

By Mara

As a "Young Angel" I know how all the dances work. From set up to clean-up everything is a team effort. On Friday December 4th as I was lugging heavy boxes of Jarritos soda from the parking lot to the kitchen I watched as three new people walked through the door of the Palisades Woman's Club. I knew they were too early and too old for the dance, so I walked over to them with a smile. Brook introduced them as Yvette, Pedro, and Emanuel from Amino Watts High School. They had come to watch how we worked the dances for their school dance on December 11th. Excited for the chance to show off all I know and the chance to incorporate new faces into Young Angels, the "old" angels spoke with the "new" angels. We learned that Yvette, Pedro, and Emanuel were in eleventh grade and they were working to have a dance like the Young Angels dances at their school. We learned that with the money they would raise from the dance they were going to buy soccer uniforms and equipment for their soccer team. The most shocking thing we learned about their school was that it had been a part of Locke High, which had so many shooting incidents, and helicopters always over head, and SWAT teams as a fixture at the school, that the campus was broken up into 6 schools—Animo Watts being one of them.

At five minutes before seven all the "old" Angels were in place and ready for the crowd of middle school kids to flow through the door. At the check in table sat a new face: Yvette, who worked with Deja to check in the kids who had not yet bought tickets on-line. Our security angel Nathan was posted in his usual position at the door and with him were Emanuel and Pedro who were an extra addition to our security team. From an outside point of view one would never be able to tell that the Young Angels were doning new members of our team.

As the chaos decreased and kids were coming out to grab a quick refreshment of our sponsored soda: Jarritos, Emanuel and Pedro switched jobs to the table selling drinks. They were excellent as kids rushed forward pushing money towards them and then ran off with their drinks. They calmly collected the money and distributed the drinks without any problems. They were "pros." Yvette was easily dealing with the kids and parents that asked questions and tried to get in with "special exceptions." The "new" Angels were awesome.

The following week I had the privilege of attending the dance at Amino Watts High School. All the kids were so dedicated to what they were doing. Every single "angel" at Amino Watts was so inspirational to watch. They all handled every issue with no problem, from how check-in would be set up to when the food should be served. I got a chance to meet some of the students, a few of them even showed me around the campus. It was a two-story school that was a lot smaller than the sprawling school I go to, and it was very nice and clean. The students were so nice and proud of their school.

The dance turned out to be a hit. It was the kind of party any person would have fun. There was an excellent DJ, DJ R.E.N, and special guest, Khao, performed. It was so much fun to watch all the kids just let loose and have a blast, each of them knowing that by participating they would be helping their school. When I got home that evening I felt proud of what I had done, even

though most of the students ran the whole thing, I was still there to help if they needed it. It was an experience I will always remember and I am so glad that we as Young Angels have inspired new people to join and become part of what we do. I look forward to going back to Amino Watts, and I also look forward to expanding beyond the teams we have to the many schools that could use a Young Angels team. I know that Yvette, Pedro, and Emanuel learned something from us, but I also know we learned much from them as well.