



## community impact

By Anika Attaluri • Submitted photo

# Yes ICAN

In 1991, concerned citizen Henry Salinas invested in Chandler teenagers in response to the rising gang violence in his neighborhood. Over time, this investment blossomed into the local full-ser-



Lejon and his mom at Howard



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vice youth center ICAN, which primarily serves residents in low-income neighborhoods. ICAN continues to impact countless families by remaining dedicated to its mission to provide free, comprehensive programs that empower youth to be productive, self-confident, and responsible members of their community.

ICAN is remarkable for removing barriers confronted by low-income families by providing healthy snacks, meals, transportation, and programming for youth. ICAN's partnerships with Chandler CARE Center, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Dignity Health, and Gabriel's Angels enable additional resources and expertise for the children's benefit. At ICAN, the participants attend activities incorporating STEAM, literacy skill-building, sports and recreation, and a specialized curriculum that focuses on life-skills. During intersession breaks, the youth spend the entire day at ICAN and are offered highly-anticipated field trip opportunities, ranging from camping trips to visits to local businesses. Moreover, parents are regularly offered programs to reinforce the skills taught to the kids at ICAN.

ICAN has been proven effective for shaping better outcomes for individuals, including Lejon Davis. In his elementary years, Lejon was a handful and would frequently get into trouble. To keep him busy, ICAN staff gave Lejon extra math sheets, through which he was identified as gifted. Lejon's mother, Victoria, placed him into



Building strong friendships

the gifted program at his school, and the boy's behavior improved drastically. At Chandler High School, Lejon was incredibly involved in the International Baccalaureate program and eventually received a scholarship to the prestigious Howard University, where he now thrives. Victoria "is so proud of him and so appreciative to have found ICAN."

As the campus is operating at near-maximum capacity, ICAN's CEO, Shelby Pederson, has recently announced that the organization will be keeping Henry Salinas' vision alive by adding a new location this fall. This site-based location will be at Galveston Elementary School, as it "does not currently have an after school program and there is a great need among their families for this service." After a successful pilot year at Galveston, ICAN plans to add additional sites. This is an incredibly exciting time for the non-profit, and it's astounding to see their visions come to life.

If you would like to support ICAN, please donate at [www.icanaz.org](http://www.icanaz.org). Information on volunteering and supplies needed for ICAN's programs can also be found online.



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