



## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

*By Maria Calcaben*

With the craziness of the holidays, from frantic cooking to stressful shopping, we can easily lose sight of one of the most important things about this season: loving thy neighbor. This December, teens from the PODER After-school Program brought some of this holiday spirit back into the neighborhood. Intern Jordan Phillips led a discussion with the group about the importance of giving, especially to those most in need. The first task was to create donation boxes for the Neighbors-Helping-Neighbors Canned Food Drive so residents could come in and donate cans during this one-week drive. Usually this drive is sponsored by the Allen Woods Resident Assembly but the teens seemed very interested to help in the project this year. A little friendly competition grew between the boys and girls of the group, but overall the goal was the same: helping neighbors that were in need of food this winter. In the two days that the teens went out to the Allen Woods neighborhood and collected cans, they set a new record and collected a total of 366 cans and dry goods! The girls were the overall winners collecting 239 food items.



I helped Jordan and resident volunteer and FSS participant Kathy LaPlant-Israel put boxes of food together and wrapped them up as presents. In the end, there were 15 boxes that were created to give to the elderly and some families that needed food this holiday season. Seven of the boxes went to neighbors in Allen Woods. The rest were shared with other Housing Authority sites and with Meals-on-Wheels participants. I supervised the distribution at Allen Woods, which was done by a small group of after-school kids during their winter break, just before Christmas.



They brought each box to the door and joyfully exclaimed "We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" They even went to the front office to wish Executive Director Albert Sierra a Merry Christmas. The kids had a great time spreading holiday cheer and were rewarded with cookies and treats from the front office for their hard work. It was a successful drive and a great way to teach the kids how a *little effort* can go a *long way* and make a *big difference*.

**RESIDENTS: SEE IMPORTANT NOTICE ON PAGE 6!**

## ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER



### Go, Cats, Go!

The Texas State Women's Basketball team invited kids and families from Allen Woods to attend a free game in December. The team had worked with the kids during the summer by hosting free basketball camps. SMHA was recognized during half time for the work we do in the community along with other community organizations the basketball team had worked with throughout the year. Service Coordinator Maria Calcaben and teen Makayla Spurlock went to the half-court to receive the recognition! The kids cheered for the home team. It was an exciting game! All the kids got free shirts and cookies. They also met Santa and got to take a picture with the Bobcat mascot, Boko. Great fun for all!

## Reasons to Celebrate

The residents of Allen Woods were filled with Christmas spirit this year! One activity had a few kids help decorate the Christmas tree at the front office. With hot cocoa in hand and laughter in their hearts, the kids worked together to string lights and hang ornaments. On the last day of the kids program, they were treated with a story telling of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and made ornaments. The party also included cookies, cakes, chips, and weenies. They were able to personalize their hot chocolate with multiple ingredients from our hot cocoa bar. The teens played some fun games and received silly gifts with their own version of the White Elephant gift exchange. Thanks to the generosity of Hays County United Way and the Terry Scholars, each child went home with two gifts! The kids weren't the only ones that had fun this season. PODER was packed with parents and elderly residents at the Resident Christmas Party. Each household brought at least one dish for a potluck and a small gift for the White Elephant gift exchange. Everyone was able to get a plate full from a variety of foods including spaghetti, turkey, chicken sandwiches, and rice. There was also lots of desserts including pies, bonuelos, cookies, and a cake donated by Bee First Primary Home Care. A few kids from the after-school program stepped up to help serve these treats to their family and neighbors! This holiday season brought opportunities for residents to come together and celebrate as a community but also opportunities to share with their neighbors. Check out the story on another page about our successful can food drive!





## Springtown Villa



Our Christmas cake was donated by Bee First and most of the food for our Christmas party was purchased with Resident Council funds.



*Our residents enjoyed our yearly Christmas party. This year we had a great turnout, which made us very happy to see that residents are participating in our events. The residents were very excited to participate in the white elephant gift exchange. Thank you, Amanda Ramirez, for taking on the responsibility of cooking the entire Christmas meal. Without you this would not had been possible!*



For the month of December we had a raffle to raise money for the Resident Council. We did very well and we had two very happy winners: Gene Martin and Bill Cruz!



MAY YOU HAVE A SAFE & HAPPY  
& HAPPY NEW YEAR !

It's always a good start when you have cookies and coffee in the morning.  
Thanks Ramona!





## C. M. ALLEN HOMES — KAD KORNER STORE



It was a bittersweet goodbye as Christmas break drew near. The KAD kids are so sweet and appreciative of everything I have done during my time volunteering. The kids get so attached to everyone that volunteers here, which makes it that much harder for me to leave. I hope to volunteer here during the spring semester to continue affecting the KAD kid's lives in a positive way. It's not goodbye but more of a "See you later kids!"

Shelbi White—Social Work Volunteer



We are so proud of these two KAD members Devin and Darin! They achieved their first Cub Scout uniforms along with their first badges. Devin and Darin already have goals for the next badges they want to receive. Way to go Devin and Darin! Keep up the good work.



Many thanks to the Texas State Association Of Recreation Enthusiasts for their donation to the SMHA KAD afterschool program. Professors Burke and Zimmerman have been great champions of our cause and we are very thankful for their support .



## CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

The FSS Program is going gangbusters! We have expanded the number of families enrolled in the program because it works . . . So well, in fact, that we have been too busy to give proper homage to some of our recent graduates. When combined with other resources and proper support, public housing works and here is the proof!



*Gabrielle DeLeon and her son Brodee, came to Chapultepec Homes in August 2014. Gabrielle was working full-time at the outlet mall and enjoyed her job, but was ready for something that offered more security, stability and normal hours. She was referred to the Office of the Attorney General just before they opened their office in San Marcos, and was hired to work in their San Antonio office. Eventually she was able to transfer to the San Marcos location, where she continues to work today. She completed the FSS Program and earned escrow in 2 years.*

*Melinda Troncoso and her son Grayson joined the FSS Family in October 2014. Melinda was working in a call center that contracted for the Attorney General Child Support Division and while she enjoyed her job she wanted more from her career. She left her job there and started working for Hill Country MHDD, better known as Schieb, as a Family Partner. Melinda is able to assist families with resources and supportive services that they may need to improve their quality of life. Melinda also completed the FSS program and earned escrow within two years.*



*Pablo Palomino and his family joined the FSS Program in May 2013. Pablo and Sofia utilized the FSS Program to help them achieve their goals of homeownership and financial stability. Pablo works for Country Inn Suites and Sofia works for Holiday Inn. After Pablo completed multiple certification courses, he was promoted to General Manager which came with a substantial pay increase. Due to this increase, Pablo and Sofia will achieve subsidy freedom! The couple has begun the process of purchasing a home and will use the knowledge and escrow gained from FSS to check this item off their bucket list.*

*Rebecca Reyes joined the Housing Authority family in June 2011 and joined FSS the following month. Rebecca worked as the Administrative Assistant for Chapultepec Homes for a couple of years before moving on to a full-time position outside of the Housing Authority. After just one year, she came back to the SMHA but in our Section 8 office. Rebecca graduated the FSS Program earlier this year.*



## NOTICE TO RESIDENTS

The HUD Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) has rescheduled the inspection of the SMHA for mid-February. We should have the exact date by the next issue of The Oracle. Please help us by observing these points:

- Do not block all windows in a room. Make sure there is at least one window that can serve as a fire escape in each room.
- Do not run wires through window openings. Also, cables running across floors must be covered with duct tape.
- Report leaky faucets, GFI electrical outlets not working, beeping smoke alarms\*, missing refrigerator shelves or bars, missing stove knobs, and other things that need to be fixed or replaced.

*\*Do NOT disable smoke alarms. We will replace the batteries or replace defective units. A disabled smoke alarm could result in your eviction. The Housing Authority and HUD take this requirement very seriously.*

### Other Notices:

- Please remove all Christmas decorations, lights, and spray foam by January 15.
- Rent and other payments must be made by check, money order, or a credit/debit card. Payments by cards will have a 3% convenience fee added to the total to cover bank charges.

## Texas NAHRO Scholarships Available!

**Deadline:** February 10, 2017

The Texas Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (TXNAHRO) is a professional membership organization consisting of agencies and individuals who administer housing and community development in the state of Texas. NAHRO is the leading housing and community development advocate for the provision of adequate and affordable housing and strong, viable communities for all Americans, particularly those with low and moderate incomes. TXNAHRO provides scholarships each year to deserving high school seniors, graduating in the Spring following this application deadline, and who are currently living with their families as Public Housing or Section 8 program residents. Available scholarships are one (1) \$2,500 Jim Hargrove Scholarship, and eight (8) \$1,000 scholarships.

Applicants for TXNAHRO Scholarships must:

- Be a resident of public housing or a participant in the Section 8 program in which you are living.
- **Be a graduating high school senior.** (You can not have graduated in the previous year or be in college already for this scholarship. It is intended to help high school seniors get started immediately in college).
- Demonstrate exceptional school attendance.
- Demonstrate high academic achievement.
- Demonstrate leadership and/or high level of motivation.
- Be a resident of a Housing Authority or Community Development (CD) agency that is a member of TXNAHRO.

Get more at: <http://txnahro.org/Scholarship/Applicationoverview.html>







**Albert Sierra accepts a donation from Lalo Rodriguez, Deputy Commander of Amvets, in support of our after-school programs.**

## Shattering the Stigma of

*Suicide*

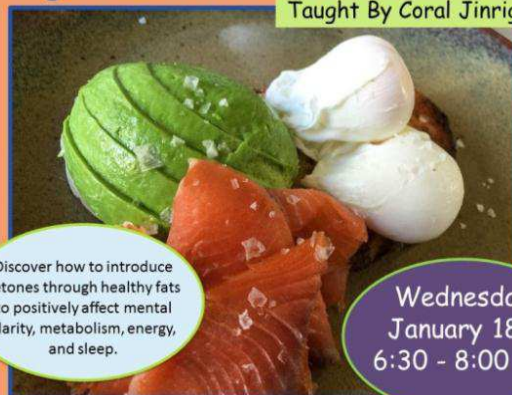
Thursday  
January 26<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 PM

An open, honest community discussion about the stigma surrounding suicide in our society, and what we can do to reach out. Conversation led by Kelly Giesler.

San Marcos Public Library 625 E. Hopkins 512.393.8200

## Ketogenic Nutrition Workshop

Taught By Coral Jinright



Discover how to introduce ketones through healthy fats to positively affect mental clarity, metabolism, energy, and sleep.

Wednesday  
January 18<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 - 8:00 PM

San Marcos Public Library 625 E. Hopkins 512.393.8200

## Financial Answers Series



Presented by  
Randolph Brooks  
Federal Credit Union

SAVING  
INVESTING



Part 1:  
Saving and Investing  
Thursday  
January 19<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 - 7:00 PM



San Marcos Public Library 625 E. Hopkins 512.393.8200

**BRING  
PROOF  
THAT  
YOU  
WENT TO  
ANY OF  
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AN FSS  
PARTICI-  
PATION  
POINT!**

## SMHA CALENDAR - January 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	2 SMHA OFFICES CLOSED	3	4	5	6 ALLEN WOODS RESIDENT ASSEMBLY 10:00 AM	7
8	9 CM ALLEN RESIDENT ASSEMBLY 1:30 PM	10	11 SPRINGTOWN RESIDENT COUNCIL 3:30 PM	12	13	14
	16 SMHA OFFICES CLOSED	17	18	19 FSS Class Chapultepec 6 PM	20	21
22	23	24 SMHA Board of Commissioners 5:30 PM	25 SPRINGTOWN RESIDENT COUNCIL 3:30 PM	26	27	28
29	30	31	<b>January</b> (in Latin, Ianuarius) is named after the Latin word for door (ianua), since January is the door to the year. The month is conventionally thought of as being named after Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions in Roman mythology, but according to ancient Roman farmers' almanacs Juno was the tutelary deity (patron or protector) of the month. ~ Wikipedia			

### LEADERSHIP

#### Board of Commissioners

Richard Cruz—Chairperson  
 Mary Barnhart—Vice-Chairperson  
 Gloria Salazar—Commissioner  
 Gerald Brown—Resident Comm.  
 Rose Brooks—Commissioner

#### Executive Director

Albert Sierra

### HOUSING OFFICES

Allen Woods Homes (Main Office)  
 512-353-5059  
 CM Allen Homes  
 512-353-1116  
 Chapultepec Homes  
 512-396-3364  
 Housing Choice Voucher  
 512-353-5061  
 Springtown Villa  
 512-396-3363

### RESIDENT SERVICES

Chapultepec Adult Learning Center/  
 Family Self-Sufficiency  
 512-396-3364  
 CM Allen KAD Korner Store  
 512-392-6273  
 Allen Woods PODER  
 Learning Center  
 512-396-3367  
 Springtown Villa  
 512-353-7343