

ARJUN BANERJEE MULCHANDANI

FOUNDER AND CEO, KIDS TEACH TECH,
SAN RAMON AND OAKLAND

✦ While most 10-year-olds are focused on homework, friends, sports, or video games, Arjun Banerjee Mulchandani launched his own company.

His enterprise, Kids Teach Tech, brings coding education to underserved young people who might not be able to afford costly tech camps or lessons. Another goal is to inspire participants to “teach it forward,” says Mulchandani, who is now 13 and going into eighth grade at the Seven Hills School in Walnut Creek. “[We’re] creating an ever-expanding, youth-led movement that impacts local communities.”

Since founding the nonprofit, Mulchandani and his team have taught coding and robotics classes to more than 1,500 students, covering everything from tech basics to complex video game programming. Although COVID-19 forced Kids Teach Tech to develop a new model that works as a live, online experience, the company continues to instruct students both locally and across the country.

“Everyone always assumes that only adults can teach,” says Mulchandani. “Since we are kids ourselves, we know how to make our classes exciting and fun. ... We’re proving that kids can make a huge impact in the lives of other kids.” —*R.O.*



EMILY PILLOTON

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GIRLS GARAGE, BERKELEY

✦ When Emily Pilloton says, “I want to give girls the tools they need to build the world they want to see,” she means it literally. She provides them with power drills and circular saws to make a bookshelf or a chicken coop—or a whole city.

The seeds for Girls Garage were planted when Pilloton was 16, helping to construct a park in Central America for a service project. “Actually building things with my hands, not just dreaming them up, made me feel like I had power in the world,” she says.

In 2008, after working in architecture, she launched the nonprofit Project H, partnering with schools on shop classes with a twist. Student projects fulfilled local needs, from greenhouses for community gardens to tiny homes for the homeless. But Pilloton noticed that her female students spent a lot of energy proving themselves, which affected their creativity. So, in 2013, she launched Girls Garage, an additional program, offering after-school workshops to girls. Three years later, the group moved into its own space in Berkeley.

Each year, approximately 200 girls ages 9 to 18 take classes at Girls Garage, learning carpentry and welding free of charge. When the global pandemic moved the spring and summer sessions online, students received donated tool kits for home and still completed a modular bookcase for the St. Vincent de Paul shelter in Oakland. Meanwhile, *Girls Garage* the book was released in June, bringing Pilloton’s mission to a wider audience, with how-to projects and inspiring stories.

“We know the numbers in STEM and the trades. Basically all of the industries in which our world gets shaped are male-dominated places,” says Pilloton. “What would the world look like if it wasn’t that way?” —*LeeAnne Jones*



SUSUN KIM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CONTRA COSTA FAMILY
JUSTICE CENTER, CONCORD

Susun Kim works not only on the established programs of the Contra Costa Family Justice Center, where she is executive director, but she is also constantly searching for new ways to serve the community. “I look to identify unmet needs and underserved communities and develop strategies to meet those needs,” says Kim, an immigrant from South Korea.

An attorney with 17 years of legal aid experience, she refers to the Family Justice Center as a “warm and welcoming one-stop center” for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking. She manages three locations (Concord, Richmond, and East Antioch), with 16 staff members and more than 50 partner organizations.

She is quick to credit her mentors and colleagues with helping her achieve success. “I learned from caring and brilliant teachers,” she says, “and I have worked with critical and thoughtful colleagues who have challenged my thinking.” —*M.J.*