



# The Oracle

**Special Report:  
GED Changes**

## Samantha Serrano: A Rising Star



It all began when Samantha Serrano sang *Love Story* for her 6th grade talent show. She was enticed by the cheers and energy and she felt she needed to do more. She began to take free guitar lessons at the PODER Learning Center over the summer from a resident of Allen Woods, Don Thorndyke. She jokes, "I learned guitar by a gypsy name Don." With lessons two days a week and practice every day, Samantha made her debut at the children's talent show at Springtown Villa. She was a hit! After two months of playing, she was able to get gigs at the Farmer's Market. She claims the best advice that Don has given her is, "Don't play for other people, play for yourself. If people want to listen, they'll listen." She currently plays cover songs, but hopes to write her own songs about a normal life of a teenage girl. Her grandma, Stephanie Serrano, encouraged her to try out for "San Marcos Has Talent" and she made it to the top 12 contestants. With a song in her heart and a guitar in her hand, Samantha walks up to the stage, greets everyone with a smile, and begins to sing for the audience and judges for San Marcos Has Talent. She did not make it to the next round, but she

continues to sing in coffee shops in San Marcos. With her family's support, her commitment to do well in school, and a strong spirit, she hopes to go places with her music. For any teen girl with a dream, she advises, "Dreams are just reality waiting to happen. You just need hard work and dedication to get them." That's the spirit!

### ***Notes from the Main Office***

✓ **Attention Parents!** Recently, we have had some issues with kids using the outside air conditioning condenser units to climb up onto the roof of their home. Bad idea. First, the roof is not a place to hang out. It's a place to fall off. Second, damage to the condenser unit is expensive to repair and guess who gets to pay for that? Hint: Think of the Bob Dylan song, "It Ain't Me, Babe." In this case, it ain't the Housing Authority. So, if you see kids climbing on the roof and/or messing around with condenser units, please tell their parental units. You'll be doing them a favor!



✓ **Giving Thanks:** Housing Authority employees will be busy eating turkey, watching football, and doing other such things on Thursday and Friday, November 24th & 25th. They will be so busy, in fact, that they won't be at their normal worksites. What else can we do but close the SMHA offices on those days? As always, our dedicated Maintenance Department will be on call, ready to give up some of their holiday to help salvage your holiday, should you have a maintenance *emergency*. (P.S.—Try not to have one, but if you must, call 738-1243.)



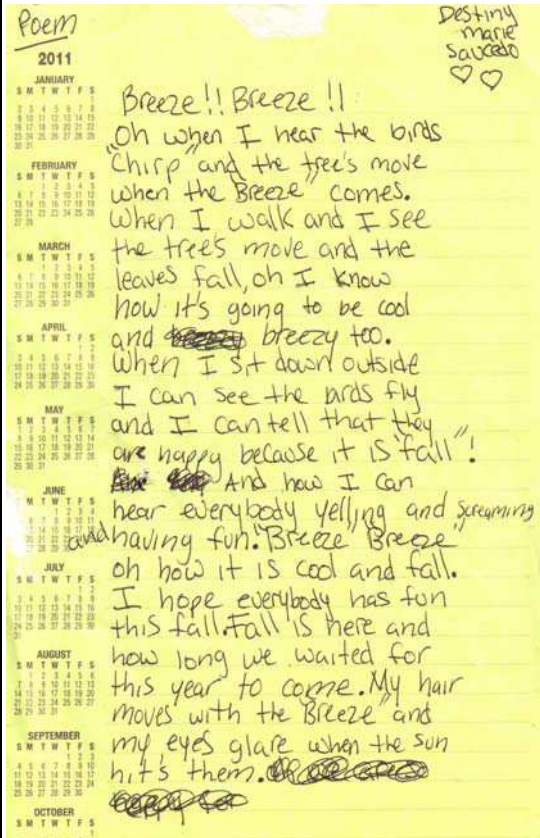
# ALLEN WOODS HOMES—P.O.D.E.R LEARNING CENTER

## Dollars and Sense

In this economy, wouldn't it make sense to learn how to keep your dollars? Alma Ramirez, a representative of Randolph Brooks Credit Union, taught just that in her adult financial education class. Her fun and interactive class taught about credit, savings, budgeting, and managing your money and gave out prizes! The P.O.D.E.R. Learning Center will continue to have more adult learning classes. Look for the schedule on the monthly flyer!



# ALL ABOUT FALL!



*"Breeze!! Breeze!!" original manuscript poem by Destiny Saucedo, 6th grade. Imagine how valuable this will be when she becomes a Nobel Laureate Poet!*



Drawing by Damaris Vasquez, 4th grade. We are blessed to spend our days with such talent!

### LIFE LESSONS

Tina Ybarra from the Hays-Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse comes every Tuesday to the P.O.D.E.R. After-School Program. She creates activities that help children understand the choices that they will be faced with when approached with drugs and alcohol. She has done activities on self-esteem, communication, and making choices.



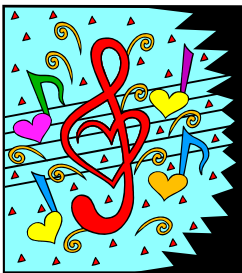




# Springtown Villa

## RESIDENTS FIELD TRIP TO Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos

*Baile Folklorico dancers*

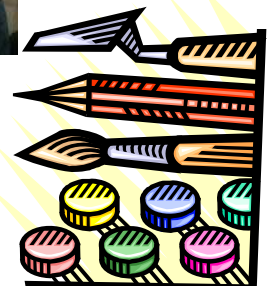


On Saturday, September 17, 2011 residents from Springtown Villa enjoyed plenty of food, music and entertainment during the Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos 1st Anniversary Celebration.

# Art Class

*Texas State University  
Volunteer Linda Smith*

offers Art classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays to our residents at Springtown Villa.



CHILDREN FROM  
ALLEN WOODS HOMES  
CELEBRATE  
• DIECISÉIS DE SEPTIEMBRE

*Prizes, prizes and more prizes*

# Piñata



# Good food



A celebration of Mexican Independence with music and fun activities for the children.



# KAD & Senior Events @ CM Allen

KAD teens helping at the United Way Fundraiser in Kyle pictured with San Marcos City Manager Jim Nuse along with Geraldine & Arthur Taylor .



Family Science night with Parents and kids at KAD, sponsored by Texas State and Miller Junior High (above).



Seniors enjoying their weekly bingo social at KAD Center along with Tom Madden, our intern from Texas State (below).



Lydia Perez from Community Action, Breast Cancer Awareness presentation at CM Allen (left).



RBFCU putting on a money management session (above).



# Family Self-Sufficiency

A Family Self-Sufficiency Program Orientation for all applicants on the FSS waiting list was held in October. The applicants learned the basics of FSS and the most important rules and regulations of living in Public Housing. Nineteen applicants attended and were eager to continue the process of joining FSS!



Eliga Davis showing off his face painting.



Xantha Callihan gets her face painted.



Desira Ybarra gets an airbrush tattoo.

Thanks to all the residents who came out and made Texas Night Out a huge success!!! Residents enjoyed sausage wraps, a cake walk, face painting and air brush tattoos!!!



Mason & Kylie Moregon with Tres Rios.



Liberty Smith and Gabriel Mendoza playing on the fire truck!



## ***SPECIAL REPORT: Changes Coming to the GED***

According to Jonathan Engel, Adult Education Director for Community Action of Central Texas, Inc., big changes are coming to the General Educational Development (GED) exams. The GED Testing Service plans to make several changes. The first change is that the test will no longer be available as a pen and paper test but will be strictly on computer. After that, there will be changes in both the content of the test and how it is scored. Finally, there will be two levels of GED testing. One will be for students interested in high school equivalency and job readiness. The other will be for people who want to go to college. The hope is that students who pass the higher level test will then be able to pass college entrance exams at a level sufficient to avoid having to take any non-college credit, developmental (a.k.a. "remedial") courses. Those courses eat up precious college financial aid resources but generate no college transcript credits. Mr. Engel says, "The real message is that folks should prioritize passing all of the GED tests before January 2014. Sometime after that, the test will become a lot harder."

Don't wait! You can get help at the **Community Action Training Center**, located at **1633 State Hwy. 80**, just a little ways past Hwy. 21.



### **Free GED Preparation PLUS**

**GED Test Preparation**

**Career Awareness Activities**

**Occupational Exploration**

**Career & Education Planning with CAI Career Counselor**

**Computer Literacy:**

**Microsoft Office Applications, Learner Web, GED Academy**

**Workforce Referral**

New Student Registrations will be held on the following dates at 9:00AM:

**January 4, 2012**

**February 7, 2012**

**March 6, 2012**

**April 3, 2012**



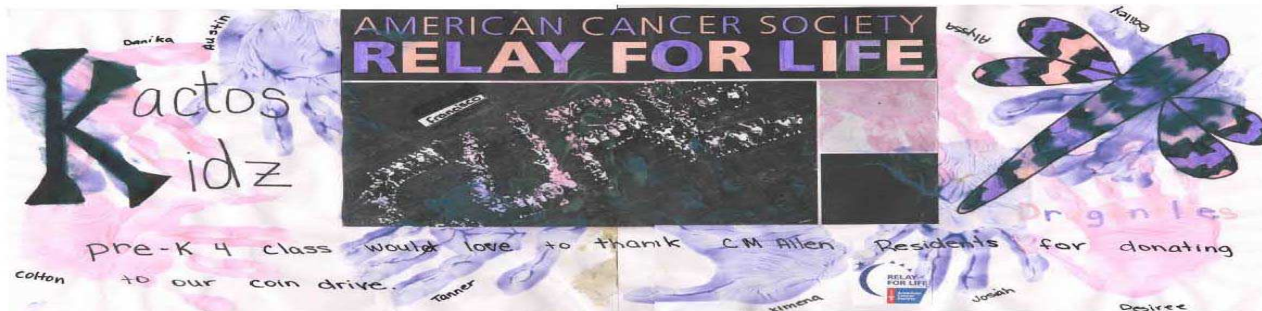
You need only attend ONE registration session, but be prepared to stay for 3 hours.

Morning classes held Monday through Thursday 9:00 AM-12:00PM

For more information contact:  
**Paula Simmons**  
 Community Action Training Center  
 (512)396-0177 ext.23  
[psimmons@communityaction.com](mailto:psimmons@communityaction.com)



# PARTNER PAGE



**Kactus Kidz Child Care** would like to extend their gratitude to all the residents of the San Marcos Housing Authority for their amazing support with the Relay for Life Coin drive. Over \$115 was raised in just a few short weeks and our success could not have been possible without all of the generous donations of the SMHA residents. You opened your hearts and cracked (sometimes literally) the piggy banks to help find a cure for cancer!!! Thank you all so much!!!

The Dragonflies (handprints and names pictured) raised the most money, but all the kids enjoyed pizza which was donated from Little Caesar's on October 28<sup>th</sup>.



The Job Corps is currently enrolling applicants aged 16-24 in over 20 career fields. Job Corps is a no-cost residential or non-residential program which offers housing, clothing, meals and job placement assistance to qualified candidates. If you need a GED, High School Diploma and a Drivers License give us a call. College training is available as well. Get started today! Call 665-7327.

## *THOMAS TELLS HIS OWN STORY*

Thomas Madden is a social work intern who is working with us at the C. M. Allen Homes this semester. This is his story.

"I was born in Encino, Ca. I lived in Long Beach California for 35 years. I went to high school with several famous people including Cameron Diaz and Snoop Dogg. I received my Associate in Arts at Compton Community College. I also met my wife there. I was captain of the Men's Baseball team and selected first team All American 1992 and 1993.

"I attended California State University Long Beach in 1994-1995 and studied Computer Science and Management Information Systems. I spent 10 years (continued on next page)





# SAN MARCOS HOUSING AUTHORITY

*Photo by Kayla Spencer*

**Board of Commissioners:**

Rose Brooks, Chairperson  
Rev. Samuel Montoya, Vice-Chairperson  
Stacy Green—Resident Rep.  
Ovelia Mercado  
Lorraine Burleson

Brian Guenther

**Administration:**

Executive Director  
*Albert Sierra*  
Accountant/Program Mgr.  
*Lana Bronikowsky*  
Maintenance Director  
*Albert Hernandez*  
Public Housing Manager  
*Rose Miranda*  
Resident Services Director  
*Stewart Dale Spencer*  
Section 8 Coordinator  
*Frances Garcia*

Springtown Villa Manager  
*Vacant*

**Housing Offices:**

Allen Woods Homes (Main)  
353-5059  
C. M. Allen Homes  
353-1116  
Chapultepec Homes  
396-3364

Housing Choice Voucher  
353-5061

Springtown Villa  
396-3363

**Resident Services Centers:**

*\*Family Self-Sufficiency*

396-3364

*\*KAD Korner Store*

392-6273

*\*PODER Learning Center*

396-3367

*\*Springtown Villa*

353-7343

## WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT

The San Marcos Housing Authority provides decent, safe, and sanitary housing for about 555 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.

*The Oracle is produced and published by the Resident Services Department of the San Marcos Housing Authority. Concept by Herod King Ellison. Senior Editor—Stewart Dale Spencer. Contributing Editors—Maria Calcaben, Gracie Campos, Bonnie Pecina, & Megan Perez. Contact: SMHA Resident Services, 701 South LBJ Drive, San Marcos, Texas, 78666 \* 512-396-3364 \* [www.smpha.org](http://www.smpha.org)*

## *Thomas Madden's Story*

(continued from page 7) working in Loss Prevention for Target Corp and worked as a Loss Prevention Manager and Field supervisor at The Sports Authority specializing in credit fraud. "I have been married for 12 years to my wife Veronica. We have two boys. I am a father of a child with special needs. My son Joseph is ten years old and was born with Down syndrome. My youngest son is Matthew. He is seven.

"I relocated my family to Kyle, Texas in October 2006 where we purchased our first home. After moving to Texas I returned to school at Texas State University San Marcos to study social work. I have maintained a GPA of 3.77 and I will be graduating with honors on December 16<sup>th</sup>. I have volunteered 200 hours at the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless. At the ARCH, I volunteered in the computer lab and assisted people seek employment, build resumes, navigate the internet etc.

"I love to spend my weekends watching Matthew play CTYFL football for the Kyle Invaders. I also love watching my son Joseph compete in several events at the Special Olympics. I have enjoyed being a stay at home dad while living in Texas. Over the past five years I had the opportunity to complete everything on my bucket list. Upon graduation I look forward to returning back to work serving the community through social work.