

THE ORACLE

SMHA Resident Services Achieves a Major Milestone



As announced in a previous issue, the Housing Authority was awarded a new, three-year continuation grant in the Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Program (ROSS) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). What we could not report on at the time was how well we accomplished the goals of the previous grant, which began in October of 2010 and concluded last September. We recently completed our final report to HUD and we are pleased to be able to report that our Resident Services Department performed exceptionally well under very challenging circumstances.

In 2010, the Resident Services was faced with a major challenge, which resulted from significant changes in the ROSS program at the national level. When we obtained our first three-year grants in 2006, we were awarded two major ROSS grants. One was for services to elderly and disabled residents of public housing. The other was for families. Those grants made it possible to hire two service coordinators, a support technician, and several part-time tutors for the after-school programs. It also paid for a specially-equipped mini-van to service disabled residents as well as a regular mini-van, which supported teen activities. The grants also supported the programs in other ways. Our overall program expanded significantly. When the 2009 grants were announced, rule changes limited us to only one grant and one service coordinator. We were awarded a continuation grant but had to deal with the loss of two-full time employees and funding for our tutors. Ouch.

Adversity gives rise to creativity. We were determined to maintain our level of services. We made some changes to the design of the overall Resident Services program, which ensured that we would have a full-time coordinator at each of our two largest public housing sites, supported by funds from HUD, the City of San Marcos, allocations from the Housing Authority's low rent program, United Way of Hays County, and other sources. We secured a major expansion of the Kid's Cafe program from the Capital Area Food Bank and expanded our connections with Texas State University to secure additional volunteers and interns.

Last month, we reported to HUD that we achieved 86% of our target goals, which included a variety of services as well as the resulting outcomes of those services. These goals included things like connecting elderly residents with health and personal care resources so they could live independently as long as possible. It also included services to families such as access to computer labs and connections to employment and training resources along with financial literacy education. For program participants, the average *increase* in annual income was almost \$16,000! We also achieved significant results in the area of youth leadership.

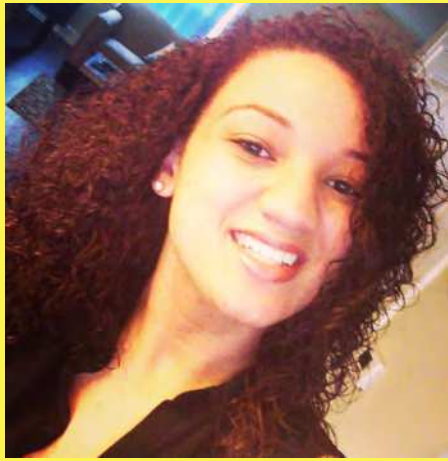
We fell short of some targets, such as enrollments in GED programs and helping families establish and maintain a budget. Some of these were the result of circumstances outside our control and some have pointed to weaknesses in the design of our program. We learn and adapt. We have experienced and capable personnel who are good at securing resources and connecting our residents to those resources. We are confident that we can continue to help residents improve the quality of their lives and reduce their dependency upon public assistance. Here's to another successful report three years from now!



The residents of the Allen Woods Homes, through their Resident Assembly, approached Housing Authority management and said that they needed a place where their dogs could run and play with other dogs. Elderly residents and those with limited mobility had a hard time meeting the needs of their furry companions and the city dog park required traveling on foot or by wheelchair through a very congested area. The happy pooches in this picture were present for the Grand Opening of the new dog run in December. They were too busy running in circles to "paws" for a comment.

ALLEN WOODS HOMES—PODER LEARNING CENTER

Reap What You Sow



Although it's chilly outside, Destinee Wells, our new PODER After-School Program Kid's Café Monitor, has been a busy bee tending to the garden of children at PODER! Destinee is originally from Germany, but her family moved when her military father was reassigned to San Antonio, Texas in 1997. Destinee likes to read, take road trips, volunteer, and do things that allow her to learn something new and give back to people. She lives in San Marcos and

attends Texas State University. She is majoring in Sociology. After she graduates, she hopes to go on to graduate school and eventually get her PhD. Destinee feels that working with the kids at Allen Woods Homes gives her the opportunity to serve her community. Although she can't always see the difference she is making in their lives, she enjoys seeing the growth and development over time in the kids and in the community. With patience and imagination, Destinee says she "hopes to plant seeds of strength, love, and positive development into the kids in the after-school program." Ella Wheeler Wilcox said, "A weed is but an unloved flower." In time, this bountiful harvest will reflect the great work Destinee has put into them!

Joy and Happiness

The PODER After-School Program ended the year 2013 with a great party! The children enjoyed snacks, games, and prizes! Activities included an arts and crafts table, s'more making, and a photo booth. All the children received a special toy and goodie bag. Special guests included former volunteers Michael Schneider and Italia Moreno. We want to thank all the volunteers that have helped us this year including Kid's Café Monitor Destinee Wells. Here's looking forward to another successful year!



A Sense of Community



A holly jolly Christmas Party was hosted by the Allen Woods Resident Assembly! The food was prepared by dedicated members of the assembly and donations from residents. Residents enjoyed the company of their neighbors while listening to Christmas songs and relaxing to Christmas images. A special thanks to Resident Assembly members Amanda Camacho, Jane McWhorter, Lola Bell, Brigitte Bell, and Christine Williams as well as volunteers Christi Leal and Mary, daughter of Maria Flores for hosting this special event. The *Neighbors Helping Neighbors Can Food Drive* helped create food boxes to give away as presents to families in most need this holiday season. The next Resident Assembly meeting will be Tuesday, January 7 at 6 PM at the PODER Learning Center. We'll see you there!

Springtown Villa

Dedicated hearts like yours
Are not so easy to find.
It takes a special person to be
So generous and kind.

To care so much for your fellow man
Is a quality all too rare.
Yet you give of your time and talents,
For all in need to share.

So thank you for being a volunteer. We are
privileged to work with you. We want you to
know how appreciated you are, not just today,
but the whole year through.



Rosa Morales



Mary Helen



Janice



Mr. Lombardo



Jorge (CARLS Jr.)



Eloy



Bobbi Riel



Janet Arron



Linda

THANK
YOU



Puente family



Gary Job Corp Students



C. M. Allen Homes—KAD Korner Store



Marina Santos has finally received the results for her GED tests. She passed all of her tests on the first try. After being out of school for 17 years she was not feeling very confident in trying school again. She tried the practice tests to see about placement and her advisor stated that she should just go for it. So she did, and she passed! She wants to say thank you to the C. M. Allen Resident Services staff for the encouragement and support she received. Having access to the computer lab was a big help being that she was able to refresh her knowledge on various subjects before taking her tests. She is very thankful for the KAD after-school program where her children can get a hot meal and also get help with their homework. Finally, she thanks the Texas State volunteers for assisting her children with their homework.



The kids got in the holiday spirit by making edible reindeer.

The Capital Area Food Bank of Texas is sponsoring a Cook for Your Life Class series. Classes will be every Monday at the KAD Center from 1:00 — 2:30 PM and will be held on January 6, 13, & 27 and on February 3 & 10. Come sign up to participate.



The Hays County Family and Consumer Science program, part of Texas AgriLife, is coming to the KAD Center to get the kids involved with the Hatching Project. It will start on Feb. 4 and end on Feb. 26. It will be a great learning experience for the kids!

Chapultepec Homes — Family Self-Sufficiency

Naeemah Cato came to San Marcos from Houston to attend Texas State University. When deciding where to attend school, she looked at Texas State and the University of Texas. She decided she liked Texas State because the campus was smaller and more personal and Texas State had more resources to offer. Naeemah always knew she wanted to help people, and thought she would enjoy a career in nursing, but she soon discovered Social Work was her calling. She came to the San Marcos Housing Authority to volunteer as part of a requirement for one of her classes. She chose the Housing Authority because she hadn't heard of us and she didn't know anything about what we do. She completed 50 hours of volunteer service in our after-school program. She said her favorite thing about working with the kids at Chapultepec was helping them with homework and watching them learn. In the picture to the right, she poses with Emily, one of the kids in the program. Naeemah expects to graduate in May 2016 and we hope to see her again. Thanks, Naeemah, for everything!



Katherine Beavers served at the San Marcos Housing Authority in 2012 when she was required to volunteer for one of her classes at Texas State University. She came back to us this past semester as an intern to complete her degree in Family and Childhood Development. Her favorite part of working with our after-school program was creating lasting bonds with the children and helping them with homework. Katherine says this was good experience for her future as a teacher. Last month, she graduated from Texas State University. She will substitute teach in Austin, her home town, and will attend Texas State University in Round Rock beginning next August to earn her Master's Degree and teacher certification. Katherine wants to be an elementary teacher and the kids hope she will teach at Crockett or Travis Elementary.



5 Easy Tips for Keeping

Your New Year's Resolution

1. **Pick Realistic Goals – Keep the goals small and simple.**
2. **Define Those Goals – Be specific. Develop specific, concrete ways to reach your goal.**
3. **Set a Schedule – Write it down but don't be afraid to change it if it's not working for you.**
4. **Don't be Upset by Setbacks – It's part of the process.**
5. **Enlist Additional Help or Support – This will help increase your success in maintain your New Year's resolutions.**

[psychcentral.com/archives/
new_years.htm](http://psychcentral.com/archives/new_years.htm)



Computer Security Info from Kim Komando

(Go to www.smpa.org and click on the Newsletter link to download this issue of The Oracle to be able to click on the links in this story)

Security software is one of the first and best things to install on your computer. An unprotected Windows computer can pick up a virus on the Internet in under a minute. Even Macs aren't immune to viruses. A recent Trojan outbreak infected more than 600,000 Macs worldwide! Protection doesn't have to be expensive, though. Research shows that free antivirus solutions are just as effective as paid programs.

Antivirus

There are tens of thousands of pieces of malware circulating on the Internet, including viruses, worms, Trojans, dialers and other monsters. These pose a serious threat to your security. Antivirus software can counter this malware. You should only run one antivirus program on your computer. If you run multiple antivirus programs, they'll conflict. Make sure to keep it updated, as virus definitions are constantly being added.

Free antivirus for Windows:

- [AVG AntiVirus](#)
- [Avira AntiVir Personal](#)
- [avast!](#)

Free antivirus for Mac:

- [Sophos Antivirus for Mac Home Edition](#)
- [Avira AntiVir Personal](#)



Firewall

A firewall hides your computer from probing hackers while you're online. It also watches your computer's network traffic to watch for suspicious activity. As with antivirus software, only run one firewall program at a time or they will conflict. Windows 7 and OS X both have decent built-in firewalls. The Windows firewall is turned on by default. To turn on the firewall in OS X, go to System Preferences>>Security & Privacy.

Free third-party firewalls:

- [Zone Alarm](#)
- [Outpost Firewall](#)

Anti-spyware

Spyware and adware are other big threats to computer security. Spyware tracks your Web surfing and reports your interests to a computer on the Internet. Adware sits on your computer and feeds you ads. Both spyware and adware will slow your machine. You need programs to keep spyware and adware from taking root and you need other programs to annihilate spyware and adware that collects on your computer. You should use multiple anti-spyware programs on your computer. Unlike antivirus software and firewalls, they won't conflict.

Free anti-spyware programs:

- [Ad-Aware](#)
- [Spybot Search & Destroy](#)
- [SpywareBlaster](#)

Emergency software

No system is entirely safe from malware. The above programs can remove most infections, but there are some infections that just won't go away. Here are some powerful last-ditch programs you can use to clean up your system.

- [Malwarebytes](#)
- [Windows Defender Offline](#)

Safer browsing

Microsoft's Internet Explorer 8 and earlier is rife with security holes. IE9 is much better, but it isn't available on Windows XP. If you haven't upgraded to IE9 on Vista and 7 I strongly recommend you do so. If you want an alternative to IE on any version of Windows, here are some browsers I recommend.

- [Mozilla Firefox](#)
- [Google Chrome](#)



Source: The Kim Komando Show (www.komando.com)

**Sometimes the BEST gift ...
is the gift of sobriety.**

If you need help or know someone who does

Let us help 1901 Dutton Dr. Ste. E, San Marcos
www.hayscaldwellcouncil.org
 Providing Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Locally

 **Hays Caldwell Council**
 -On Alcohol & Drug Abuse

512.396.7695
800.733.1214

The Council is a local non-profit agency dedicated to promoting community and family enrichment through substance abuse education, prevention, intervention and treatment.

FREE COMPUTER CLASSES AT THE SAN MARCOS PUBLIC LIBRARY!

Wednesdays at 10:00 AM & 5:30 PM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

The library offers free classes in basic computer skills, Internet searching, email, Microsoft Word and Excel. Call 393-8200 or email smpl@sanmarcostx.gov to register.

Henry Bush Child Development Center Enjoys New Garden

Suad Hooper, the Head Start Program Director, is very grateful to the Texas State University Horticulture Department for their help in establishing a garden on the ground of the Head Start center at the Chapultepec Homes. She had this to say: "Children are natural gardeners. They're curious, like to learn by doing, and love to play in the dirt. Working in a garden, a child can experience the satisfaction that comes from caring for something over time, while observing the cycle of life firsthand. Gardening gives children a chance to learn an important life skill, one that is overlooked in standard school curriculums. Gardening is also a great way to teach environmental awareness by exploring the workings of nature."





Event Calendar

- **January 1**
New Year's Day, SMHA Offices Closed
- **January 11**
Sewing 101, San Marcos Public Library, 2 PM
- **January 18 - 19**
Creation Station, San Marcos Public Library, all day
- **January 20**
Martin Luther King Day, SMHA Offices Closed

San Marcos Public Library — Free Tax Aid!

Free Tax Aid Starts February 1

Walk-in Hours:

Mondays, 3:00 - 6:00 PM

Saturdays, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

AARP Volunteers offer free income tax assistance for the elderly and low income. E-filing is also offered. Taxpayers who utilize this service should bring with them a copy of last year's income tax return, social security cards for everyone on the return, a photo ID, and any other tax-related information. Tax forms will be available in the library by January 15.

WHAT WE DO

The San Marcos Housing Authority has provided decent, safe, and sanitary 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 569 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

Rose Brooks—Chairperson
Lorraine Burleson—Vice-Chairperson
Vacant—Resident Representative
Ovelia Mercado—Commissioner
Mary Barnhart—Commissioner

Administration

Albert Sierra—Executive Director
Lana Bronikowsky—Accountant/Programs Manager
Albert Hernandez—Maintenance Supervisor

Rose Miranda—Public Housing Manager
Gene Martin, II—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