Jannene Montano, (left) an eighth-grader at Ed and Verma Pastor Elementary School, laughs with Esther Ovarte, 20, during a team-building exercise at a Be a Leader Foundation workshop. The foundation, which receives Season for Sharing support, helps mostly inner-city students develop self-confidence and leadership skills, and sets them on a path to college. *Story, B2.*
Foundation helps inner-city students get ready for college

By Glen Creno
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Jannene Montano is an eighth-grader but already is trying on possible careers.

She thought about becoming a lawyer, then thought some more. Now, she's aiming at becoming a doctor or a pharmacist.

"I really like helping people," she said.

To accomplish that, Jannene said she needs to be sure she wants to make the right choices as she goes through

Season for Sharing

Who is helped? Last year, 177 agencies received about $2.7 million to help Arizona's children and families; the elderly, victims of domestic violence, and literacy and education programs. Since 1993, when the campaign began, nearly $41 million has been raised and distributed.

Where does the money go? All of it goes directly to non-profit agencies in the Valley and state. All fundraising overhead costs are paid by The Arizona Republic and 12 News.

How do my dollars help? Gannett Foundation will match donations 50 cents on the dollar until donations reach $800,000. That is an extra $400,000 to local agencies. If you donate $50, it becomes a $75 contribution.

Who makes this possible? The Arizona Republic, 12 News and Gannett Foundation.

How can I donate? Go to sharing.azcentral.com or use the coupon on Page A2 and mail your donation to Season for Sharing, P.O. Box 29616, Phoenix, AZ 85038-9616.

Season for Sharing, the annual fundraising campaign of The Arizona Republic and 12 News, has given the foundation $33,000. The foundation doesn't charge for its programs.

Trujillo said school counselors are overloaded, and Be a Leader helps pick up the slack.

"There was a huge need for something like this," she said. "They are strapped for time. They really can't give every student their full attention."

ASU student Fernand Gacvin, a junior finance major, is one of the mentors in Be a Leader. Gacvin, 21, of Tolleson, serves as a mentor in Be a Leader's Valedictorian Club. It selects elementary-school students as "valedictorians" based on character, leadership potential and the desire to succeed. He also is a mentor to one student apart from the club.

"I enjoy every single bit of it," he said. "My goal is to get across the idea that academics are vital. ... We try to drive that mentality: Don't settle for less. Dream big and work hard at it."