



MATT HAMILTON/Daily Citizen-News

Chloe Medlin, 16, left, and Surbhi Bhatte, 15, clean a kitchen area at the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center on Friday.

## UW's youth program teaches students team building, leadership

BY SHAKA L. COBB

shakacobb@daltoncitizen.com

Many teenagers don't get excited about chores, but last Friday Surbhi Bhatte, Chloe Medlin and Olivia Richardson had smiles on their faces as they cleaned a kitchen area at the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center.

The students were part of the United Way of Northwest Georgia's goLEAD program. LEAD is an acronym for Leadership Education and Development. The program is a camp that teaches students team building, leadership and service learning. At the end of the camp, students choose a project to complete.

Medlin, who will be a senior at Northwest Whitfield High School this fall, said she heard about the program from a teacher.

"I looked it up and thought it would be an excellent opportunity so I applied," she said.

With the exception of the service project at the crisis center,

a domestic violence shelter for women and children, the camp was held at the United Way of Northwest Georgia office in Dalton. The dates were June 5-16.

"Our goal is to teach youth how to make an impact on the community and give them the skills to be able to reach out to organizations," said Amy Faillace, volunteer coordinator at the United Way.

The program started in 2015 and is open to high school students who express an interest in participating. The maximum number of students is 20. This year 14 participated.

Richardson, who will be a senior at Dalton High School, said she didn't realize how many organizations in Dalton needed help.

"Being in goLEAD taught me how important it is to be involved in my community," she said.

Faillace said the group chose the crisis center after going on tours and listening to a panel of

### 2017 goLEAD participants

- Adrian Barragan, Northwest Whitfield High School
- Surbhi Bhatte, Dalton High School
- Hannah Blair, Northwest Whitfield High
- Star Cazares, Morris Innovative High School
- Jaysia Dillon, Dalton High
- Felipe Espino, Southeast Whitfield High School
- Jesus Espino, Dalton High
- Lilibeth Fagala, Southeast Whitfield High
- Dorna Ghane, Dalton High
- Chloe Medlin, Northwest Whitfield High
- Martinika Miranda, Dalton High
- Linda Olvera, Dalton High
- Christian Perez, Dalton High
- Olivia Richardson, Dalton High

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United Way partners.

"We had partners speak to students about their organization and projects that needed to be completed," she said.

With input from staff at the crisis center, the students created a list of ideas and projects to complete during their last day of camp. The list included cleaning and organizing the playroom, gym, birthday room and kitchen, and painting bulletin boards.

Laura Mares, volunteer coordinator with the crisis center, said the students did an "amazing job."

"We rely heavily on volunteers," she said. "Our shelter wouldn't be able to operate without them, so this was a tremendous help."

Mares said programs like goLEAD give young people "an opportunity to give back to the community."

"That makes a difference for our center because we have people who care," she said. "It also gives students a learning experience and a better opportunity understanding what domestic violence is about."

Linda Olvera, who will be a senior at Dalton High School, said she wanted to participate in the program last year, but missed the deadline. "I'm so excited to be here now," she said.

Olvera, Star Cazares and Felipe Espino were busy cleaning the playroom. Olvera transformed a corner into a library and sitting area while Cazares vacuumed.

"It's just a good feeling knowing we're able to help kids and families," Cazares said.

Jaysia Dillon, who will be a junior at Dalton High School, said she learned a lot at the camp about being a leader.

"Being a leader requires good communication skills and not getting offended if someone disagrees with what you say," she said.

Lilibeth Fagala, who will be a junior at Southeast Whitfield High School, said the camp taught her how



PHOTOS BY MATT HAMILTON/Daily Citizen-News

From left, Felipe Espino, Star Cazares and Linda Olvera clean the play room at the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center.

important teamwork is.

"I feel like it's something I can use in the future to do things in Dalton or wherever I go," she said.

Applications for goLEAD are usually available by March at [www.ourunitedway.org](http://www.ourunitedway.org). Click on the volunteer tab, then youth volunteers.

Hannah Blair, who will be a junior at Northwest Whitfield High School, said the program has been "a lot of fun, and early mornings."

"It makes it all worth it, especially when you see everyone is grateful for what you've done," she said.



Hannah Blair paints the border of a bulletin board.



Adrian Barragan, 14, left, and Martinika Miranda, 16, piece together a toy at the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center.

Gwinnett  
leader to be