

# THE ORACLE

## **FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMS MEET GOALS, PREPARE FOR CHANGES**

*by Stewart Dale Spencer*

The Public Housing FSS Program has been in operation at the Chapultepec Homes since 1993. The Housing Choice Voucher FSS Program was added in 2002. If you are a regular reader of The Oracle, you have seen the stories of many successful participants chronicled on these pages. *This* is a story about the success of the programs themselves and a preview of things to come.

Megan Perez is our Public Housing FSS Coordinator. You can find her at the Chapultepec Homes. Recently, she turned in our most successful performance in the history of the program. She helped 6 families to successfully complete their FSS Contract of Participation in the most recent program year. Participants secured 16 full-time jobs and 8 households moved to non-subsidized housing. Overall, we met 11 of 12 goals for that program with several being exceeded by significant amounts. The one goal we fell short on was a HUD policy priority related to the number of education and training services added as a result of on-going gap analyses by our Program Coordinating Committee, a goal which requires a community-wide response. The gaps we identified are the challenges facing a growing homeless population, chronic but non-acute mental health issues endemic in much of the low-income population, and the need for child care during nights and weekend to support workers in many entry-level jobs.

Gracie Campos is our Housing Choice Voucher FSS Coordinator. Her office is at Springtown Villa. The HCV FSS Program is somewhat smaller than its sister program but she also had a very successful year. She helped 3 families to complete their FSS contract in 2013. Participants secured 9 full-time jobs and 3 households moved to non-subsidized housing. Overall, we met 10 of 12 goals last year. One was the HUD policy priority mentioned above, which was a shared goal. The other dealt with financial literacy and the number of bank accounts established. Only two families without an established bank account came into the program last year and this goal is no longer relevant for the population we serve.

Last year was the beginning of a transition period for our FSS Program as HUD began preparing housing authorities for a merger of the two programs. It started with a standard list of services and outcomes, the result of research and experience spanning two decades. We chose to have identical goals for our programs, with only a slight difference in numerical targets. Because of the way the programs have been funded in the past, we had to apply for two different grants each year and there could be no overlap in service coordination. This year, we submitted only one application for a combined program with two FSS Coordinators. Because of program size requirements, we are expanding both sides of the FSS program so that the total enrollment goes from 55 families to 80 families. We expect to have all the details worked out in time for the July issue of The Oracle so stay tuned!

### **NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTS ABOUT LARGE TRASH ITEMS**

Large items (furniture, appliances, mattresses, etc.) that will not fit in the trash bins for regular trash collection should only be placed outside for pickup on Sunday night or before 8 AM on Monday morning. SMHA Maintenance personnel will pick them up Monday morning. We will pick up most large items except for common household trash and items such as car batteries and oil that are environmental hazards if not disposed of properly.

Please don't put your items out any earlier than Sunday night. Nobody wants to look at it. We are not charging you for this service because we want to do our part to keep our communities looking good. Please do your part. If we have to pick up large items at other times, the violator will be fined. This applies to all sites except the scattered houses. Contact your site manager if you have any questions about this.



## ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER

### THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

Gabriel Matthews grew up in New Orleans and made his way to San Marcos after Hurricane Katrina. When he was in the third grade, he watched *Star Wars* and became a big fan but because his family could not afford extravagant spaceship models, Gabriel decided he would create his own with cardboard, glue, and other materials he found. This began his love for creating F.A.C.T. (Functional Arts & Craft Technique) fantasy art pieces. He creates animals, spaceships, castles, fighter planes, and battle cruisers. Gabriel also suffers from depression and finds that focusing on his creations steers his attention away from the anxiety. He describes this technique, which he developed and named, as being like putting a puzzle together but he is creating the pieces to finish it. His story was featured on the front page of the *Times Picayune* (February 26, 1998) and the book *Self-taught, Outsiders, & Folk Art: A Guide to American Artists, Locations, & Resources* (Betty-Carol Sellen). Gabriel's art has been displayed at Jerry's Artarama in Austin and, with the encouragement of Maria Calcaben, the Service Coordinator, is on sale at the San Marcos Activity Center. His advice to budding artists: "Just do it. Everyone has a creative spark we got from God. It is beneficial and totally worth the contribution to society that everyone explores creative outlets."



### CONSEJOS JARDÍN

1. Observa tu patio y determina a qué dirección está orientado, cuanto sol o sombra recibe y cuán grande o pequeño es.
2. Visita tu vivero local.
3. Escoge plantas que quepan bien en las macetas que escojas.



Source: <http://es.wikihow.com/crear-un-jard%C3%ADn-en-el-patio>

## Resident Resource Fair

Need a job? Direction on re-starting your education? Health needs?



Wednesday, June 11

1PM—4PM

PODER Learning Center



## Springtown Villa



Springtown Villa residents attended El Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos' Cinco de Mayo luncheon. Tickets were donated by Dr. Israel Najera from the Hispanic Policy Network at Texas State University. Pictured from left to right are: Ramona Galvez, Ramona Coleman, Cherie Wood, Deborah Morris, Gloria Galindo and Bill Cruz.



Resident Council Vice-President Deborah Morris takes a picture with Congressman Lloyd Doggett during the luncheon. Deborah has been a strong voice for the residents at Springtown Villa.



**Resident Cherie Wood could not stop smiling as she has her picture taken with Congressman Doggett. Cherie was the "grito" winner at this year's Cinco de Mayo luncheon. She proudly shows off the \$50.00 bill she won.**



It was a win—win at the luncheon as Resident Council Secretary Bill Cruz strolls away with one of the door prizes. Bill was the winner of two shirts from the El Dia de los Muertos 5K Run/Walk & Kids Fun Run.

*Thank You*

to Dr. Israel Najera  
from the Hispanic Policy Network  
at Texas State University  
for donating the tickets for luncheon.



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



After two years of planning, work is finally starting on the improvements to Conway Park, located on Sturgeon St. across from the KAD center. Residents from C.M. Allen are excited to see this project get underway. The playground will not be ready until the latter part of August, according to a spokesperson for the City.



Service Coordinator Bonnie Pecina took advantage of the opportunity to raise money for the KAD center during this year's Cinco de Mayo celebration in Martindale. Items sold were donated by residents from CM Allen. On the right is a picture of Alicia Tubb. She participated in this year's Little Miss Cinco de Mayo. Alicia attends the after school program at KAD.



### Fun & Fit 4 Life Summer Camp Schedule:

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday

Beginning June 16 and ending June 27

A limited number of slots are available.

Sign up your child as soon as possible!

Applications are at the KAD Center.



Monday-Friday @ KAD

June 9— August 15 \* 11 AM to 1 PM

Sponsored by SMCISD & KAD

## CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

The Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse will be doing a MADD Parents Presentation on how to keep your children safe from underage drinking. Topics of discussion will be the dangers of underage drinking, the powerful influence parents have, and how you can keep your child safe from underage drinking.

**When: June 19**

**Where: Chapultepec Adult Learning Center**

**Time: 6:30 p.m.**

All FSS Participants who attend earn a participation point! Contact Megan at 512-396-3364 if you have any questions.



*“Success  
is liking yourself,  
liking what you do,  
and liking how  
you do it.”*

– Maya Angelou  
1928-2014



David Hamm joined us last month to fill in as our Kid's Cafe Monitor until the end of the school year. Mari Contreras was doing a great job but babies don't always conform to the school calendar so she had to leave a bit earlier than we had anticipated. David is from Victoria and came to San Marcos to attend Texas State, where he majored in Environmental Research Management, but what really attracted him was the beautiful river. David has two children, Bret, who recently graduated from Texas A&M, and Ally, who is in the 8th grade. David says what he likes most about working at the Housing Authority is the kids! From what we have seen, the kids have really taken to David and that helped make the transition easier.





## First Time Homebuyer Loans Available from the City

The City has a loan program for eligible first-time homebuyers. The loans provide up to \$7,000 for down payment and closing costs in the form of a second lien, 5-year forgivable loans, with no interest. You make no payments if you live in the house for 5 years and meet all program requirements.



Applicants may be eligible if they:

- Have not owned a home in the past three years (or meet one of the exceptions)
- Can qualify for a primary loan with the lender of their choice
- Have a total before-taxes household income that does not exceed HUD's guidelines
- Meet all other requirements as outlined in the policy

The house may be eligible if it:

- Is located inside the City limits (pays City taxes)
- Is in good condition and passes a safety inspection
- Is not occupied with renters that will have to move because of the sale
- Is a single-family style home (includes condos, townhouses, and patio homes)
- Is not a manufactured home or a duplex

The policy, income limits, and application forms are found on-line at [www.sanmarcostx.gov/cdbg](http://www.sanmarcostx.gov/cdbg). For more information contact Janis Hendrix at 512-393-8147 or [jhendrix@sanmarcostx.gov](mailto:jhendrix@sanmarcostx.gov).

## FSS PARTICIPANT TO EARN THE NEXT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOME



San Marcos Area Habitat for Humanity will begin construction this spring on the first of two houses in its Victory Gardens affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization program.

On April 14, Habitat San Marcos completed its purchase of a quarter-acre tract on Stillwell Street in the Victory Gardens neighborhood. The all-volunteer, nonprofit organization will demolish an uninhabitable house and replace it with two energy-efficient 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom homes designed by San Marcos architect Pax Chagnon, a local Habitat board member.

The Stillwell Street property was purchased with \$32,939 in federal Community Development Block Grant money allocated to Habitat San Marcos by the San Marcos City Council in 2012.

The first house will be occupied by Brenda McKinney, a San Marcos resident who has worked for 5½ years for H-E-B Grocery Co. McKinney and her three teenage children will put in 300 hours of "sweat equity" during their home's construction and make monthly payments on a 20-year, no-interest loan secured by Habitat San Marcos.

The homes are sold at prices drastically below market value because of thousands of labor hours donated during construction under the supervision of San Marcos homebuilder Tom Taber of Vista Homes.

Habitat San Marcos is looking for a partner family for the second Stillwell Street house. Applicants must earn less than 60 percent of the median household income for the region and demonstrate the ability to make monthly payments of about \$600.

To qualify as a partner family for San Marcos Area Habitat for Humanity's affordable home ownership programs, families can make no more than 60 percent of the median income for the Austin-San Marcos region.

For information about applying to become a Habitat for Humanity San Marcos partner family, visit [San Marcos Area Habitat for Humanity's website](http://SanMarcosAreaHabitatforHumanity.org) here.

*(Article reprinted with permission from the [San Marcos Mercury](#).)*



2013 GED Graduates

## 2014 HAYS COUNTY GED GRADUATION SET FOR JUNE 9

Hays County Literacy Action, in cooperation with Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas, is sponsoring its 25th GED graduation ceremony on Monday, June 9. Jonathan Engel, Adult Education Director at Community Action, requests that if you know someone who attained their GED anytime in the last 12 months, please encourage them to "walk the stage" and be recognized for their achievement! They can call Maribel Booker at 512-392-1161 (ext. 333) for details.



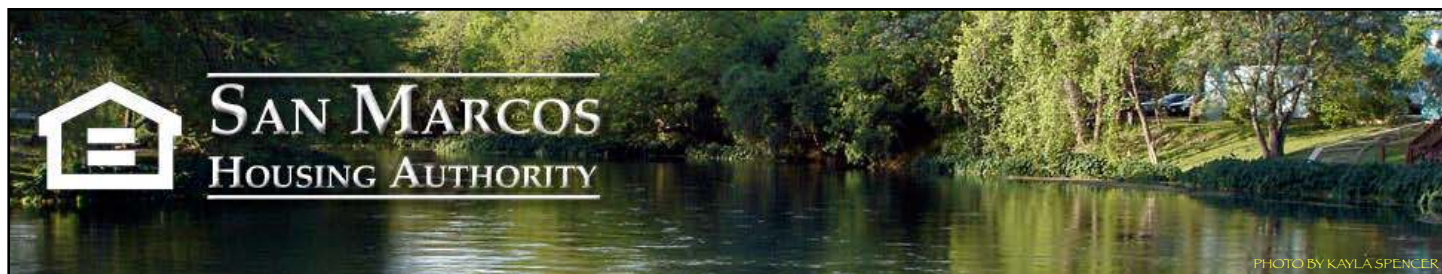
Now accepting applications to assist families with the cost of child care. Go online to [www.workforcesolutionsrca.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsrca.com). Click "For Parents" to print out an application for service or visit their office at 202 South C.M. Allen Parkway in San Marcos. You can also call toll-free to 877-223-0404 (ext. 4019) to have an application mailed to you.

### Chasing Rainbows *by Maria Calcaben*

When Albert Serra, Executive Director of the San Marcos Housing Authority, presented the opportunity to walk a mile during work time, many employees took advantage of it. Because of the progress they had made by choosing healthier lifestyles, Service Coordinators Megan Perez and Maria Calcaben took it a step further and invited residents and interns to join them in The Color Run! Described as "The Happiest 5k on the Planet," The Color Run is "a five-kilometer, un-timed race in which thousands of participants, or 'Color Runners,' are doused from head to toe in different colors at each kilometer." ([thecolorrun.com](http://thecolorrun.com))

Resident Mary, former intern Italia, and friend Chelsea joined Megan and Maria early on a Saturday morning to jog, walk, and run the 5K in Austin with hundreds of other runners. Megan and Mary had been running and walking around Chapultepec a couple times a week since January to get fit and train. With support from each other, it was easier for them to be encouraged to stick with a schedule and make time to walk during the week. Maria, Megan, and Springtown Villa manager Amanda Ramirez have also been trying out exercise classes at the San Marcos Activity Center. It is only \$6 to try a class and no commitment to stay plus there are childcare services. Megan says that the best part about the Color Run is knowing and seeing results in her accomplishments from all the hard work she's done these past few months. Need some motivation to get healthier? Talk to your Service Coordinator to find out how you can take the first step towards a healthier you!





## FREE & FUN THINGS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!

- **June 5, 12, 19, 26 ~ Summer in the Park Concert Series**

Hear great music on Thursday nights from 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM at the San Marcos Plaza Park.

- **June 10, 17, 24 ~ Movies in Your Park**

Enjoy a FREE movie in San Marcos Plaza Park every Tuesday. Feature begins at sunset with games taking place one hour before showtime. This month, you can see Monsters University, Despicable Me, & Frozen!

- **June 14 ~ Texas Water Safari**

Free admission for spectators to watch the beginning of the "World's Toughest Boat Race," at 9 AM at the Meadows Center (formerly the Aquarena Center).

- **June 21 ~ Cruise In Night at Dick's Classic Garage Car Museum**

Show off your custom ride at the monthly Cruise in Night at Dick's Classic Classic Garage. Enjoy a fun filled night of classic cars, live music and local eats. Event is open to the public and admission is FREE after 5pm.

For more Jazzy June events go to: <http://www.toursanmarcos.com/events/index.html>

### 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 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

Rose Brooks—Chairperson  
Mary Barnhart—Vice-Chairperson  
Susan Tilatitsky—Resident Representative  
Gloria Salazar—Commissioner  
Frank Arredondo—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