



Issue 104

BrainWise + Community Service: A Double Dose of Doing Good

What happens when a simple idea—"teach thinking by doing"—is put into practice for 20 straight years?

BrainWise has long championed community service as a powerful way to reinforce the 10 Wise Ways, giving youth a "double dose" of critical-thinking practice that strengthens their skills while benefiting the people they serve. Past newsletters have highlighted these dual-impact projects, featuring schools that teach BrainWise in partnership with service initiatives led by adult and youth Rotarians. A list of examples is at the end of the newsletter.

This issue turns the spotlight on one of the most enduring and far-reaching examples of that model: the 20-year collaboration between the Rotary Club of Denver Mile High and CEC Early College, a career-technical Denver public high school.

At the heart of this partnership is Stacey Hervey, the visionary CEC instructor who weaves community service—including BrainWise—into her criminal justice curriculum. Under her leadership, CEC students have used the 10 Wise Ways to design and deliver activities that have reached more than 4,000 children, youth, and adults, creating a legacy of service-driven learning that continues to ripple across the community.



Professor Stacey Hervey

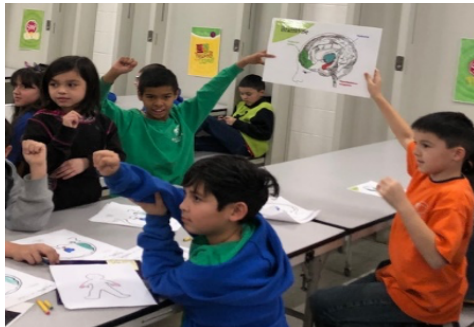


CEC Young Rotarians



Teaching BrainWise

BrainWise students' service and leadership projects show they are being more than good citizens—they are practicing the very skills that help them navigate life's challenges with clarity and compassion. Multiple studies on volunteering and service-learning confirm that youths who participate show improved academic performance, critical thinking, and social-emotional development. The value of this approach--older youth teaching children--is captured in the rapt attention they demonstrate as well as in their requests for autographs from their teen instructors.



Children React to Young Rotarians Teaching Wizard Brain over Lizard Brain and Fact vs. Opinion

Research on Critical Thinking and Volunteering. A strong body of research indicates that programs building cognitive and behavioral skills are among the most effective ways to support mental well-being, leading to increased resilience, improved quality of life, and reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress. Large-scale population studies and systematic reviews of youth volunteering add another layer of evidence: Community service gives young people a real-world environment in which to practice decision-making, problem-solving, and emotional regulation.

Learning BrainWise—and then reinforcing the 10 Wise Ways through service projects—creates a powerful bridge between theory and practice. Working alongside others invites perspective-taking, empathy, and collaboration. Students reflect on their actions, evaluate outcomes, and see firsthand how their choices positively affect the people they serve. By applying the 10 Wise Ways outside the classroom, they generalize critical-thinking skills to new settings, strengthening Wizard Brain pathways and making them more durable over time.

BrainWise Emphasizes Thinking About Others—Examples Illustrate How Taking Others' Point of View (POV) Is Integrated Into the 10 Wise Ways.

A core theme of BrainWise is teaching children to use the Wise Ways not only for their own decision-making but also to understand how their actions affect others. This emphasis on perspective-taking runs throughout the program and comes together powerfully in Wise Way #10: Communicate Effectively.

The following Wise Ways explicitly teach students how to consider other people's needs, feelings, and points of view as they make choices and solve problems. These thinking skills help children and youth understand that their actions affect others—and give them concrete tools for responding with empathy, awareness, and responsibility.

POV and the WISE WAYS

Red Flag
Warnings

Exit Your
Emotions
Elevator

Identify
Choices

Consider
Consequences

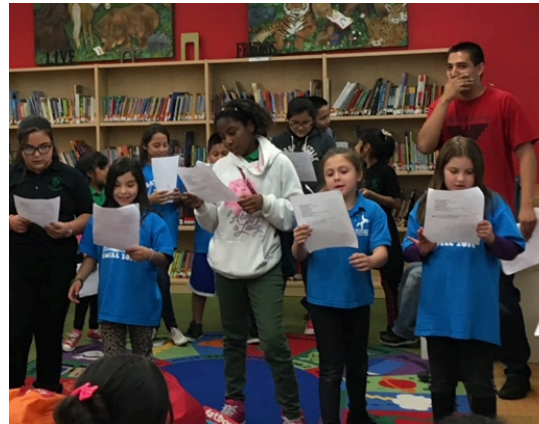
Communicate
Effectively



Recognizing Red Flag Warnings requires noticing not only your own internal cues but also the signals others display. Students learn to observe behaviors, body language, and emotional shifts in the people around them—skills that become even more important when using the **Emotions Elevator** to understand what triggers reactions and who can help de-escalate tense situations.

Identifying Choices naturally leads to **Considering the Consequences**, including how each option affects other people. Students practice evaluating both immediate and long-term impacts, learning that wise decisions take into account the well-being of those around them.

Communicate Effectively brings all the Wise Ways together. **Wizard Brain** thinkers learn that taking another person's **Point of View (POV)** is essential for empathy, understanding, and meaningful connection. Effective communication depends on recognizing how others feel, what they need, and how your words and actions influence them.



Primary School Students Enjoy Practice Activities BrainWise Teens Designed



Reinforcing the Brain Lesson



Demonstrating a Constellation of Support

BrainWise graduates know that volunteering is more than giving time. They don't step up out of obligation—they act because they understand the ripple effect of giving and how their choices impact themselves and others.

By applying the 10 Wise Ways in real-world situations, they see how empathy, awareness, and making good choices can change lives—including their own. Each act of service strengthens the very cognitive and emotional pathways that BrainWise teaches, helping young people become more grounded, more connected, and more capable of helping others.

This is the heart of combining BrainWise with community service: Young people discovering that when they use their skills to lift others, everyone rises—and “service above self” becomes not just a motto—it becomes part of their everyday actions.

Thank you for helping your students and clients make this connection.

Below are links to past newsletter issues featuring Young Rotary volunteers teaching BrainWise:

[2025 Feb Issue #94 BW, Knight Moves and Rotary](#)

[2025 June Issue #98 BW Teens Reinforce the 10 Wise Ways Virtually](#)

[2023 June Issue #81 BW and Rotary Collaborate to Serve Others](#)

[2023 Sept Issue #83 BW Collaborates with Rotary to Promote Problem Solving Skills](#)

[2023 Oct Issue #84 Taylor Swift Case Used to Teach BrainWise](#)

[2022 April Issue #72 Teens Use Games to Reinforce BrainWise](#)

[2021 April Issue #62 Urban Teens Reinforce BrainWise with Rural Elementary School Students](#)

[2021 Oct Issue #67 Gratitude for Longtime BrainWise Community Partners](#)

[2019 March Issue #38 Teen Mentors Reinforce Wise Way #1](#)



**Take Care,
Dr. Pat**

On a Lighter Note

The *Power in Our Connections* video captures, in just over a minute, how purposeful service strengthens the very thinking skills BrainWise teaches. It's a perfect complement to the examples in this newsletter featuring CEC's Young Rotarians, offering a vivid snapshot of how more than one million Rotarians worldwide work together, solve problems, and make wise choices.

The video reinforces a central truth: volunteering is far more than “helping others.” It is a powerful way for people of all ages to practice and reinforce executive function skills that build empathy, awareness of others, respect, and acceptance of differences.

This is the double-dose effect in action—BrainWise + Service: A Double Dose of Doing Good.



Power in Our Connections — Rotary (1:11)



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