

Dallas-based Skratch app helps busy teens find jobs in their neighborhoods

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Miranda Alfaro said she's had a difficult time finding a part-time job that fits her busy academic schedule.

The 16-year-old plays the viola in Plano West High School's orchestra and is a member of the school's color guard, winter guard, National Honor Society chapter, and speech and debate teams. Skratch, a [mobile app](#) on her iPhone, has helped her find paid temporary [jobs](#) in her North Dallas neighborhood when she does have time, she said.

"There are some days of the week when I happen to be free, and with pure luck there will be gigs available on those days," Alfaro said. "I will accept them, and it's a good way to make money."

The [free app](#) helps North Texas teens and young adults ages 14 to 20 find temp gigs in their neighborhoods. The jobs, which include things like dog walking, yard work and tutoring small children, pay \$12 to \$15 an hour and must take less than three hours to complete.

Alfaro said she has accepted Skratch jobs organizing her neighbor's garage and babysitting another neighbor's kids.

"I've had a lot of them request me again and text me outside the app asking me when I was available because they were planning to post to the app and wanted me to accept the gig," she said.

Scott Bennett, Skratch co-founder and CEO, said he came up with the

idea for the app after his friend and co-founder, Ronen Akiva, told him his teenage son couldn't find a job that would work with his overloaded academic calendar.

The two found other parents with similar stories and decided to come up with a way to provide work experience to teens with packed schedules.

"We beat up millennials about not having experience," he said. "But before beating the younger generation up, why not give them a chance?"

The app launched in 2016 in four North Texas ZIP codes, Bennett said. Today, it's in 26 ZIP codes that include parts of Dallas, Carrollton, Frisco, Plano, and University Park. The app is only available to iPhone users, but Bennett said he plans to expand it to other mobile devices in the coming year.

Teens under 17 must have a parent authorize their account on the app before they can book jobs, Bennett said. Parents are sent mobile notifications every time their child accepts work.

Users who are 17 years old or older are also screened against the Texas Public Sex Offender Registry, he said.

"Safety is our single priority as a business," Bennett said. "For every interaction that the teen has, Mom and Dad know where they are going."

Lindsay Feldman, Skratch's director of strategic partnerships, said she often talks to mothers who use Skratch. She said they've told her they like that their children not only get [work experience](#) but also get to connect with people they may not have met otherwise.

"You are always learning what different marriages and relationships look like," Feldman said. "Those are experiences that really grow you, and

develop the kind of working person you're going to be."

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