.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2015-10-17-10.50.35.jpg)As for social justice issues, specialized education of minority teens seems to be a theme for Jonah. His true passion lies in providing technological opportunity, particularly for minority and at-risk youth. “Right now there is not a lot of diversity in the tech community or in the Silicon Valley. I would really like to see a lot of racial diversity in tech because it is a new field and there is a lot of economic opportunity,” he said. “If we could teach children digital skills then they would be able to go into this field. A good job and career in technology would not only benefit the individual but also his or her community.”

He believes that providing youth with this education and opportunity could be a possible solution to the increasing number of minority youth who end up in prison. “I think providing skills and education instead of detention gives young people the tools they need to succeed and that is a better alternative than putting them in the prison system.”

Jonah joined the Leadership Team so he could spread his passion for philanthropy, and he thinks YPC has set up the perfect platform to spread that message far. “I feel that YPC empowers youth by giving them the abilities and tools to go into their communities to help people, and this empowers other people in turn, which creates a kind of chain reaction.”

Communicating and spreading ideas among his peers is what makes Jonah so excited for [YPC’s International Conference in Anaheim, CA this July.](http://www.fcfox.org/ypc2016register/) “I’m looking forward to going to the workshops, meeting lots of new people, and learning a lot for myself,” he said.

But the conference this summer is not the only thing Jonah is looking forward to in his philanthropic career. He hopes to keep giving, and to continue his work as part of a foundation. “I really would like to be able to make a change in this world.”

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