

THE ORACLE

HUD ranks the Housing Authority as a High Performer

By Stewart Dale Spencer. Photo credit: Maria Calcaben



Left: Rose Miranda, Public Housing Manager, and Albert Hernandez, Maintenance Supervisor. Right: Lana Bronikowsky, Programs Manager, and Albert Sierra, Executive Director.

The San Marcos Housing Authority (SMHA) is pleased to report that it was recently designated as a “High Performer” for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013 by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This came as a result of receiving a score of 91 out of a possible 100 points on the Public Housing Assessment System Score Report.

Every year, HUD’s Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) does an evaluation of the performance of every housing authority in the nation. They look at several indicators of the overall health of a housing authority. These indicators are the physical condition of the housing authority, its financial condition, various management factors, and how well they utilize their annual Capital Fund allotment.

The physical score comes from the annual inspections that are done by REAC. The SMHA received a score of 36 out of a possible 40 points. Inspectors selected by HUD examine the condition of housing authority offices, maintenance buildings, resident services centers, and the housing units. This score is greatly affected by whether or

not tenants report issues in their units. It is also up to the maintenance staff to notice where repairs might be needed. When the maintenance workers change the air filters each month they also look at the general condition of the unit and pay attention to a few specific items —like smoke detectors — but a thorough inspection is performed only once per year for each unit.

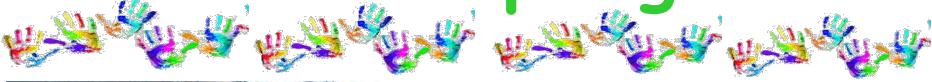
With regard to the financial condition of the SMHA, much of this comes from the annual audit. HUD looks at things such as whether or not rent is being paid on a timely basis and whether or not account receivables and payables are being properly managed. The SMHA’s Programs Manager, Lana Bronikowsky, oversees the performance of management
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Housing Authority management would like to remind residents of our housing sites that for security and reasons of safety, they should stay away from construction areas. Also, please do not talk to the contractors working on empty units. They need to focus on their work and should not be distracted by interacting with the residents, other than a friendly hello. This helps us hold down costs.



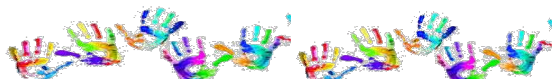
ALLEN WOODS HOMES—PODER LEARNING CENTER

Sensational Spring Break



Action and adventure filled the Spring Break week! The Spring Break Program joined Allen Woods kids with the Chapultepec Homes kids on some field trips. The kids enjoyed exploring caves and staying balanced in the anti-gravity house at Wonder World Park, bowling strikes at Sunset Lanes, and learning about gardening thanks to a scavenger hunt at Dunbar Community Park set up by intern Lynn Krebbs.

The Allen Woods kids got to go to a special field trip to the Luling Farm Foundation to learn about agriculture and get their hands dirty pulling weeds and picking pecans! At the end of the week, the Resident Assembly sponsored a Fundraiser Plate Sale. Resident Assembly officers, residents, and interns volunteered to cook and assemble the plates: chalupas, Spanish rice, fruit salad, and tea. A few children came to help advertise around the neighborhood. Together, we raised over \$180 to be used for the kids program and neighborhood activities!



Cómo Preparar a sus hijos para los exámenes STAAR

- ◇ **LA NOCHE ANTES:** Asegúrese de que su hijo/a duerma bien por la noche.
- ◇ **EL DÍA DE LA PRUEBA:** Asegúrese que su niño/a tome un buen desayuno. Recuerde - los alimentos que contienen azúcar pueden causar que su niño/a se sienta soñoliento después.
- ◇ **DESPUÉS DE CADA DÍA DE PRUEBAS:** Dígales a sus hijos lo orgulloso que se siente de ellos.
- ◇ **CUANDO USTED RECIBA LOS RESULTADOS:** Hable con su hijo sobre tres cosas en las que él/ella va a trabajar el próximo año escolar.

<http://www.scusd.edu/document/preparin-g-your-child-star-testing-parent-tips-spanish>



FREE GUITAR LESSONS

SPACE IS LIMITED!

If class space is filled, your child will be on the waiting list for the summer class.

FIRST COME,
FIRST SERVE



Call Maria at 512-396-3367
for more information.

Ages: 9 & above

Springtown Villa



RESIDENTS FROM SPRINGTOWN VILLA CELEBRATED ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH A GOOD OL' GAME OF LOTERIA.

THE GAME WAS SPONSORED BY BEE FIRST PRIMARY HOME CARE. JUANITA TORRES WAS THE GAME CALLER.



Residents celebrated March birthdays with a St. Patrick's day theme. Cynthia Watts stops to enjoy her slice of birthday cake.

Happy birthday Cynthia!

Cathy enjoys her birthday slice of cake listening to good conversation.

Happy birthday Cathy!

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Beatriz		Cathy
James N.		Virginia
Chris		James W.
Cynthia		Gloria



Resident Lu Hickey attended a Question and Answer session provided by SONAS Medical Supply where Mario Garcia talked about Scooters and Wheelchairs.

Q&A



C. M. Allen Homes—KAD Korner Store



Kappa Delta Chi women continue to support the Kids Against Drugs afterschool program with tutoring, activities, mentoring, and sharing the importance of education. A big thank you to these wonderful volunteers and to Texas State University!

Kappa Delta Chi

Another big thank you to Social Work 2375 students from Texas State University! KAD kids enjoy their daily interactions with the volunteers. Over the years, many of these students have returned to do their internships at the SMHA and more than a few have been hired in one capacity or another. Some come back to volunteer just because they fall in love with the kids and want to see them grow up.



**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH**



Dates to be announced



Chapultepec Homes — Family Self-Sufficiency

The kids at Chapultepec enjoyed a Spring Break trip to Wonder World Park with the kids from the PODER Learning Center at the Allen Woods Homes. They explored the cave and learned its history. They rode the train that led to feeding deer, peacocks, llamas, and chickens. They made their way up the observation tower where they could see all of San Marcos. Finally, they experienced the anti-gravity house.

During the break, the kids also enjoyed a trip to the bowling alley, went on a scavenger hunt, and took a trip to the park.



Thank you to Rocke and Justine from Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union for coming out again to speak to the FSS participants about using credit wisely. Participants learned what credit is, why credit is important, the most common types of credit, how to obtain credit, the pros and cons to having credit, what is in a credit report, understanding credit scores, and understanding how inquiries as well as positive and negative accounts affect your credit score. If you would like to see your credit report, visit annualcreditreport.com.



FSS Classes are held on the third Thursday of every month at 6:30 PM in the Chapultepec Adult Learning Center. If you have suggestions about class topics, call Megan at 512-396-3364.

The FSS Program at Chapultepec Homes is looking for motivated families to participate in the program. If you or someone you know is ready to be successful . . . and is highly motivated to make it happen . . . contact Megan at 512-396-3364 to learn how we help change lives!



High Performer (continued from page 1)

personnel in this area. For 2013, the SMHA got a score of 22 out of a possible 25 points. HUD also examines the level of reserves on hand. HUD says that housing authorities should have six months of operating reserves. The SMHA fell short of that because it has invested so much money in maintaining and improving units over the past few years. According to Albert Sierra, the executive director, "We err on the side of decent housing."

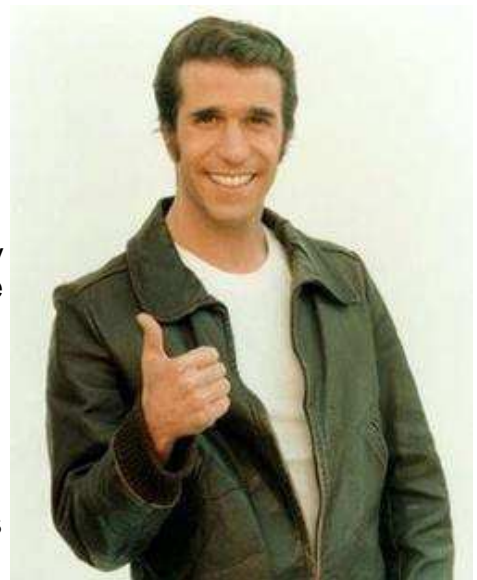
The SMHA got a score of 23 out of a possible 25 points for management. This is largely influenced by our occupancy rate. HUD monitors this in real time based on data that our personnel enter into the Public and Indian Housing Information Center via online submissions. This occurs every time a family moves in, moves out, has a change in household composition or income, and when the required annual review is completed. Entries are also made for annual inspections and whenever a unit is taken off the rent rolls temporarily for major repairs or modifications.

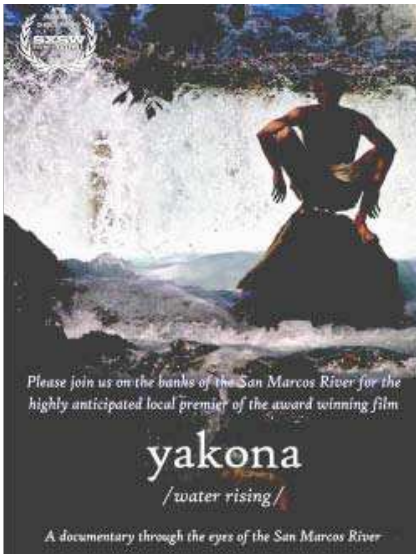
The occupancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of occupied unit months by the total number of available unit months. In 2013, the SMHA had an occupancy rate of just over 98%. Keeping units occupied is a constant challenge because the screening process takes time and move outs often come in waves. Also, the SMHA wants to ensure that the "make ready" for new tenants is done properly. In the recent past, the SMHA was doing more major modifications to units when they became vacant but because of vacancy rate and financial pressures there are more repairs and fewer unit modifications. The SMHA simply can't afford to do as many of the nice touches that it had been doing, both in terms of vacancy time and money.

The final indicator relates to the Public Housing Capital Fund, which provides money for physical and management improvements each year according to a HUD-approved 5-year plan, which is updated on an annual basis. HUD looks at whether or not the housing authorities are spending the money in accordance with that plan and in a timely manner. One of the ways the SMHA does this is requiring contractors to meet deadlines. The score was the maximum of 10 points.

The Public Housing Assessment is done annually and the SMHA is usually just below or just above the high performer line. A high performer is 90 to 100 points. There is no "above average" designation. A standard performer is 60 to 89 points. Below 60 points results in being designated as a "troubled" housing authority and if not remedied, HUD takes over the management of that housing authority directly until such time as the problems can be resolved and the housing authority is returned to local control.

One of the benefits of being designated as a high performer is that those housing authorities receive slightly more Capital Fund money in the next fiscal year. The SMHA will continue to work to obtain the highest score possible while not sacrificing repairs and improvements to get a higher score on the financial indicator. The SMHA encourages residents to report problems. Some problems are simply not visible to our maintenance staff but residents are aware of them. Sierra says, "Maintaining a high performer rating is a combination of resident and staff efforts," and he credits the entire Public Housing management team for helping to achieve this rating. The SMHA is committed to ensuring that public housing in San Marcos is something of which our community can be proud.





Local residents Anlo Sepulveda and Paula Collins created an 85-minute documentary about the San Marcos River called *Yakona*. This is from yakona.org: *Yakona, meaning "rising water" in a local Native American language, is a visual journey through the crystal clear waters of the San Marcos River and its headwaters at Spring Lake. This film takes the viewer from prehistoric times through the modern era on an impressionistic journey from the perspective of the river. While filming, many extraordinary changes occurred surrounding the springs and river, including the removal of the Aquarena Springs theme park, the restoration of Spring Lake and the uncovering of ancient human remains. We were there to capture these historic changes to the river.*

We follow the river from source to sea, through the changing seasons, interpreting the river's time and memory, and documenting this relationship between the natural world and man. Yakona speaks directly to the viewer with its beauty, appealing to humanity's higher nature, and the viewer begins to understand this is a river that yearns to remain unchanged despite everything that is changing around it.

***Yakona* premiered at the South by Southwest festival in Austin this year.**

It won the Audience Choice Award in the Visions category.

You can see it for free on April 12 @ 9 PM in Sewell Park.

MORE AWESOME VOLUNTEERS from the Housing Authority's annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon in January! On the right, Senior FSS Coordinator, Megan Perez, along with Resident Services Director, Gene Martin II, presents a certificate to Shaun Contreras. He was the Top Volunteer at the Chapultepec Homes in 2013 with over 100 hours. His name was added to the permanent plaque for Chapultepec.



On the left, Service Coordinator, Maria Calcaben, poses with Pablo Gomez, who serves far beyond his paid time as a part-time employee. He continues to be the Top Volunteer at the Allen Woods Homes. He volunteered over 1,200 hours in 2013! His name went on the permanent plaque for Allen Woods. We love all our volunteers at Allen Woods but Pablo's record will be hard to beat!