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## UpLift Austin Communications Team

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Local nonprofit UpLift Austin gets a hit with first fundraiser**

Last Saturday, Oct. 17, local nonprofit UpLift Austin hosted Hello Birdie, the first fundraiser in its short, one-year history. The successful event drew 150 people and raised \$12,000 that will directly go to fund UpLift student projects.

UpLift offers an innovative program for high schools: teaching at-risk youth about “green” collar jobs as a pathway out of poverty. Each class also completes a project to make the schools more environmentally friendly.

“Our projects this semester range from recycling projects to outdoors classrooms and we need all the support we can get to give our students the school that they deserve,” said Adrienne Clements, the organization’s campus coordinator at KIPP Austin Collegiate, standing like a proud mentor as four of her 100 students spoke about the program.

“At first, I thought it was just another hippie class,” said Jim Donelly, one of Clements’s students. “But we did this thing where we learned how many planets we would need if everyone lived like me. And if everyone lived like me, we’d need 6.1 planets. That’s too many.”

Each UpLift student contributed a decorated bird ornament to the event, which were strung together by Kizzy Hannibal, campus coordinator at Garza Independence High School, and crafted into two art pieces that were auctioned off.

Overall, 33 bird-inspired art pieces found happy homes with local art- and bird-lovers.

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“These art pieces were all donated by the amazing artists and architects that support the UpLift program,” said Clements. These pieces included a ‘bat house,’ the highest selling item, as well as a martini glass birdfeeder, a Chrysler birdfeeder and luxury condos for feathered dwellers.

Beyond the art and the students, Hello Birdie featured DJ Manolis, donations from local businesses and even live birds.

A mere few years ago, Hello Birdie was a yearly Austin event for Big Red Sun, where it was held this year as well. After a short hiatus, UpLift Austin took on the project as its first fundraiser.

“We are resurrecting the Hello Birdie for its sixth year,” said Gina LaMotte, UpLift founder and executive director. “We couldn’t have done it without the support of our all-volunteer staff.”

LaMotte started UpLift about a year ago and has motivated volunteers to create programs in two high schools for seven total classes. By June 2010, LaMotte believes UpLift will graduate 240 green leaders who will continue to spread the message about environmental sustainability to the community

The program also partner with local artists, architects and designers to teach students about the kinds of jobs available in the “green” career field.

“What amazes me is the effect that UpLift has on guest speakers,” said Stephanie Perrone, UpLift board member. “These volunteers come in to show the students what kinds of jobs they could have, and end up so inspired that, when I run into them in my professional life, they are asking when they can come back.”

With over 150 volunteers putting in 4,500 hours in its first year, UpLift’s future looks bright.

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