

THE



ORACLE

A Change of Luck

by Maria Calcaben

“Do you know what ‘Maldonado’ means in Spanish? It means ‘bad luck’! Ha!” Martín Maldonado laughed. Martín had lived at CM Allen for two years with his wife, Idolinda, and his son, Martín Jr., before the Memorial Weekend Flood forced them to evacuate their home.

The Maldonados remember returning to a home full of mud, mosquitoes, and the stench of sadness of memories lost. Their home may have been destroyed, but their family stayed strong. They packed up the remainder of their things and slept in their car for a few days until they were able to stay in a hotel for a week as they considered their next move. They moved to Mission and for two months they lived in a house that was left to them by Idolinda’s family. There was no electricity. They used most of their money on food and car maintenance. They were able to get FEMA assistance for moving expenses and utility deposits when they moved back to San Marcos and into a unit at the Allen Woods Homes. During the transition, Idolinda suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized for many days. Idolinda said she gained strength through her family and her faith. She said, “Keep your faith in God and don’t doubt Him. Never have any doubt.” Once Idolinda was back on her feet, the Maldonados returned to rebuilding their life. They came with very few things but feel blessed by all the help they have received from friends like Dennis and Ruth Philips, who helped them find furniture. They are also grateful to the Housing Authority Maintenance Department for their hard work in getting their new home ready. Lastly, they are thankful to SMHA Resident Services for helping them sign up for Mattress Firm’s Flood Relief program. They received a \$700 voucher. They stretched their voucher by spending it on Labor Day and were able to get two beds and box springs! Looks like the Maldonado’s luck is changing for the better!



FROM THE MAIN OFFICE

- ›SMHA OFFICES WILL CLOSE AT 2 PM ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23 FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY AND WILL REOPEN THE FOLLOWING MONDAY.
- ›SMHA OFFICES WILL CLOSE AT 2 PM ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31 FOR THE NEW YEAR’S DAY HOLIDAY AND WILL REOPEN THE FOLLOWING MONDAY.

ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER



Reader's Theater



An evening of food, fun, and laughs filled the PODER center as the Bobcat Mentorship Program, a partnership with the Education Department at Texas State University, presented a "Reader's Theater." Texas State mentors worked with kids of the PODER After-School Program to present skits, songs, and dance to parents and guests. Residents RJ and Kevin Lizama-Reyes were the special cooks for the evening, treating guests with food from their home, the island nation of Guam. Parents were able to share how the program has affected their child with Dr. Chris Milk and Blanca Loya, the professors behind this pilot program. It was a great way to end the semester and we look forward to continuing the program next semester!

The Winning Shot!

The Allen Woods Billiards Competition was held at PODER in November and drew in some talented competitors! We hope this will become a regular event. The contestants included (left to right) Julie Cowan, Brigitte Bell, Lola Bell, Gloria Ortiz, and Pablo Gomez (not pictured). The contestants enjoyed friendly but intense bracket games and the last game between Julie and Gloria attracted a crowd of enthusiastic spectators. Gloria took the winning shot and won a free groceries trip to HEB. Any residents of Allen Woods



wanting to play a friendly game of pool can come to the center and play between 8:30 AM and 3:00 PM, Monday through Thursday.



Thanks so much to all the Bobcats in our Mentorship Program for helping us this semester!

Springtown Villa



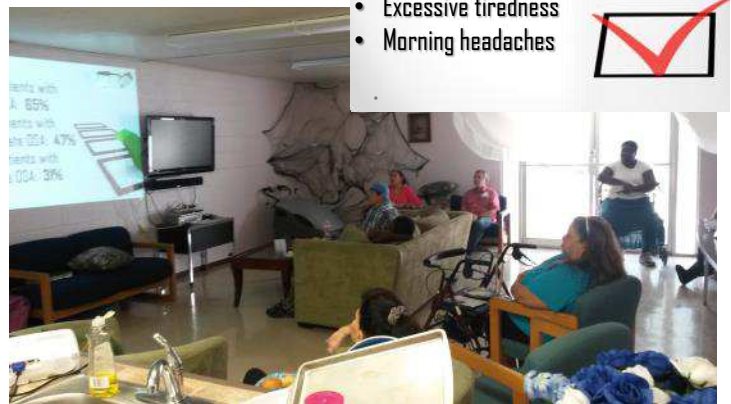
With the new year fast approaching, residents attended Medicare 101 hosted by Cal Hero. Residents were able to ask questions regarding any changes in their benefits.



Children from the PODER Learning Center visited Springtown Villa for Halloween. They went trick or treating and participated in holiday activities hosted by residents, Texas State volunteers, and staff.



Brad Mills provided our residents with information on new techniques for treating sleep apnea. Residents asked questions regarding any risks with the new techniques.



C. M. ALLEN HOMES — KAD KORNER STORE

I have lived at CM Allen with my son, Jose, for the last four years. Our experience here has been great. I have wonderful neighbors. Bonnie does an awesome job encouraging us to participate in the different events at the KAD center. She is very resourceful and does so much for our little community. We were victims of the Memorial Day flood and were displaced but with the SMHA providing all kinds of information about the help available to us, it was less stressful. We were gone for three months and have been back now for two months. Coming back home was such a blessing. We find that Bonnie is right back at working to bring the community back together by providing different activities at KAD. Jose and I feel so blessed that we are finally back home. Such a great feeling! We also want to thank Amy Valles, the Site Manager, and the staff of the SMHA Maintenance Department for all their help in making it possible for us to come home. — Rosaura Rodriguez



Tatum Guerra with Jordan Health Services provided lunch and a game of Bingo for our residents. Tatum talked about the different health services available to them. The attendees were able to speak to Tatum privately after the meeting. Most importantly, everyone was happy to be back together again.



Words can not express my gratitude to Mario F. Carranza and Adrian Munoz of Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity. They helped me move all the furniture from one building to another after the October flood. Without their help KAD would not have been ready for the Thanksgiving meal, which was sponsored by the "Betas" and the Kappa Delta Chi sorority. These awesome future leaders bought the food, cooked it, and served it up along with a generous helping of smiles.

Bonnie Pecina
Service Coordinator



CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

A HOME OF THEIR OWN

Brenda McKinney and her three children, Charles, Keishon, and Brandi (L to R in the picture) came to the Family Self-Sufficiency Program in 2009. Brenda was working part-time at the H-E-B Plus grocery store in Kyle, a few miles north of San Marcos. She was looking for employment as a medical administrative assistant. Brenda became a medical administrative assistant through Everest prior to moving to Chapultepec. At least once every couple of weeks, Brenda could be found in our computer lab with her financial binder, paying all of her bills and checking her finances. She always did her best to pay her bills on time and save money for her children's extra-curricular activities at school. Brandi was active in the San Marcos High School Marching Band, Keishon participated in SMHS Choir and Charles was part of the football and basketball teams at Goodnight Junior High School. As a single parent to three growing teenagers, Brenda did everything she could to make sure they had what they needed. Even after she got a raise at work and started receiving child support, Brenda took on a second part-time job at Rudy's Bar-B-Que. Brenda still hadn't been able to find employment as a medical administrative assistant so she decided H-E-B would be her career path for the time being. She began taking management training courses provided by H-E-B in order to show her dedication and determination to gaining full-time status and the benefits that came with it. Recently, H-E-B recently gained national attention by instituting a stock sharing plan for 55,000 employees so Brenda made the right decision. In 2013, she earned a full-time position as a team member and graduated from the FSS Program. In January 2014, just days before Brenda was about to sign a lease to a new apartment, she received notice that she had been approved for a Habitat for Humanity home here in San Marcos. Brenda remained at Chapultepec for one more year until her home was built. In April 2015, Brenda and her children moved into a brand new, energy efficient three-bedroom home that will go perfectly with the homemade quilt that was donated to Habitat so they could present it as a house-warming gift to new Habitat families!



If you missed November's FSS Class, you missed a great class! Stewart Dale Spencer, Resident Services Assistant Director, educated our residents on budgeting with his famous Bean Budget Exercise. The activity is not only wonderful for building relationships between residents but also gives them a visual representation of how they are spending money and the best practices to reduce debt and build savings.

Looking to stay on top of news and information pertaining to FSS? Current participants and FSS Graduates can request to join our new Facebook group: "SMHA Family Self-Sufficiency Program"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1645690175700986/>



MEALS-ON-WHEELS RECOGNIZES VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE

For over 25 years, Meals-on-Wheels at Allen Woods Homes has been a staple in the elderly community as a place to meet and have a good meal. Helen Snow (L), the Operations Director of Meals-on-Wheels, and Beatrice Pacheco, Meals-on-Wheels Site Manager, were the hosts of their 10th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. Recognition of senior centers included Lockhart, Wimberley, Buda, and Kyle for their commitment to helping seniors get meals in those cities. In San Marcos, the distribution sites include La Vista, Allen Woods Homes, and the San Marcos Senior Center. Volunteers from various churches including First Baptist, First Christian, First Methodist, United Methodist, Promiseland, First Presbyterian, St. Mark's Episcopal, and St. John's would delivered meals to the homebound. Tenants from Live Oak and students from the Crossroads



Program come to Allen Woods and put meals together for delivery and to serve to those enjoying their meal in the company of neighbors at the Allen Woods Dining Room. Special recognition went to Antonia Garcia of St. John's Catholic Church. Bea relies upon her as a "star volunteer recruiter." Allen Woods residents Lola Bell and Pablo Gomez were also recognized for their dedication to the program. Guests enjoyed eating a home cooked meal prepared by Bea and her sons, Josh and Justin. There were also random raffle drawings. Residents Anita Palacio and Brigitte Bell were among the winners receiving gift cards to restaurants. For more information on how to get meals or to serve as a volunteer, call Meals on Wheels at 512-353-5018.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

>The Low Income Housing fund ended October with a \$6,257 surplus. Springtown Villa had a \$21,212 surplus. The Section 8 Program had a deficit of \$4,822, which will be reimbursed by HUD.

>Occupancy rates for October: Public Housing - 95%, Housing Choice Voucher - 98%, Springtown Villa - 98%. Albert Sierra said that he expects the Section 8 waiting list to be opened for a short time in January.

>Sierra reported that there was no comments from the public hearing held on the amendment to the 5-year plan for the Capital Fund Program. The Board approved a resolution authorizing the SMHA to borrow \$400,000 from the San Marcos Reinvestment Corporation for the recovery of the CM Allen Homes. It allows the SMHA to take up to 6 years to repay the funds at 1% interest, to be paid by future Capital Fund allocations. It will be an unsecured loan because HUD regulations do not allow public housing properties to be used as collateral. He said that so far the SMHA has paid out \$201,000 from reserves. He also said that \$139,000 of Capital Fund monies was reallocated to the CM Allen recovery project and that the request for approval was submitted to HUD.

>CM Allen Status Report - The FEMA "recovery period" was extended. So far FEMA has qualified \$51,000 of expenses. Sierra expects to add another \$30,000 of additional expenses connected with the initial response to the Memorial Weekend Flood. With regard to the October flood, insurance adjusters from the Texas Municipal League are using "scope of work" estimates from the first flood and will compare them to their own assessments to determine what can be covered. Sierra said we still have not actually received any funds from any source. (In a follow up the next day, Sierra said that the SMHA has received a \$40,000 donation from a private donor in the form of a special supply account set up at McCoy's and at Lowe's.) Sierra said that the St. Bernard organization will provide materials and work and that we have assigned them to the units that had the most damage. In response to questions from the Directors, Sierra said that we have not yet had a response to our request for flood assistance funds from the United Way of Hays County. He said that the units that had already been repaired had a little water during the October flood but that the freshly-caulked baseboards prevented water from getting into the walls. New damages to other units are still being assessed. With regard to returning families, he said that some people were not coming back because of the second flood, some cannot afford moving costs, and some prefer to wait for their original unit to be ready. He said the October flood will add about three months to the total repair time. Sierra explained the lengthy process required just to begin repairs on a specific building. The repair job itself takes about 2 weeks. He said 30 units have been repaired, 27 units are occupied, and 4 are about to go under contract with St. Bernard.

STAR WARS CELEBRATION

Do you remember the first time you saw the Imperial Star Destroyer cross the big screen in the first Star Wars movie? Wow, you must be really old! That was way back in 1977! But maybe you saw it on the film's 20th anniversary in 1997 when Star Wars was digitally remastered and re-released to movie theaters, along with The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. Maybe you first saw it on VHS or DVD or Blu-ray and have been eagerly watching trailers for Star Wars: Episode VII. It doesn't matter when you first saw it. If you love Star Wars, watch the first movie again along with other fans in a group viewing of Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope. Try your hand at a fun related craft. Bring your own snacks. Wear a Star Wars costume! Saturday, December 12 at 1:30 PM.

**SAN MARCOS
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

PHYTONUTRIENT GARDENING

Phytonutrient gardening is growing the most nutrient dense, healthy, and rich varieties of fruits and vegetables you can. Joe Urbach, a certified Texas Master Gardener, currently serves as the Vice President of the Hays County Chapter of the Master Gardener Association. He teaches and lectures on gardening regularly and can often be found speaking at local nurseries, libraries, garden clubs, and extension offices. Wednesday, December 16 at 6:00 PM.

NEW RULE REQUIRING SMOKE-FREE PUBLIC HOUSING

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, HUD. **ACTION:** Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule would require each public housing agency (PHA) administering public housing to implement a smoke-free policy. Specifically, this rule proposes that no later than 18 months from the effective date of the final rule, each PHA must implement a policy prohibiting lit tobacco products in all living units, indoor common areas in public housing, and in PHA administrative office buildings (in brief, a smoke free policy for all public housing indoor areas). The smoke-free policy must also extend to all outdoor areas up to 25 feet from the housing and administrative office buildings. HUD proposes implementation of smoke-free public housing to improve indoor air quality in the housing, benefit the health of public housing residents and PHA staff, reduce the risk of catastrophic fires, and lower overall maintenance costs.

DATES: Comment Due Date: January 19, 2016.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposed rule. All communications must refer to the above docket number and title. There are two methods for submitting public comments.

1. Submission of Comments by Mail. Comments may be submitted by mail to the Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW., Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410-0500.

2. Electronic Submission of Comments. Interested persons may submit comments electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. HUD strongly encourages commenters to submit comments electronically. Electronic submission of comments allows the commenter maximum time to prepare and submit a comment, ensures timely receipt by HUD, and enables HUD to make comments immediately available to the public. Comments submitted electronically through the www.regulations.gov Web site can be viewed by other commenters and interested members of the public. Commenters should follow the instructions provided on that site to submit comments electronically.

Note: To receive consideration as public comments, comments must be submitted through one of the two methods specified above. Again, all submissions must refer to the docket number and title of the rule. Facsimile (fax) comments are not acceptable.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/11/17/2015-29346/instituting-smoke-free-public-housing>



FUN FAMILY EVENTS

SIGHTS & SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS - December 2 — 5, San Marcos Plaza Park

Enjoy four full evenings of holiday festivities. Highlights include carnival rides, arts & crafts, pictures with Santa, local school performances, live nativity scene, and a food court. Gates open at 5 PM every night. Nightly Admission: \$5 (Kids 12-and-under are free); 4-Day Wristband at the gate: \$10. (Presale 4-Day Wristband: \$7, available at the San Marcos Activity Center or the San Marcos Parks and Rec. office.)

Family Night, Wednesday, Dec. 2nd, 5 PM to 11 PM. Enjoy half price carnival rides with the entire family.

Texas State Night, Thursday, Dec. 3rd, 5 PM to 11 PM. Wear your TSU t-shirt and enjoy \$1 drinks. Music performances on the main stage, singing the best Christmas tunes of all time!

Friday, Dec. 4th, 5 PM to 11 PM. Come see the best of the best on the Friday night main stage.

Special Music, Saturday December 5th, 5 PM to 11 PM. Special guests artists from the community.

Carnival Open, Sunday 12 PM to 6 PM-ish. The Carnival area will continue to run on Sunday afternoon. (No other events will be open. No vendors or entertainment will be available. Only the carnival will have services running. Admission is free and tokens for each ride can be purchased from the Carnival token booths.)

COOKIES AND COCOA AT THE COURTHOUSE: How the Grinch Stole Christmas, December 10

Find a spot on the Courthouse Lawn with your blanket and snacks. The show starts at 6:00 PM. This event is free. There will be a free Photo Booth.

WHAT WE DO

The San Marcos Housing Authority has provided decent, safe, and affordable housing for San Marcos Residents since 1950. We have three housing programs: Public Housing, Housing Choice Voucher, and Project-based Section 8. These programs provide housing for about 574 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.

WHO WE ARE

Board of Commissioners

Frank Arredondo—Chairperson
Mary Barnhart—Vice-Chairperson
Catherine Welsh—Resident Comm.
Gloria Salazar—Commissioner
Richard Cruz—Commissioner

Administration

Albert Sierra
Executive Director
Lana Bronikowsky
Accountant/Programs Manager
Albert Hernandez
Maintenance Supervisor
Rose Miranda
Public Housing Manager
Gene Martin II, LBSW
Resident Services Director
Frances Garcia
Section 8 Coordinator
Amanda Ramirez
Springtown Villa Manager

HOUSING OFFICES

Allen Woods Homes (Main Office)

512-353-5059

C. M. Allen Homes

512-353-1116

Chapultepec Homes

512-396-3364

Housing Choice Voucher

512-353-5061

Springtown Villa

512-396-3363

RESIDENT SERVICES CENTERS

Chapultepec Adult Learning Center &

Family Self-Sufficiency

512-396-3364

KAD Korner Store

512-392-6273

PODER Learning Center

512-396-3367

Springtown Villa

512-353-7343