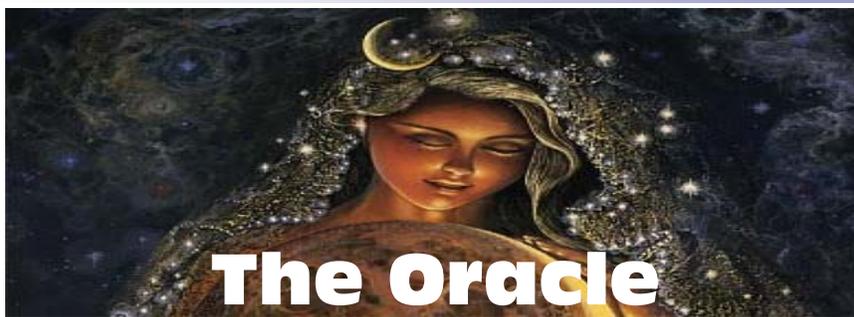




Happy Valentine's Day!



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Brandy Brock: Never Too Late to Change

This changing of mind is a slow process when it comes to teaching those with a limited education how important education is, but Brandy is an example of progress after a year and nine months of continuous programming. Brandy, like many other residents in public housing, is warming up to the idea that education is the way out of poverty. Brandy Brock enrolled in the RSS program in September of 2008. She did not make much progress in the first year, but then it happened. She realized that she wanted to make a

difference in the lives of children who were caught up in the middle of custody disputes. In September, 2009, Brandy became a volunteer for the Court Appointed Special Advocates program (CASA) and enrolled in classes to become a CASA Advocate. She became an “Officer of the Court” and was sworn in at a banquet in New Braunfels last November. Brandy also enrolled in the University of Phoenix online

and began working toward a degree in human services last October. She got a grant from the university to pay for her classes. Brandy is using the opportunities she has to make a better life for her family. We will be there to support her all the way!



******AVOID TAX REFUND RIP-OFFS!******

Keep all of your income tax refund. Don't use companies that offer “rapid refunds.” They are really loans advanced to you against your refund. They charge you interest and service fees that are usually between \$200—\$300. The I.R.S. has several free filing services available. We recommend filing online at www.taxfreedom.com. If you need help, call your Resident Services Center to make an appointment. We cannot give you tax advice but we can show you how to file your return online for free. If you have a bank account, you can get your refund in about one week. If necessary, we can help you open a free savings account at a local credit union. Getting your refund by mail takes a little longer but unless you have an urgent need for money, isn't it worth the wait? You can also go to the San Marcos Public Library for free tax aid on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and on Mondays from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Letter of Appreciation

As a volunteer at the KAD after school program over the last year, I've been shown a whole different side of community support. It's people I work with at the grassroots level that have shown me the most. Their dedication to service is unsurpassed. They work countless hours organizing events for the youth and cooking for them. I've even seen many spending money from their own pockets to provide support for them, donating paper, pencils, etc. They are also creatively innovative, proving that happiness is not only achieved with money. Just yesterday, we used left-over Halloween toys to reward the winner of a very competitive quiet game. As a future educator, this has been one of the most inspirational programs I have seen. I'm proud to be a part of such a testimony to humanity. — Katelynn Butler, Junior, Texas State University



FOOD BANK SCHEDULE CHANGE

For residents that receive assistance from the Capital Area Food Bank, your groceries will be available for pick up on the fourth Tuesday of every month at the PODER Learning Center for Allen Woods residents, the KAD Korner Store for C. M. Allen, and the Community Room for Springtown Villa. Contact your Resident Services Site Coordinator for more information.



The Boys are Back

Residents of Springtown, get excited! The Iliacus Band, the one that plays for Music Nights on Mondays, are back on schedule. Their comeback concert happened January 11 playing some classic favorite country and folk songs. Their fans clapped, sang along, and danced to the music! Everyone left with a good tune in their heart. Pictured from left to right are Larry Lincycumb, Everett Shevle, and Herod Ellison. Join us next time! Concerts are the second Monday of every month.



Money, Money, Money!

The Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union is offering a **free** financial education class



at the PODER Learning Center on Thursday, February 11, from 1 to 2 p.m. Knowledge is power in any field. Get control of the power of your financial well-being. You can't create wealth if you don't have a plan. Join us for an hour on February 11, and we'll help you develop a plan. Its only money but it's your money. Contact 396-3367 for more details.

Our Generation

Mission Possible: A Song

Mission Possible Program

This is the mission possible program

This is a slow jam

you can do anything as long as you achieve

Show perseverance and believe

That you can make it to the top

Never stop

Don't give up

Even if you're straight outta luck

This is a mission possible program like I said before

Later y'all time for me to walk out the door

By Jonathan Ledesma, age 13



New Youth Program

Parents, get your kids enrolled in the new "Golden Youth Alternative Program" (GYAP) at the PODER Learning Center today. The program is for kids from grade one to teenagers in high school. We'll have a lot of exciting, new and fun things to do while we learn and the "GYAP" Awards banquet is coming up in June. We'll present awards to kids who have accomplished the most academically. We'll have plenty of food and drinks for everyone. Your kids could win \$125.00 or \$50.00 in cash but they must be in the program to qualify. Come by PODER from 9 a.m.—5:30 p.m. on weekdays and get your kids signed up!

Chapultepec All Stars

"Star Students" are kids in the Chapultepec after-school program who attend every day, practice good manners, and complete their homework. This month's star students are:

- Charles McKinney
- Matthew Ledesma



February Birthdays

Allen Woods

- None

Chapultepec

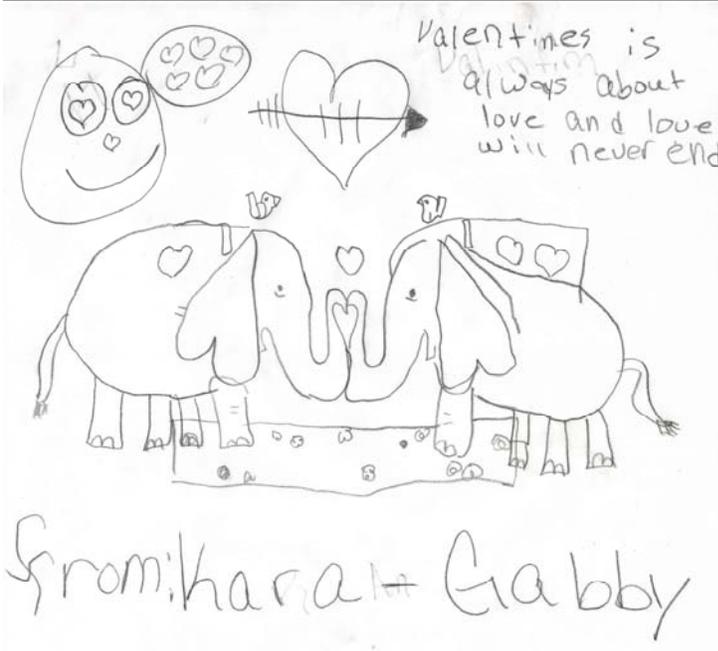
- Damien Carter—13th
- Hannah Salazar—2nd

C.M. Allen

- Keasha Varela—5th
- Tino Guerrero—20th



Art Box



Artwork by:
Gabrielle Lasiter and Kara Marian, age 9

The Corkboard: Announcements, Games, and Laughs

In Search of Love by Maria Calcaben

Love. From crushing heartbreaks to fairytale romances, the word itself has a powerful hold on our hearts. Willing volunteers—Housing Authority employees and residents—help me find an answer in the search for the meaning of love.

What is love?

1. Love is when you like somebody similar to yourself. - Kara Marian, age 9
2. Love is devotion—I would do for him what he would be willing to do for me. - Megan Perez, newlywed
3. Love changes you. It can take away your bad habits and turn you into someone good. - Martin Montelongo, married 6 years
4. Love is beautiful. It's showing real respect and appreciation for each other. - Maggie Skinner, widower, age 79

How do you know that you're in love?

1. You don't study your math or reading because you daydream about the person you like. - Stephanie Reyes, age 7
2. The time you spend apart brings you closer to each other. - Megan Perez, newlywed
3. You meet someone and get a feeling you've never felt before. - Reyna Montelongo, married 6 years
4. From the words expressing himself to me that he wrote in his love letters. - Maggie Skinner, widower, age 79

How does a person show that they love you?

1. My mom hugs me and says "have a great day at school" and I tell her "I love you." - Gabriella Lasiter
2. Forgiveness. In arguments, he can admit when he's wrong and cares about your feelings. - Amanda Ramirez, newlywed
3. You must respect and support her. You must also try to do things as a family. - Martin Montelongo, married 6 years
4. When you can look at each other and see love in their eyes. - Maggie Skinner, widower, age 79

Love

What is the hardest thing about love?

1. When you love somebody so much, but they want to go somewhere else and it's complicated because they don't want to hurt your feelings. - Kara Marian, age 9
2. Finding a balance and compromise on family, beliefs, and the past. -Megan Perez, newlywed
3. Love is not hard, but jealousy, routine, and distrust can hurt love. - Martin Montelongo, married 6 years

4. Having the person constantly on your mind, even after you lose them. -Maggie Skinner, widower, age 79

What is one important thing about love?

1. The person becomes more than a best friend, kind of like a parent, because they take care of you and you won't be alone. - Gabriella Lasiter, age 9
2. Keeping the love, the "spark," alive and having fun with it. - Amanda Ramirez, newlywed
3. Your children and your spouse. - Martin Montelongo, married 6 years
4. To continue to love your husband even after he is gone out of respect for him. You could still feel him in your heart and the sadness it brings. - Maggie Skinner, widower, age 79

Regardless of our perception on love, perhaps we can all learn a lesson from Nathan Parikah who says, "Unconditional love means that the person can just live their life exactly

as they choose and you will always be there for them no matter what." So children hug your parents, parents kiss your spouse, and everyone shake their neighbor's hand and enjoy LOVE this Valentine's Day.



Mi Vida, Mi Comunidad

“Mas Vale Prevenir Que Lamentar” by Martin Montelongo

Era el mes de Julio 2004 en la ciudad de Monterrey, Nuevo León, México, un día por la tarde que no recuerdo, pero lo tengo presente porque ese día recibimos mi esposa y yo una notificación de la “clinica de salud de mujeres.” Mi esposa se habia ido días atras hacerce unos exámenes de rutina “papanicolaou”. Cual seria la sorpresa que le diagnosticaron con la palabra “cancer.” Mi esposa se puso triste y yo mas porque la noticia nos dejo frios de temor.

No aceptamos la noticia y decidimos pedir una segunda opinión con un medico. Pero esta vez en la ciudad de Houston, Tx. La siguiente semana



ella viajo para ver otro medico que confirmara algo que se pudiera curar. Dos semanas de larga espera, tensos, tristes y muy largos, pasaron. El día que me hablo mi esposa para darme la noticia, me regreso el aliento a mi cuerpo, era un error, no tenía cancer, todo estaba bien. Ella estaba y está sana. Ella volvió a la ciudad tres días despues y celebramos la buena noticia, con gran alegría como se reciben buenas noticias. A si que mas vale prevenir que lamentar.

Site Announcements



FSS Participants:

-February 19, FSS Support Group, St. Philips University programs & financial aid, Presentation, 6:30 p.m.

Allen Wood Residents:

-February 10, Rules and Regulation Presentation, 5:30 p.m.

-February 11, Financial Classes, 1 p.m.

C.M. Allen Residents:

-February 10, Blood Pressure Check, 10 a.m.

Springtown Residents:

-February 12, Hill Country Youth Group Activities, 7p.m.



**¡SECCIÓN
EN
ESPAÑOL
EN
*The Oracle!***

¿Tiene usted una historia? ¿opinión? ¿receta? ¿chiste? ¡Se publicará en *The Oracle!* Por favor vuelva con tu nombre en la oficina de su coordinador(a) de servicios.



SAN MARCOS HOUSING AUTHORITY

Board of Commissioners:
Gloria Salazar—Chairperson
Earl Moseley—Vice-Chair.
Stacy Green—Resident Rep.
Rose Brooks
Rev. Samuel Montoya

Administration:
Executive Director
Albert Sierra
Accountant/Program Mgr.
Lana Bronikowsky
Maintenance Director
Albert Hernandez
Public Housing Manager
Rose Miranda
Resident Services Director
Stewart Dale Spencer
Section 8 Coordinator
Frances Santoya
Springtown Villa Manager
Mary Ann Ramirez

Housing Offices:
Allen Woods Homes (Main)
353-5059
C. M. Allen Homes
353-1116
Housing Choice Voucher
353-5061
Springtown Villa Manager
396-3363

Resident Services Centers:
*Chapultepec Homes
Family Self-Sufficiency
396-3364
*KAD Korner Store
Youth Development Services
392-6273
*PODER Learning Center
Resident Self-Sufficiency
396-3367
*Springtown Villa
Elderly & Disabled Services
353-7343

WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT

The San Marcos Housing Authority provides decent, safe, and sanitary housing for about 555 low-income families and individuals, including the elderly and disabled. Our Resident Services Program consists of several initiatives designed to support Self-Sufficiency & Family Development, Elderly & Disabled Services, Youth Services, and Resident Organization & Community Development. All Resident Services initiatives are united in the overall goals of improving the quality of life for public housing residents, reducing dependence on the welfare system, and empowering our residents to take charge of their lives and of their environment.

*The Oracle is produced and published monthly by the Resident Services Department of the San Marcos Housing Authority. Managing Editor—Maria Calcaben; Senior Editor—Stewart Dale Spencer; Creative Consultant—Herod King Ellison. Contact: SMHA Resident Services, 701 South LBJ Drive, San Marcos, Texas, 78666. Phone — 396-3364 * Website — www.smpba.org *Nameplate image on Page 1 is from www.josephinewall.co.uk**

Maribel Vasquez: Striving for More



Maribel Vasquez moved to San Marcos from Devine, Texas in 2002 to find more opportunities. She has lived in public housing for six years and has worked for public housing for three. She is currently the site manager at the C. M. Allen Homes. She says, “I understand the problems tenants have because I’ve been in their shoes.” Maribel graduated with an Associates Degree in Business from the University of Phoenix with a 3.06 grade point average and is currently taking online classes for a degree in Criminal Justice Administration. With a desire for higher education and open to opportunities, Maribel is striving — and reaching — for more!