

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT  
THE  
SAN MARCOS  
HOUSING  
AUTHORITY

RESIDENT  
SERVICES

PROGRAM

**PROVIDING A FULL  
SPECTRUM OF OPPORTUNITES  
AND OFFERING HOPE TO  
FAMILIES, YOUTH, ELDERLY,  
& DISABLED**



# The Big Picture



The San Marcos Housing Authority (SMHA) provides decent, safe, and affordable housing for about 575 low-income households, including elderly & disabled, in the San Marcos area. SMHA Resident Services coordinates a wide variety of direct services and referrals for families and individuals receiving housing assistance. We work to improve quality of life, reduce dependence on the welfare system, and empower our residents to take charge of their lives and of their environment. **Our vision** is to make public housing in San Marcos a place of family healing and development—a place where families can grow stronger while they live in decent, safe homes. The Resident Services Department administers four major and several smaller initiatives. This includes the significant involvement of other agencies such as Community Action of Central Texas, the Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the Hays-Caldwell Women's Center, the Hays County Area Food Bank, the Central Texas Food Bank, Goodwill, and others. Our primary initiatives are:

## Youth Development Services

- After-school and summer-time programs for at-risk youth.
- Teen groups to help teenagers develop in a positive direction, including community service activities.
- Nutritious meals to children living in public housing four days a week through the Kid's Cafe and Backpack programs, in cooperation with the Central Texas Food Bank.

## Family Self-Sufficiency

- Low-income families and individuals get the tools they need to achieve self-sufficiency through housing assistance, effective case management, facilitation of support groups, and the coordination of access to local, state, and federal resources, including connections to job training and educational resources.
- Residents fulfill their dream of home ownership by learning money management skills and credit repair.

## Elderly/Disabled Services

- Elderly and disabled individuals get free or low-cost prescription drugs, transportation to medical appointments, access to in-home services, and opportunities for recreational and social activities.
- Delivery of supplemental food from the Central Texas Food Bank to home-bound elderly/disabled residents.
- Referrals to other resources, including the Allen Woods Nutrition Center (Dining Room and Meals-on-Wheels) operated by Combined Community Action, Inc. and specializing in services to the elderly.

## Resident Organization

- Support for resident organizations at four different housing sites.
- Financial oversight and tax exemption benefits to resident fundraising activities.
- Emergency funds to help families when no other community resources are available.

All initiatives include providing **internships and community service opportunities** for Texas State University students, religious and service organizations, residents, and the general public. We hold an annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet to recognize resident and non-resident volunteers who sacrifice their time and energy in support of Resident Services operations.

The following pages illustrate how we are making a difference in the lives of our residents. It includes detailed information on our history, our funding sources, and our internal organization. All photo subjects are actual residents. More information is available at [WWW.SMPHA.ORG](http://WWW.SMPHA.ORG). The archived, monthly newsletters provide an excellent window into our operations and the lives of our residents.

# Youth Development Services

**Promoting** education, healthy lifestyles, and community involvement in public housing neighborhoods.

**Providing** a safe environment after school and support for educational success.

**Teaching** essential skills such as conflict resolution, goal setting, personal responsibility, and communication.

**Assisting** families to break the cycle of poverty.

## MISSION

The Youth Development Program is a place where school-age youth in San Marcos can find support and encouragement. We strive to provide our youth with the opportunity to learn many of the skills needed to become strong community leaders.

## GOALS

- Provide a safe environment where youth can get help with school work.
- Provide youth with the necessary support to transition into successful community leaders through encouragement, access to resources, and opportunities to practice what they learn.
- Provide students with classes and seminars that build self-respect, teach conflict resolution, and teach leadership skills.
- Help youth learn personal responsibility, goal setting, communication skills, and the importance of community involvement.



## HISTORY

The Youth Development Program started in 1988 by the Social Services Coordinator at the San Marcos Housing Authority as the Kids Against Drugs Program . It began in a small room located at the C.M. Allen Homes office building. Children came to do their homework, talk with friends, play games, and find a smiling face to welcome them.

## PRESENT

Today, the Youth Development Program serves about 90 youth at three different sites. Each site provides tutors and mentors, homework assistance, video game consoles, and a computer lab. The PODER Learning Center at the Allen

Woods Homes includes a game room with a pool table and electronic darts. There is also a recording studio complete with various musical instruments. The KAD Korner Store, our Resident Services Center at the C. M. Allen Homes, includes a store, supported by residents, to raise funds in support of the program. All sites include the Kid's Cafe, a program sponsored by the Central Texas Food Bank and Feeding America. Through their generosity, we are able to provide nutritious, hot meals four days a week to growing children who might otherwise be snacking on junk. The program includes nutrition education.

## GIVING VISION

Youth in Public Housing often have a different vision of their future than that of their wealthier peers. We work to expand the horizons of all the youth that participate in our program to help them see what is possible through hard work, determination, honesty, and community service. We aim to mold our youth into future leaders who can bring us into the best possible future .



## Family Self-Sufficiency

The FSS program was enacted by Congress in 1990 to promote employment and boost the assets of low-income families participating in certain federal housing programs. Currently serving more than 75,000 families nation-wide, the FSS program is administered by State and local Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and is open to families participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program or living in Public Housing. PHAs have discretion to determine how applicants are selected for participation as well as the size of the local program.



*Successful FSS graduates, Felix and Nancy Silguero wave as they move out of public housing. We were both happy and sad to see them go!*

### Case Management

FSS participants receive case management services to help them develop a personal training and services plan specifying their individual goals over the five-year course of the program and some of the supportive services in the community that can help them achieve those goals. The nature of the services varies among programs and communities. Examples include: employment search, employment training, high school or post-secondary education, financial literacy education, child care, and transportation assistance. Teaching people how to set and achieve personal goals, manage their personal finances, and improve their credit-worthiness are probably the most important and practical aspects of this ambitious program.



*Senior FSS Coordinator Megan Spiller and Resident Services Director Gene Martin II present a graduation certificate and a disbursement of escrow funds to Brenda McKinney in front of what has become known as the "Success Tree."*

### Escrow Accounts

This is the asset-building component of FSS. As the incomes of families in the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs increase, their rents also increase. This is because most families in these programs pay 30 percent of their adjusted income for rent and utilities. FSS participants, however, have an opportunity to obtain a refund of some or all of these increased rent payments. As the rent of an FSS participant increases due to increased income, an amount equal to the rent increase caused by that increased income is deposited into an escrow account. Individuals that successfully complete the FSS program receive their FSS escrow funds plus any accrued interest. The initial program term is five years but many families graduate sooner. Upon graduation, there are no restrictions on how these funds may be used. Many families use the funds as a down payment on a home, to pay for education or training

programs, or to start a new business. FSS participants may also apply for interim withdrawals to cover work-related expenses and other expenses that are consistent with the goals in their personal training and services plans.

## Making a Difference for Valued Citizens



Elderly and disabled residents are often isolated and vulnerable and they generally lack the knowledge and skills necessary to access the variety of resources potentially available to them. For some, language is a barrier. They may be first generation immigrants from Mexico whose children and

grandchildren assimilated into the dominant culture but they were too busy surviving to acquire a new language. These residents are very hesitant about reaching out for assistance. For others, lack of transportation is a barrier. For example, if an elderly resident has to spend so much of their income on rising utility costs that they cannot afford sufficient nutritious food or a reliable vehicle, they cannot get to the Food Bank distribution sites.



Through our outreach efforts, we can identify such situations and arrange to have food delivered to their home as often as needed to ensure a healthy diet. Wherever a need exists, we will work to identify it, develop a plan of action to address that need, implement that solution, engage in on-going evaluation of how successfully we are meeting that need, and make adjustments as needed. The problem of isolation and inadequate access to resources is resolved by reaching out to people in a non-threatening manner, engaging them on a personal level, letting them know that there is hope for a better life,

and developing a plan to move them from isolation and need to engagement and realization.

In the end, it is we who benefit the most. Our honored elders and our residents who cope with physical and other challenges bring an invaluable perspective to our work. Many become volunteers, giving thousands of hours of their precious time to help make a difference for others.



*Pablo Gomez one of our top volunteers, serves at the PODER Learning Center.*

# How Do We Do It?



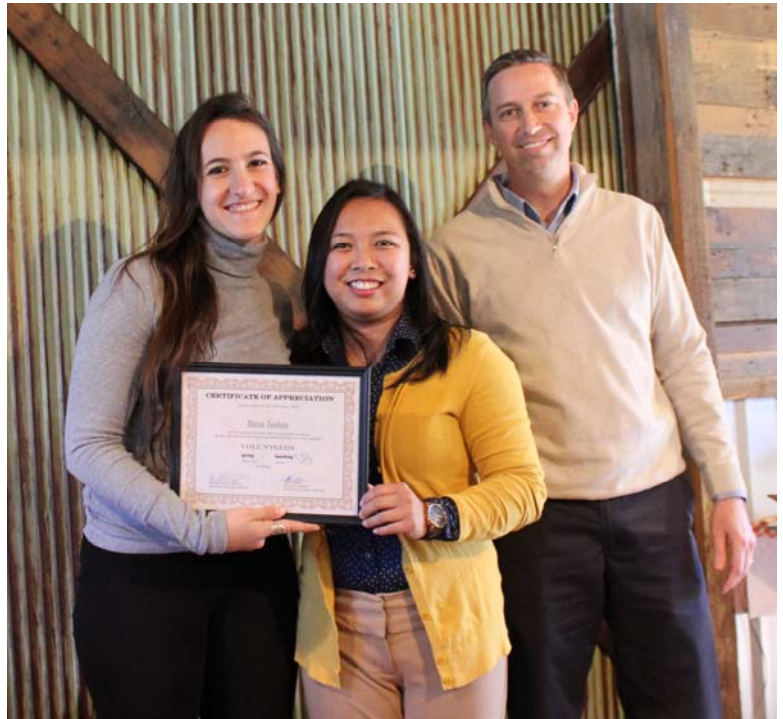
The chart on the following page shows detail only for the Resident Services Department since we operate as an agency within an agency. It is important to note that the administration of the Housing Authority has a traditional hierarchical structure but each department is given a great deal of latitude in the performance of its duties. The Board of Commissioners and the Executive Director provide guidance and direction but also serve as resources for each department to encourage initiative and development. This is especially true of Resident Services. Each staff member is responsible for his or her duties and they are given the authority to get the job done. The Program Director acts as a resource and provides guidance. He intervenes only when necessary to protect the interests of the Housing

Authority and to be faithful to the responsibilities placed upon him by the Board and the Executive Director.

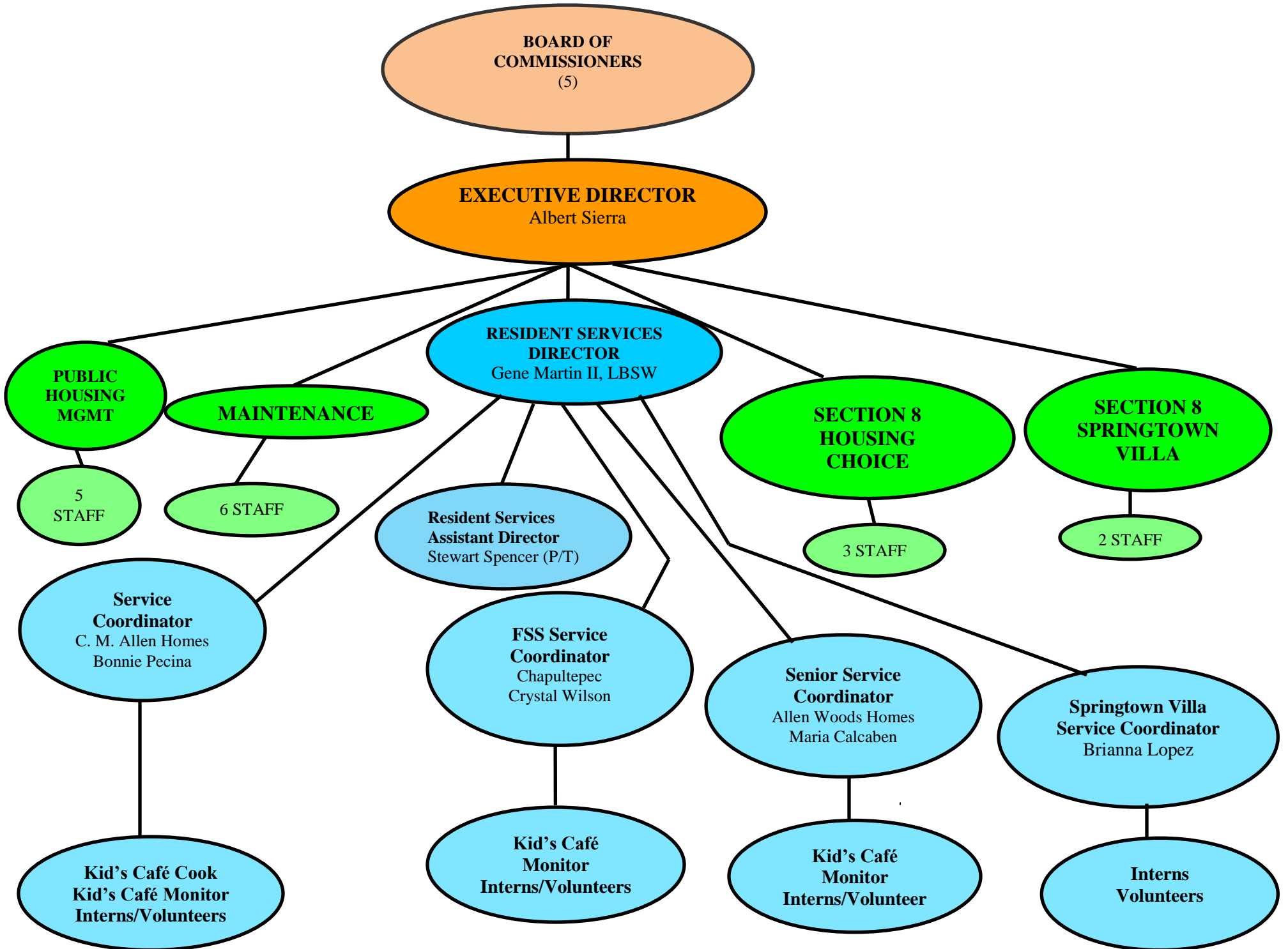
***Top row: Gene Martin II & Maria Calcaben  
Front row: Bonnie Pecina, Courtney Johnson, Megan Spiller,  
Jordan Phillips, & Stewart Dale Spencer***

Since they are scattered over four sites, the employees and interns of the Resident Services Department meet regularly, by conference call and in person, to coordinate resources and schedules and to make group decisions when overall program issues are at stake. A majority rule is invoked whenever consensus is not reached on a particular issue. This has led to a sense of ownership of, and responsibility for, the Resident Services Program and its successes or failures. Resident Services personnel are encouraged to take the initiative when they are uncertain of which course of action to follow. Mistakes are viewed as an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. Many creative ideas have been born out of this environment. The Service Coordinator that works with each site's resident organization adopts the same relationship and attitude toward the residents.

Personnel stability is a major factor in the overall success of our program. It takes time to build rapport with the residents and to earn their trust. Bonnie Pecina, the Service Coordinator at the C. M. Allen Homes, is often contacted by kids who grew up at her site and came back to thank her for making a difference in their lives. These stories are documented in the newsletter archive at our website: [www.smpa.org](http://www.smpa.org).



***Maria Calcaben and Gene Martin present the award for Volunteer of the Year to Social Work student and martial arts instructor Rana Zeidan. The plaque says: "The Housing Authority is a brighter place because of you! Thanks to your hard work and dedication, families have become more involved and children have learned self-discipline, confidence, and respect. Thank you for sharing your gifts with us!"***



# How Do We Pay For It?

We have a variety of funding sources that provide the financial resources necessary to pursue our mission. Here is a brief summary of our budget for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2018.

**SOURCES:**

Federal Funds — Allocations from Housing Authority Programs	106,269
Federal Funds — Grants from HUD and other sources	149,974
Non-Federal Funds—City of San Marcos, United Way, etc.	88,631
<b>Total</b>	<b>344,874</b>

**Best Newsletter Award!**

Housing Authority Programs includes Public Housing Operating Funds and Springtown Villa. These are properties that we own and operate with subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). You may be surprised to learn that only about 40% of our operating revenue comes from HUD. The rest comes from rent paid by our tenants, which is based on their income.



HUD Grants include the Capital Fund Program (an annual grant from HUD for physical and management improvements), Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program grants, and the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. Together, these programs fund all or a portion of our Elderly & Disabled Services Program, our Youth Development Services Program, and our Self-Sufficiency Program in both Public Housing and in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Our Non-Federal Funds include funding from the City of San Marcos, United Way of Hays County, program income, and miscellaneous other sources of funding including private and corporate donations. Program income includes money from our own fund-raising operations as well as from fund-raising events supported by outside entities or groups. It also includes interest income from our bank accounts.

Most of our funds — about 90% — pay for direct personnel costs. These are the people who provide direct services and who coordinate services provided by other organizations. Our Service Coordinators and other personnel are in the business of developing people and connecting them with resources. Many local agencies, such as the Hays Caldwell Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, seek us out because they know we can help them gain access to the people they seek to serve. Because of this, part of our job is to engage in a vetting process whereby we investigate the integrity and the value of such services before we put our stamp of approval on them and allow them to use our facilities or recommend them to our residents.



Approximately 7% of our funds are devoted to direct tenant services costs such as center operations, an emergency fund, printing (flyers, signs, and the monthly newsletter), postage, vehicle operations & maintenance, volunteer support, and resident training. The remaining 3% of our budget is allocated to other costs such as equipment & furniture purchases, telecommunications, office supplies, administrative contracts, professional development, and accounting expenses.

**Public Housing Management**  
*Albert Sierra—Executive Director*  
*Sylvia Flores—Public Housing Manager*  
*Lana Bronikowsky —Programs Manager.*