

THE ORACLE

HIGH MARKS FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY...AGAIN!



L-R: Gene Martin II (Resident Services Director), Rose Miranda (Public Housing Manager), Albert Sierra (Executive Director), Lana Bronikowsky (Accountant & Programs Manager), Albert Hernandez (Maintenance Supervisor)

by Stewart Dale Spencer

Recently, I visited with Albert Sierra, the Executive Director of the San Marcos Housing Authority, to talk to him about the recent designation of the Housing Authority as a "High Performer" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) looks at several indicators of the overall health of a housing authority. (See the April 2014 issue of *The Oracle* on the newsletter link at www.smpa.org.) Last year, the Housing Authority earned 91 of a possible 100 points. This year, that score was surpassed by 3 points. This was the result of earning the maximum score on the financial rating portion of the assessment (25 out of a possible 25 points). The Housing Authority improved its previous score by increasing its reserves, having good liquidity, and by having no significant debt. Sierra said the Housing Authority was very close to the HUD recommended level for operating reserves. He

said this was helped by the fact that our occupancy is so high and because residents pay their rent on time. Most people are surprised to learn that only about 40% of the Low Rent Program revenue comes from the federal government. Nevertheless, because rent is based on income, Sierra said the improved economy has resulted in higher average rents. He also noted that the Housing Authority is at 97% occupancy. This rate is based on unit months leased versus unit months available. Higher average rents and a higher occupancy level results in a better cash flow.

There was no change in the score for Management (23 out of 25 points) and Capital Fund utilization (10 out of 10 points). There was no change in the physical score this year (36 out of 40 points) because a HUD inspection is only required once every three years for high-performing housing authorities. Sierra said he doesn't take that for granted. He said the Housing Authority encourages residents to report damages and malfunctions within their units. With regard to the overall appearance of the properties, he said that Housing Authority people are always looking out for what's needed and doing their best to maintain the properties. He also said that the Maintenance Department turns vacant units around quickly and that the Public Housing Management personnel do a good job of getting units filled. Sierra said the Housing Authority has to use a lot of contract work because it's difficult to find qualified maintenance employees.

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ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER



A huge THANKS to all our volunteers from the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet accomplishing 50+ hours in one year: Carlos Lujan, Lola Bell, Johnny Villanueva, Pablo Gomez, and Efrain Saucedo!



Love for the Neighborhood

The Resident Assembly had a great Valentine's Day Bake Sale raising over \$200! With plenty of pre-orders, residents and members of the San Marcos community showed their love for Allen Woods by purchasing strawberry desserts, cakes, cupcakes, and cookies. All were homemade by residents, interns, and staff. The money raised will be used to benefit residents in the Allen Woods neighborhood.



A Helping Hand

Let's give a big hand to Lacey Horne, our new spring intern at Allen Woods Homes! Lacey is from Austin and is in her last semester as a Social Work major at Texas State. She plans to start working on her master's degree in the fall. She's enjoyed her internship so far,



learning new things everyday and being able to provide assistance to children and families in need. One challenge she has come across is wanting to take on more than she can handle. She just wants to help everyone! Lacey is learning to balance quality and quantity. She hopes to make a difference in the lives of residents and the children with whom she will be working. She advises others, "Don't be afraid to ask for help. There will always be someone willing to lend you a hand." If you would like assistance, please call Lacey at 512-396-3367 or visit the PODER Learning Center! She's here to help!



"Perhaps every day is not good but there is something good in every day."

Springtown Villa

Bee First Primary Home Care



Bee First representative Juanita Torres takes a picture with birthday girl Ramona, who was also a door prize winner!



Juanita Torres from Bee First, Brenda Ramos with Rosy Health Care Services, and Amanda Sanchez with New Braunfels Regional Rehabilitation Hospital are always ready to provide good information to our residents. The ladies also provided refreshments and food for our birthday celebration.



Resident Arleen Machado is ready for CTMC annual Valentine's Dance at the San Marcos Activity Center.

Residents Ramona Galvez, Deborah Morris, Pedro Puente and Lu Hickey pose for a group picture during the Valentine's Dance sponsored by CTMC, the City of San Marcos, and AA Care.

Pedro had the ladies smiling as he took time to dance with each one of them. Residents are looking forward to April's dance when the theme will be *Western Showdown*.



C. M. ALLEN HOMES — KAD KORNER STORE



Our Kappa Delta Chi Girls Are Back! The girls have volunteered their services for over ten years, helping in the afterschool program by mentoring, tutoring, leading and inspiring our youth towards a successful and brighter future! Their motto is "Leading With Integrity, United through Service".



Thanks to the Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity, Inc. volunteers, our boys are back on the basketball court AND more homework is getting done at KAD! Now that's teamwork!



Carmel Washington created a card for her mother during a Valentine's Day activity. She was excited that she won the Best Card Contest!



Jose and Alyssa, previous KAD tutors, recently visited the place where they served so many youth. Alyssa is currently a Mariachi Music teacher in Uvalde Texas. Jose is pursuing a career in law enforcement. They said, "Who can forget about KAD?" It's great to see former volunteers and see how their time at KAD helped them to mold their own lives!

CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

Priscilla Mendoza from A+ Federal Credit Union presented information to our participants about budgeting. Priscilla discussed the importance of values and how to



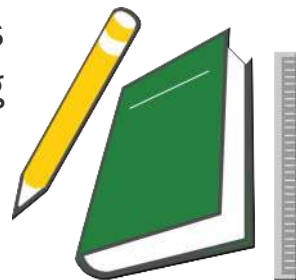
effectively plan a budget so you won't forget your values. If you would like a copy of the information, contact Megan at 512-396-3364.



Jason Boys with Skillpoint Alliance spoke to FSS participants about upcoming training classes being offered to Hays County Residents. Skillpoint Alliance builds partnerships among industry, education, and the community leading to college and career

success for Central Texans, while meeting employers' needs for a qualified workforce. If you are interested in learning more about their programs, contact Jason at 512-814-3266.

<http://www.skillpointalliance.org>



(High Marks for the Housing Authority (continued from Pg. 1))

Because of the good economy in Texas over the past few years, many qualified maintenance workers, for a variety of reasons, prefer to work as independent contractors.

Sierra said that a stable workforce and a good partnership of Housing Authority teams have been critical factors. In addition to Public Housing Management and the Maintenance Department, Sierra said that Resident Services Department programs and activities help improve the general level of happiness and satisfaction on the part of the residents. He talked about the many activities that go on at each site and that there are so many opportunities for residents to get connected to their neighbors. He also noted that in recent years there has been very little graffiti.

Finally, Sierra addressed the issue of volunteers. He said, "The Housing Authority is able to attract good volunteers because we have good people running the Resident Services Program." He got no argument from me on that point. We reminisced about the changes over the years and how when I joined the Housing Authority in 1991, the after-school program was run by 3 part-time Youth Advocates and was limited to a small space in the C. M. Allen Homes office. There was more space at the Allen Woods Dining Room but the program was only 2 days a week at each site and served only about 30 children. Now, we have a nice facility and a full-time Service Coordinator at each site, serving all residents and over 100 children. We talked about how it has taken time to build up the relationships within and outside the Housing Authority that make the whole program work. We are looking forward to another successful year and a trail of improved lives at the end of 2015!



SAN MARCOS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Free Tax Aid! February 2 through April 13, Mondays 3:00 to 6:00 PM, Saturdays 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Gardening 101 Saturday, March 14 @ 3:00 PM, Jonas Jones, farm manager for Gray Gardens in Buda, will share his knowledge of the organic approach to garden site location, composting, crop selection, soil building, planting, fertilizers, pest control, harvest, and crop storage.

GED Registration Part 1: Tuesday, March 24 at 1:30 or 6:30 PM

GED Registration Part 2: Thursday, March 26 at 1:30 or 6:30 PM

(You must do both parts of the GED registration process!)

SPRING BREAK EVENTS!

SPRING STORYTIMES, TUESDAY, MARCH 17 & FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 10 AM & 11 AM.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY CRAFT, TUESDAY MARCH 17, 2 - 3 PM.

LEGO MANIA, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 4 PM

PUPPET SHOW, THE TORTOISE & THE HARE, THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 10 AM & 11 AM.

Call 512-393-8200 or go to sanmarcostx.gov/library for more library info.



Community Action, Inc.
of Central Texas

Head Start & Early Head Start Program

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

WHO:

Children Birth to 4 years old for families who qualify, including children with disabilities.

WHERE: SAN MARCOS, TX

A. Washington CDC
0-3 Year Olds
103 Hays Street
Center# 512-353-1507

Henry Bush CDC
3 Year Olds
722 So. McKie St.
Center# 512-396-3533

Bonham Head Start
4 Year Olds
Center# 512-395-5623



For additional information, please visit

www.communityaction.com



Head Start Services are free for families who qualify!

- ◇ Child Care ◇ Health ◇ Nutrition ◇ Education ◇ Family Services ◇
- ◇ Transportation for children with special needs ◇
- (Please ask for details)



FREE & FUN THINGS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!

• **Smart Orchestra Spring Pops Concert** - San Marcos High School Performing Arts Center, March 7
Come join the SMART Orchestra for their first concert of the Spring. Start Time: 2:00 PM. Admission: Free and open to the public.

• **National Corn Dog Day - Downtown San Marcos, March 21 (Noon - 4 PM)**

National Corn Dog day has been celebrated in San Marcos since 2003 and moved to Downtown San Marcos in 2014. Since 1992, this event has been held nationwide in conjunction with March Madness and features corn dogs, tater tots, as well as party favors for the whole family. Downtown establishments hosting March Madness specials will be featured as part of this event so keep posted by joining the Facebook event (Corn Dog Day SMTX).

• **ARMADILLO RISING: Austin's Music Scene in the 1970s - Alkek Library, March 1 (8 AM - 5 PM)**

Showcasing the vibrant and eclectic Texas Music archives at the Wittliff Collections, this exhibition presents handwritten lyrics, photographs, and memorabilia from Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, the Armadillo World Headquarters, Austin City Limits, and much more, documenting the breakout years of the Austin music scene. Parking is free at the Alkek Garage and Woods St. Garage.

* For more Marvelous March 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

Rose Brooks—Chairperson
Mary Barnhart—Vice-Chairperson
Susan Tilatitsky—Resident Comm.
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, 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