

Dear Students and Families,

We're excited to announce some important updates to our youth volunteer program formerly known as **YAT (Youth Action Team)**. Beginning this year, the program will continue under a new name: **ECL – Emerging Community Leaders**.

With this new name comes an expanded vision! ECL will offer students more opportunities to engage in meaningful service, develop leadership skills, and participate in community-based learning experiences that will strengthen their resumes and teach lifelong lessons about the value of service above self.

What's New?

While the heart of the program remains the same, ECL introduces new structure and more visibility for student volunteers. We aim to create an environment where students feel empowered and supported while gaining real-world experience in service and small business awareness through the Shiner Chamber of Commerce.

Transition for Previous YAT Members

We understand that some students were already participating in YAT and may be concerned about how this change affects them. Rest assured:

- **Any student who has accumulated hours during their 9th–11th grade years will not lose those hours.**
- These students will be transitioned into the ECL program and their hours will count toward ECL awards and future scholarship eligibility.

Enrollment Requirements for ECL

All students—whether new or returning—must complete and submit an **ECL application** each year to participate.

Once your application is received:

- You'll be added to the **ECL GroupMe**, where we post all volunteer opportunities and updates.
- If you use Facebook, we also encourage you to **follow the ECL page** for additional information.
- Keep **Part 2 of your application form** to log your service hours (to be signed by a Chamber representative at each event).

Eligibility

Students may begin participating the **summer before entering 8th grade** and are eligible to remain active in the program through their **senior year**. In addition to earning yearly ECL service awards, **seniors** will also be eligible to apply for the **ECL Scholarship**, which is awarded based on service and leadership. (Please note: the scholarship deadline will be mid-January and posted in both GroupMe and on the application.)

We're thrilled about this next chapter and look forward to building something truly special with our students—our emerging community leaders.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Shiner Chamber of Commerce at chamber@shinertx.com.

Sincerely,

ECL Committee

Shiner Chamber of Commerce