

Pass It On®...

Something Healthy for All of Us

How 17-year-old Gloria Barron Prize Winners Annie and Shirley Zhu provide fresh food for 1,400 people a year.

Most of us have memories from childhood that go something like this: You're not leaving the table until you eat all your vegetables.

How lucky we were to have nutritious food, even if we had to learn to like it. According to the Houston Health Department, for nearly one-quarter of children living in Houston, Texas, the choice to eat healthy doesn't exist. They don't have access to fresh produce, only canned and packaged goods. A lack of fresh meat and produce in your diet can lead to increases in depression and obesity and greater risks for heart disease and cancer. A poor diet is also tied to poor performance in school for young children.

Annie Zhu was shocked to find out so many children in Houston lived in food deserts — areas without access to fresh food. She was also shocked to see how much fresh food supermarkets discard every day. So she and her twin sister Shirley went to work.

First, they partnered with the Houston Health Department to distribute food at community centers. With the help of Second Servings, they collected surplus food from grocery stores and began organizing monthly markets. They even connected with human service agencies to provide help beyond food. Lastly, they developed (and coded) a simple app that tells people when and where the markets are. Since the food is fresh, it needs to be picked up right away, so they developed the text and messaging app Fresh Hub.

Each month, Fresh Hub organizes high schoolers who don green shirts and go to work setting up stands of fresh produce, baked goods and packaged meats. The Zhu sisters and the green dream team have distributed over 1,500 pounds of food. And while families are collecting food, volunteers are entertaining kids with art projects that teach healthy eating.

At the end of the day, Annie says the two are happy to be making a difference. "Frustration over the

unfair circumstances built into society led us to meet incredible people," says Annie. "I know I'm not alone on this journey to help the underserved — and I know my journey has only just begun!"

Good for you, Annie and Shirley, for doing something that's good for all of us.

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