

Student Wins \$100,000 to Educate Honduran Youth

Do Something! Award to nonprofit Educate2Envision

WILL FERRELL, BEN Affleck, Olivia Munn...and Katia Gomez.

The School of Public Health student found herself in star-studded company last August when she took the top prize at the nationally televised VH1 Do Something! Awards, which honor young adults 25 and under for their social change projects. Gomez won a winged shoe trophy—and a \$100,000 grant—for creating Educate2Envision, a nongovernmental organization that helps build schools and educate impoverished children, particularly girls, in central Honduras. Hers was among 1,000 applications.

“This is going to Honduras,” said Gomez (SPH’13) in accepting the award. “Things are going to im-



Actor and director Ben Affleck presents Katia Gomez (SPH’13) with a Do Something! Award during a televised ceremony.

COURTESY OF VH1

prove for those girls, and they’re going to do something big, too.”

Gomez first went to Honduras in 2009 as an undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego, to volunteer during spring break. There, she saw the effects of extreme poverty in a

country where nearly half of the population is age 16 or younger and more than half of all Hondurans survive on the equivalent of \$2 a day. Children in the region rarely get more than a few years of formal education. Many end up working in their family’s fields, or starting families as early as 14.



Gomez (center) was inspired to create Educate2Envision after her first visit to Honduras in 2009.

COURTESY OF EDUCATE2ENVISION

From a pilot program established on a shoestring budget, Educate2Envision has expanded to three remote communities, where Gomez and her coworkers have brought secondary education to more than 450 students.

Actor and director Affleck said he was honored to present the award.

“While Katia was among a group of extremely impressive people, she stood out with both her work and her sense of self,” he said. “I was lucky to have the privilege of standing next to someone who is clearly going to make a lot of positive contributions to the world for many years.”

Gomez said the grant is a complete game changer for Educate2Envision. “We have our sights set on investing in nearly 10,000 students to become first-generation high school students throughout Honduras,” she said. “We are also working to create a mobile Girls Leadership unit that will travel and set up shop throughout hundreds of communities to propel our mission of decreasing teen pregnancy rates and nurturing confidence and self-worth in thousands of young girls. And this year we’re planning our first U.S. college campus tour to jump-start Educate2Envision chapters nationwide.”

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