

THE ORACLE

Seeds of Hope by Maria Calcaben



Sixth graders Miguel Salinas (background) and Mhyson Williams (foreground) did not know what to expect when they attended the Youth Master Plan Community Conversation at the First Baptist Church, the third out of four community meeting installments. As the Service Coordinator at the Allen Woods Homes, I accompanied them, supported by Texas State Social Work student volunteer Elizabeth Swindle. The boys came in nervous but full of ideas! After enjoying many slices of pizza, the boys were ready to get down to work! Grace Davis from the Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse was the mediator for the table and Miguel was the first recorder to write down ideas. The first table discussion was about engagement with the youth. The boys volunteered to present first and represented the table. Amidst giggles and nerves, the boys presented their good thoughts and ideas

such as having outdoor activity time before class began every school day. The last two discussions were about what is stopping youth in leading healthy, active, and safe lives and coming up with creative solutions for these problems. During the last two discussions, a senior from the San Marcos High School joined the circle and helped encouraged the boys to express their thoughts and ideas and even went up with them to present first each time. They both enjoyed the experience and were praised by many adults in the event about how brave they were to present and how helpful they've been to the process of making a Youth Master Plan for the city. Mhyson said, "I had a lot of fun and I liked doing the speeches!" They were a great representation of the San Marcos Housing Authority and truly shone as leaders. The Housing Authority continues to bring opportunities such as these to our youth to not only challenge and engage, but plant seeds of hope and brighter futures. Great job boys!

Curious about how the "sequestration" of federal funds will affect the Housing Authority?

So are we. According to Albert Sierra, Executive Director of the Housing Authority, we still do not have any figures for the low rent program. All indications are that we are expected to carry on but with less subsidy. Housing Authority operations should be scrutinized to see where costs can be reduced. The Public Housing Subsidy, which makes it possible for us to charge less than market rental rates, may be reduced by as much as 20 percent. Ouch.

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program may also be affected. There might be a reduction of administrative costs along with decreases in the portion of rent paid to private landlords by the Housing Authority. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is scrutinizing the operations of all housing authorities more closely. Operating Reserves (funds required to maintain cash flow and to support operations in the event of sudden loss of funding or some urgent need) are being reduced in response to a mandate from HUD.

The Housing Authority is committed to its mission of providing decent, sanitary, and affordable housing to low-income families and individuals in San Marcos. Watch this space for more information as it becomes available.

