Helping the Elderly

Do you have a grandparent or family friend who lives in an assisted living facility? Assisted living facilities, or ALFs, are centers where elderly or disabled adults receive housing, meals, and personal care. Jackie Viana's law studies class in Hialeah, Florida, has been studying the laws that affect residents at ALFs. These students are working to make sure that their neighbors receive the best care possible.

Community Connection The Project Citizen class of Hialeah students researched laws affecting ALFs in other states, such as California. They realized that their state's laws required less training for ALF staff and less frequent inspections. "It is a problem that all of us are going to have to face because we're all going to get old," said Kristal Otero, one of the students working on the project.

Taking Action Armed with their research, the teens began work on a Florida law to increase the training hours for ALF administrators and guarantee inspections of ALFs every six months. The students want the new law to include drug-free zones around the facilities. In addition, students created brochures and diagrams to help them present their ideas to community leaders. Representative Rene Garcia was so impressed that he worked with the students to try to make the law a reality, helping them introduce it at the statehouse. "This teaches them by hard work and dedication that if they see something wrong in their community, they can change it," Garcia said of the students' impressive efforts.

Students in a Project Citizen class in Hialeah, Florida, pose with Florida governor Jeb Bush.

go.hrw.com
Project Citizen
KEYWORD: SZ7 CH15

SERVICE LEARNING

1. **Why do you think these young people were interested in working on a law to protect elderly and disabled adults?**
2. **Are there people in your community who need help? What is a law you would like to see passed to help those people?**