

# THE ORACLE

## Historic Flooding Hits Public Housing Site *by Stewart Dale Spencer*

In the wee hours of Sunday, May 24, a friend in Wimberley reported on Facebook that the Blanco River had been hit by 13 inches of rain. Soon after, I posted this: "There goes the Emergency Alert System again . . . this is going to be a Memorial Day Weekend to remember." I wish I had been wrong. The devastation from that event has reinforced why Central Texas is known as Flash Flood Alley. Because San Marcos does not have a radio station serving the general community and because of disruptions in the electric, cable, and cell phone grid, I had no idea that the San Marcos and Blanco Rivers had conspired to inundate much of the southeast side of town, an area that had not flooded in living memory. My first clue was when I ventured out later that day to run an errand to Walmart. The north-bound IH 35 frontage road over the San Marcos River was closed so I had to go around through the city and back out Hwy 80. Hmm. Walmart must have been flooded. I didn't immediately recognize the implication that if Walmart had flooded, that whole neighborhood would have to flood because the terrain is so very flat in what is, essentially, a natural flood plain.



It wasn't until I saw the damaged electric sub-station on River Road, followed by the sight of families putting their flood-soaked belongings on the curb at the C. M. Allen Homes, that I recognized the extent of the problem. I stopped in at the KAD Korner Store, our Resident Services facility at that site, and found standing water. Later that day, I was there with Albert Sierra, our Executive Director, pushing the muck out the door and wondering what the future would bring. Other Housing Authority employees were onsite talking to residents and trying to get some idea of how many homes were flooded and how badly. Only 4 homes and the management office had no flooding at all. Every other structure had from 1 to 30 inches of

Hill County flood water. Later that day, the San Marcos Police showed up in their SWAT vehicle — not to bust down doors but to hand out water and food to anyone who needed it. We passed out flyers letting people know that a shelter was open at the San Marcos Activity Center and that they needed to remove themselves and their belongings from their homes so we could go in and begin the restoration process.

The first significant help we had was from the City of San Marcos. On Day 3, Bulldozers came out to load debris and ruined personal possessions into giant dumpsters. On Day 4, help arrived from the Texas Division of Emergency Management (part of the Dept. of Public Safety). Experienced personnel from the Texas Civilian Conservation Corps showed up to help us work on tearing out sheetrock. They also helped residents clean out their homes, especially elderly and disabled persons. Up until that point, progress in flood mitigation had been very slow because we had only our 4 maintenance personnel and 3 or 4 contractors. On Day 6, President Obama made a Major Disaster Declaration for Hays County. That was a Friday. By the following Monday, FEMA contractors arrived to begin making assessments of the extent of the damage. — **Continued on page 7**



*On Day 1, Christopher Cruz was busy pulling flooded items out of his family's home. He told us that the evacuation warning came at 3:40 a.m. The water was up to his knees by the time they got out.*

## ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER



### Kick It Up a Notch!



The rain didn't stop some kids from coming to PODER and having fun learning about soccer, playing games, and eating a sack lunch, thanks to SCOPE (Students Community of

Progressive Empowerment), which hosted the soccer clinic. This Texas State organization's overall purpose is to create awareness for the undocumented community and put programs in place that would allow students to pursue more opportunities.

### PODER'S Got Talent



John F. Kennedy once said, "All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talent." The PODER Center wanted to show to friends and families the different programs we offer and some of the kids who have their own talents! The talent show included a guitar performance from Gustavo & Sofia from our guitar class (led by Anthony Bewley), a piano performance from Nancy, who has played since she was very young, and a karate/dance demonstration from our karate class led by volunteer Rana Zeidan. A surprise ending had the kids and their parents do the chicken dance to show off the chicks that successfully hatched from the AgriLife Extension Hatching Experiment! Families were brought together with a meal of pasta and dessert and enjoyed talking and laughing together in the outdoor seating!



### Actividades Divertidas Para Toda la Familia

Las **actividades divertidas** en familia son importantes de realizar porque permiten que los

integrantes de la misma estén unidos, ayudan a que las personas se sientan queridos y que puedan tener confianza los unos en los otros. Al tenerse confianza los hijos están dispuestos a contarle a sus padres sus inquietudes, problemas y demás dudas sobre decisiones que van a tomar. El compartir tiempo en familia no tiene porque ser costoso, ya que si no se cuenta con mucho dinero se puede alquilar un película divertida, hacer algo para comer y listo a disfrutar en familia.



Source: <http://www.educapeques.com/escuela-de-padres/actividades-divertidas-en-familia.html>

How can I set up  
a bank account?

I NEED HELP!

WHO CAN HELP ME PAY BILLS?

Am I eligible for food stamps?

## **RESIDENT RESOURCE FAIR**

PODER Learning Center

June 4th

1PM—5PM



**FREE RAFFLE PRIZES**

NEED A JOB?

Where can I apply  
for Medicaid?



## Springtown Villa



Even the  
squirrels are  
friendly at  
Springtown  
Villa.

Evaristo  
Hinojosa  
enjoys  
feeding

them. If you visit Springtown,  
don't be surprised if the squirrels  
come right up to you.

Marco Orrantia, Field Representative for Congressman Lloyd Doggett, met with residents to hear their opinions and field questions. He couldn't answer all their questions but he promised to get back to them with the answers, a promise he has since fulfilled. He presented a flag that had been flown over the United States Capitol building to Springtown Villa Resident Council Vice-President Arleen Machado and Secretary Bill Cruz.



Springtown Villa ladies celebrated Cinco de Mayo with a friendly game of Loteria, sponsored by BEE First Primary Home Care. Juanita, from BEE First was the game caller.



Film producer Kevin Huffaker speaks to our residents prior to showing the film

***Yakona*** — a powerful documentary about the San Marcos River. Yakona has won several film festival awards. It was a big hit with the Springtown residents for sure! You can learn more at [www.yakona.org](http://www.yakona.org).





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



Heartfelt   
**THANKS**  
 TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

*Our KAD students gave Lindsey, one of our Texas State student volunteers, a warm farewell hug. Lindsey was caring and helpful and the kids became attached to her as you can see! They didn't want her to leave! This is the hardest part about volunteering . . . having to eventually say goodbye. Don't let anyone tell you different. Fare thee well Lindsey!*



KAD ROCKS and so does ERICA, our intern from Texas State University. She has graduated and we will miss her!



Residents recently attended a nutrition class presented by Vivian Noriega and her assistant from the Capital Area Food Bank. The class was "It's Never too Early to Prevent Diabetes: A Lifetime of Small Steps for a Healthy Family." They shared what foods to avoid and what foods to include in our diet. At the end of the class, everyone participated in making delicious turkey-veggie wraps.





## CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

*Service Coordinators, Maria Calcaben & Megan Spiller along with volunteer Carlos Lujan, residents Kathleen Taylor and Roxanne Burnett, and friends Jennifer Lindsey and Charity Lindsey completed the Color Run on May 16!*



*Our heart-felt thanks go out to this lovely Family Life Education group from Texas State University! They presented a class on how to effectively communicate with friends, family, co-workers and partners. Their presentation included games that kept those who attended engaged and laughing! Thanks Ladies!*

Priscilla Mendoza from A+ Federal Credit Union presented information for our tenants about how to utilize a bank account, how to save money, ways to prepare for the future, and how to be mindful of spending habits. This is the second time Priscilla has presented information for FSS Participants and we really enjoy having her share her knowledge with us!





Give a big Allen Woods Homes "Hello!" to Anapaulina Perez, also known as Ana, our summer intern! Ana originally came from Mexico but has lived in El Paso for most of her life. She came to San Marcos to attend Texas State University and get her Bachelors in Social Work.

Ana will be with us the whole summer and after she graduates in August, she plans to start working on a Masters degree in Social Work. It's been a challenge for her to adjust to her new internship schedule but she loves getting first-hand experience on the field by working with the residents and kids. By the end of her internship, Ana hopes to learn more about kids and the roots of their behavior so she can be an effective leader. Her ultimate dream is to travel to South America with her husband and spend a few years establishing social services in communities that have none. In her free time, Ana loves to run long distance and cook with her husband. She says, "Always put God first. Life is more enjoyable if you do." Ana is excited about meeting our residents so if you see her, stop and say "Hello!" — Maria Calcaben

Springtown Villa residents welcomed intern Rebecca "Becca" Geiwitz. She is a senior at Texas State and will be receiving her Social Work degree in August. She plans to attend graduate school in the fall at Texas State. Becca grew up in Spring Branch. She is looking forward to being a Social Worker. She got into the social work because she realized how much she enjoyed helping and working with people. Becca loves getting to know people and listening to their stories and being able to help them with whatever they need. She attributes much of her success and where she is today to God who she says has continued to bless her and she is forever thankful and will continue to live her life for Him. Becca hopes that within a few years she might also join the Peace Corps and volunteer abroad. A quote she likes to live by is, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." — Gracie Campos



Amanda Torres enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program in July of last year. After moving in, Amanda found employment at a nursing and rehabilitation center as a cook. Although she enjoyed her job, she knew she wanted more. FSS Coordinator Megan Spiller told her about a free opportunity through Health Training Services (HTS) and Skillpoint Alliance, which offered scholarships for HTS students to complete the Certified Nurse's Assistant training program.

Amanda enrolled in the 4-week program and graduated in May. Amanda hopes to find a job in a doctor's office or in a hospital. Her daughter, Stephanie, surprised her with a card and some flowers to celebrate her accomplishment. Congratulations to a future FSS graduate! — Megan Spiller



Stewart Dale Spencer accepts a check from *Grande Cares*, a local community chest sponsored by employees of Grande Communications, Inc. The Grande employees awarded \$2,100 to in support of our Youth Development Program and media projects by kids in public housing., Jennifer Scharlach presented the check along with Glen Cook (back) and Greg Wurzbach (right).

## SAN MARCOS RECOVERY ORIENTED SYSTEMS OF CARE (ROSC) MEETING

MONDAY JUNE 15, 2015  
6:00-8:00 PM

Free informational  
meeting with a guest  
speaker.

### Sponsored By:

Hays Caldwell Council  
Hill Country MHMR  
Texas State University  
San Marcos Housing Authority  
Oxford House  
Good Will Industries  
Texas Neuro Rehab/Star Recovery

Support those in  
recovery from  
Substance Use!

No RSVP  
needed!

### Presented By:

Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (HCCADA)  
1901 Dutton Drive, Suite E, San Marcos TX, 78666

Please join us at HCCADA -- whether you are a professional, individual in recovery or want to support those in recovery! A light dinner will be provided.

### GUEST SPEAKER

RANDY REID OF THE AUSTIN ROSC

### About ROSC

- ❖ The framework for coordinating multiple systems, services and supports which are:
  - Designed to readily adjust to meet the individual's needs and a chosen pathway to recovery
- ❖ "The system builds upon the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, and communities to take responsibility for their sustain health, wellness, recovery from substance use disorders and improved quality of life"

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL HCCADA: 512-396-7695

### Historic Flooding - Continued from page 1

We are still assessing damage and working with FEMA and HUD to secure the resources we need for long-term recovery. For now, almost a third of our public housing stock in San Marcos is out of commission. Some units had extensive damage and will have to wait until the more lightly damaged units can be placed back in service. Almost every family has left C. M. Allen. In the first few days, there was a lot of confusion and emotions were running high, which is to be expected in a disaster situation. Some took to social media to express their anger and frustration against the SMHA and Albert Sierra in particular. I spoke with Mr. Sierra about the situation. He said, "Everything was done in coordination with our core staff, our Board, HUD, and FEMA. I even sought guidance from Legal Aid. They know real estate law. Some have said my initial letter was harsh but it was a serious situation. I don't want to evict people. We are getting legal counsel for those who refuse to leave [their flooded units] so we can repair them." Regarding the issue of June rents, Sierra said, "We waived rent for June as soon as we had authorization to do so. Initially, all we could do was waive late fees and refrain from processing evictions. HUD later said we could put units on a special 'casualty' status so that they would no longer appear on the rent rolls."



Best Food for Families, Infants, and Toddlers (Best Food FITS) is a community project started by the Nutrition and Foods department at Texas State University. Our objective is to improve the health of children in the San Marcos area by reducing the risk of obesity. Our strategies include increasing intakes of fruits and vegetables and decreasing intakes of sugar-sweetened beverages. This spring, Best Food FITS had a



wonderful experience working with the kids at the Chapultepec Adult Learning Center every Tuesday afternoon. Nutrition students from Texas State came every week to give a presentation on a nutrition topic and provide a cooking lesson. Some of our topics included "Breakfast for Champions," "Healthy Eating Out," and "Eat the Rainbow." We made many delicious recipes, including Apple Pie Oatmeal, Healthy Mac & Cheese, and Vegetarian Chili. The kids got hands-on experience preparing healthy dishes and learned to try new foods. We had such a great time learning with the kids! We are already excited for our fall classes, which will be held every Wednesday afternoon in the Chapultepec Adult Learning Center, beginning the first week in September. To learn more about Best Food FITS, check out our website, [bestfoodfits.fcs.txstate.edu](http://bestfoodfits.fcs.txstate.edu) or like us on Facebook at [Best Food FITS](https://www.facebook.com/BestFoodFITS)!

Rachel Powers, Best Food FITS Student Coordinator, Spring 2015





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

**Summer in the Park Concert Series - San Marcos Plaza Park @ 7:30 PM on Thursdays**  
Every Thursday from June till August you can enjoy an evening of music at the newly renovated Plaza Park. Fun for the whole family! Go to <http://smpaa.us/events/summerinthepark/> for the schedule of performers.

### **Movies in Your Park - Kickoff Event at San Marcos Airport (Tuesday, June 9)**

Movies in Your Park is taking a field trip to kick off the summer by showing Planes: Fire & Rescue at the Central Texas Wing Hangar of the Commemorative Air Force at the San Marcos Airport (1841 Airport Dr, Building 2249). Check out the historic airplanes and meet real firefighters! Pre-movie activities begin at 7:30 PM.



### **Movies in Your Park - San Marcos Plaza Park @ Dark on Tuesdays (June 16, 23, & 30)**

Pre-movie games begin one hour before sunset. Schedule: Annie (16th), Cinderella (23rd), The Mighty Ducks (30th). We encourage you to come early, pick your perfect spot and enjoy the movies & festivities. This event is FREE. Concessions will be available for purchase. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs.

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

### 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  
Susan Tilatitsky—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