



From L to R: Kathryn LaPlant-Israel (FSS Coordinator), Roxanne with Corey and Mason, Stewart Dale Spencer (Asst. Program Director), & Gene Martin II (Program Director)

Roxanne Burnett is our most recent graduate of the FSS Program. She began her journey with us in 2012. Last year, she was able to transfer to the Housing Choice Voucher program, just as she was completing her contract. She now lives in Buda and works for the Hays ISD as a full-time Library Technician. In a recent email, she told me, "I love my job!! There is no way that I would leave it at this time to pursue a position that doesn't work with the kids directly. My job is an amalgam of all the things that I love to do. I work with kids, I get to decorate the library space and have the freedom to be creative and I get to read some awesome books and help students find things that they like to read as well. I am at the forefront of being able to provide the students in this district with a passion for all things Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics by being in charge of the Makerspace at Dahlstrom [Middle School]." *[Note: A makerspace is a collaborative work space inside a school, library, or separate public/private facility for making, learning, exploring and sharing and uses high-tech to no-tech tools.]*

If you are a regular reader of The Oracle, you might remember Roxanne's name. She has appeared in these pages several times over the years. She was the Top Volunteer at Chapultepec in 2016. She was working full-time and raising two children but was always willing to help with babysitting for FSS classes. She even helped with the clean up. She also helped oversee the Summer Feeding Program at Chapultepec that year. It has been a joy to watch her kids grow up, including little Mason, who was born during her early years here.

During her exit interview, we asked her what were the most significant things she learned while she was in the FSS program. She said it was how to maintain relationships better and "money management . . . definitely!" That warms our hearts because poor money management skills can derail otherwise successful people.

When she was leaving Chapultepec, Roxanne wrote a letter to Kathy LaPlant-Israel, who had only been on the job for a few months. These excerpts say more than we ever could:

*I would like to open this letter with my sincere thanks. I want to thank you for your unending patience as when we met, I was going through a tumultuous time in my personal life. Your kind words when we had our first quarterly review about following my heart and going back to school will always resonate with me as you are living proof that it might not be easy, but it can be done. You understand what it's like raising a "colorful kid" as I say. I feel that you are really there to see us succeed.*

*I don't have any family aside from my children and Chapultepec has helped me build relationships in and around the community. I have learned that my heart is in volunteering and being a part of greater works. This all due to the fact that volunteering opportunities are available all the time at Chapultepec!!*

*This has been a great place to learn and grow!!! Thank you again, for all that you have done in your short time as my case worker.*

Roxanne has found a home at Hays ISD and we have been blessed to be able to help guide her toward that path. - Editor

## ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER

### Passionate About People



Hello, my name is Angelica Moore. I am an intern working in the PODER Center at Allen Woods. I am originally from Houston and have lived in that area my entire life. Some of my hobbies include hiking or walking trails, going to the river, and enjoying time with my friends. I chose to go to school at Texas State because I fell in love with the campus and all the nature that the hill country has to offer. I am majoring in social work and will be graduating in May. I like to say that I did not choose social work, social work chose me. I am passionate about the well-being of others and enjoy working with people. When I took my first social work class, I knew it was where I belonged. After graduation, I plan to go to graduate school and obtain a Master's Degree in Social Work. From there, I would like to work in a hospital setting or with children. During my time at the Housing Authority, I will strive to get as much as I can out of this experience. My hope is that I will be able to grow and learn by challenging myself. I would also like to get to know as many residents as possible. With every new experience there may be some challenges. For me, I think one of the biggest challenges I might face is overcoming the fear of messing up or doing something wrong. However, I know this is a learning process. I am excited to see what new experiences this semester has in store!

### Encouraging Exploration



Last month, our kids were given opportunities to explore and experiment during their activity time. One example was building catapults (pictured left). Each child colored their catapults, got into groups, and experimented on how much force would be

needed to launch their marshmallows into the tin pan. One group of boys used their creativity to build forts made out of wooden blocks and tried to knock each other's forts down! Another activity that encouraged the kids to experiment was when United Way came with crafts and games after reading *Mary Poppins*. Analia Voss, Director of Community Impact, brought kite crafts for our kids (pictured right). When they were ready for a test flight, the kids had to determine how fast they needed to run and in which direction to keep their kites flying. What a fun way to foster curiosity and exploration!



## Blanket Raffle!

**Tickets are \$1 each  
Or  
Buy 6 tickets for \$5  
@ the PODER Center**



*Handmade crocheted blanket*

**Winner will be announced on  
Thursday, February 14.**

All proceeds benefit the Allen Woods Resident Assembly

# Springtown Villa

These ladies started the new year on the right foot by creating vision boards for themselves. Vision boards are tools that are often used to clarify and focus on specific life goals. Everyone gathered in the community to clip inspirational images and words from magazines to display and arrange on their boards. The images can represent what you want to be, do, or have. The more you add to your board, the more personal your board becomes.

Surprisingly, this was the first time any of the residents had ever created a vision board before. When asked what her favorite part of creating was, Rhonda (pictured in the middle) said she enjoyed planning and looking toward the future with a positive attitude!



The Resident Council is selling raffle tickets for a chance to win one of two Valentine's Day gift baskets made by our Treasurer, Julie. It makes a great decoration and it's just in time for that loved one in your life!

ON SALE: 1/22/19 - 2/13/19

1 ticket = \$2      3 tickets = \$5

Winners will be announced on Wednesday, February 13th in the community room of Springtown Villa at 3:30 PM.

Please contact 512-353-7343 or 512-396-3363 to purchase tickets.



FRONT



BACK

## Five Philanthropic Ways to Celebrate Valentine's Day

1. Give a Little—Donate a dollar to a cause you care about.
2. Send Love Letters—And not just to that special someone. Send thank you cards to the organizations that make a difference in your community like your police, EMS, fire departments, and non-profit organizations.
3. Remember Those Who Serve You—Sometimes it is the most difficult to remember people who help you every day. Give a thank you card to your provider or mail-person. Leave your waiter an extra tip. Smile extra big at that worker in the drive-thru window. Thank a veteran for his or her service to our country.
4. Take Time To Tidy—Clear that dusty and cluttered space and donate used clothing, toys, or winter gear to your local Goodwill, Salvation Army, or shelter.
5. Celebrate Random Acts of Kindness—February 9-15 is Random Acts of Kindness Week. Take time to say hello to someone on the street, pay for someone's coffee, or give directions to someone who is lost. You can find more ideas at [www.randomactsofkindness.org](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org).



Source: <http://www.dbqfoundation.org/>

## ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

The polls for Resident Council elections will be open on Wednesday, February 6 from **1:00 - 3:00 PM** in the community room.

Join us for the meeting at **3:30 PM** to count ballots and witness the swearing in of our new officers!

# C. M. ALLEN HOMES — KAD KORNER STORE



My name is **Tatyana Jones** and I am an intern at the CM Allen homes. I was born and raised in Houston and moved to San Marcos to attend Texas State University in 2014. I am majoring in social work with a minor in Healthcare Administration. I expect to be graduating in May. I chose the field of social work because I believe that everyone deserves the right to live a just and happy life. I am grateful for this opportunity. I hope to practice all of the things I have been reading in school as well as gain valuable experience and confidence. I was a previous volunteer and learned so much from that experience that I am very excited to be back. My passion lies in the education field, specifically issues such as the school-to-prison pipeline and I hope to work in education policy in the future. In my spare time, you will find me binge-watching true crime shows, watching horror movies, and listening to various podcasts. I look forward to meeting you all, if you're around come visit me at the KAD Center!



Hey guys and gals! If we haven't had a chance to meet, my name is **Kat Johnson**. I'm one of the new interns here at the CM Allen Homes and KAD Korner Store. I was born and raised in San Marcos and graduated from SMHS in 2016. I'm majoring in Therapeutic Recreation and will graduate in December! After graduation, I plan to find a job in physical rehabilitation for lower income areas where it's harder to get access to those kinds of services. Recreation may seem like fun and games; however, it's very important to have in your life. It can help with your physical, mental, social, and emotional functioning. It can also give someone a purpose or help them find their purpose if they have lost it. It's something that is very important in my life and I can't wait to get the chance to make it an important part of your life.

## Upcoming Events

**February 5 & 19**

**Adult Nutrition Class @ 1 PM**

**February 12**

**Job Readiness Class @ 10 AM**

## Happy Valentines Day!



**From Left to Right - Gabriel Navarro, Devin Ellis, Darin Ellis, and former KAD member Damien Sustaita (front)**

Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts can benefit kids so much. They teach kids to have a deeper appreciation for community service, to be participating citizens, and to find a purpose. We love seeing our current and former KAD members going out and making a difference!

# CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

Our very own Jolie Ramirez was tasked with a science project. Her hypothesis was that age affects the time it takes to complete the game of Perfection, a board game where the object is to put all the pieces into matching holes on the board as quickly as possible. She wanted to see if hand/eye coordination slowed as you aged. The only problem with this was she needed test subjects of varying ages. She asked Chapultepec office personnel Gene, Stewart, and Kathy to try their hand at completing the task. She also went to the afterschool program and had all of the kids participate. There was an obvious trend. Younger children did not do as well as older children, and the fastest times were the middle aged group. As the age of the test subject increased, it took more time to complete the task. We were all so excited that we could help her. Jolie received an A for her project. Way to go Jolie, we are all very proud of you!



## DIFFICULT ROADS OFTEN LEAD TO BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS.

*Welcome to the  
Neighborhood!*

The FSS program at Chapultepec has many new faces. We are excited to welcome all of our new families. If you are out and about, introduce yourself to your new neighbor. Networking is a source of support for residents and their families.

Ever wonder just how the credit bureaus come up with your credit score? What does that number mean anyway? What can I do to get credit? How do I repair my credit if it is bad? What do I do if there are things on my credit that do not belong to me? These are all great questions. Last month, Donnie Riles from Woodforest Bank came to Chapultepec. He answered all these questions and more. While the parents were getting all of their questions answered, the kids were learning money management but with a twist. They went to the "Chapultepec Theater" next door where they were given play money to purchase tickets to the movie and nutritious snacks. Those that did not spend all their money right away got a surprise chance for an extra treat later. During discussions, they learned that saving money benefits the family in many ways. We will be having another financial planning class on February 27 at 6 PM. Classes are targeted for FSS participants but EVERYONE is welcome!



## Lawyers and Order

By Maria Calcaben

Have you ever had a teen that loved to argue? Well, we transformed the PODER Center into a courtroom and put those skills to the test with our Teen Night Mock Trial! The case was against Senior Service Coordinator Maria Calcaben and FSS Coordinator Kathy LaPlant-Israel. The story was that Maria was turning into HEB and hit Kathy while she was riding her bike. The impact broke Kathy's leg. The teens were assigned various roles.

The Defense Team included Nancy Zhang (attorney), Keandre Richardson (associate attorney) and Josh Sanchez (witness for defendant). The Prosecution Team included Makayla Spurlock (attorney), Ana Reyna (associate attorney), Jasper Barrett (police officer at the scene), and Laraeda Anderson (witness for the victim). Each attorney was given a trial

binder with evidence and a script of the procedures of the trial to follow. Each side was also given time to question the witnesses on stand, present evidence they found to support their argument, and a list of "Objections!" they could yell out in the courtroom. Although there were giggles and laughs, the teens did well staying in character and focused on defending their clients. "It was hard and I got a little lost at some points but it was a lot of fun!" says Ana, one of the attorneys. Fifth grader Aden Richardson was an honorary teen that night and served as our journalist. He sat in the audience and drew what he saw while also writing a report on what he heard. Volunteers and interns became the jury: Kathryn McDaniel, Justin Heid, Rana



L-R: Anna & Makayla (prosecuting attorneys), Kathy (victim), Nancy & Keandre (defense attorneys). Behind Nancy is Josh (witness). The defendant is not shown to protect her privacy. 😄

Zeidan, Alesha Hibbs, Tavia Marshall, La'Porsha Timmons, Sabella Kuehn, Michael Kuo, Brianna Lopez, and Reagan Bonnett. After the cases were presented, the jury had 10 minutes in the deliberation room to decide whether Maria was guilty or not guilty. Of course, no court is complete without a judge. Arleen Machado, Allen Woods Resident Assembly Secretary, stepped up and took charge. Using real courtroom lingo, a believable court case, exaggerated acting, and props (such as a gavel and crutches for the victim) helped create the illusion of a real trial. None of this would have been possible without the help of Kevin Lizama-Reyes, legal assistant at Julian Rodriguez, Jr. and Associates, P.C. He played the role of courtroom clerk and made sure everything ran smoothly in the mock trial. Kevin has been a long-time volunteer with the kids program. He wanted to give back in a special way by giving an opportunity for the teens to see what it would be like to become a lawyer. The mock trial also helped promote listening and communication skills, deductive reasoning, and presentation skills. At the end of the trial, Maria was found "not guilty" by the jury and walked out a free woman. The taste of victory was even sweeter when everyone who attended the mock trial was rewarded with a delicious cupcake!

At its January meeting, the SMHA Board of Commissioners adopted new utility allowances and new flat rent amounts (a.k.a. "ceiling rents"), which are set at 80% of the Fair Markets Rents (FMR) calculated by HUD for the Austin-Round Rock, TX Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for 2019, which includes Hays County. Residents who live in our public housing sites usually pay rent based on 30% of their adjust gross income, after certain deductions. "Family Rent" includes required utilities such as electricity and natural gas, which are not included in their rent, therefore a certain amount (known as a *utility allowance*) is deducted from the rent calculation. However, when a family has enough income that their calculated rent would be close to or above market rates, they have the option to switch to the flat rent based on their unit size. There are limits in how often a family may switch between income-based rent and flat rent. The new flat rents and utility allowances are posted at all SMHA offices and on our website: <https://smpha.org/new-flat-rents-for-2019/>



## Meet Our Newest Interns at Chapultepec

Hello everyone! My name is Jessica Owens. I am a junior at Texas State studying to become a Recreational Therapist. I love to go hiking with my dog, watch Netflix, and spend time with my family & friends. My goal for my time here is to provide structured activities and enriching experiences for the kids in the after-school program! We are always open to having more kids in the program so please feel free to stop by the office and ask to speak with Kathy for more information!



Hello all! My name is Lindsey Payne. I am one of the interns at the Chapultepec after-school program this spring. I am a senior at Texas State University, pursuing my bachelor's degree in Family & Child Development with a minor in Social Work. I was raised in Burnet but after



I graduated high school in 2014, I moved to Bryan to attend Blinn Community College. In 2017, I decided to move closer to home and still be able to complete my college career, so I made the move to Texas State and I will graduate this May! After graduation, I hope to work for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, in Child Care Licensing, where I will be inspecting childcare facilities, pre-schools, home

daycares, etc. I plan to make lasting relationships with the children and families at Chapultepec and help guide the children in whatever way possible to help them achieve success! I look forward to meeting y'all and spending my last semester at Chapultepec!

### **DON'T PAY TO FILE!**

Too many people pay someone to prepare their federal tax return. You can file for free and keep all of your refund! Go to this link for more info:

<https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>

You can also get help at the San Marcos Public Library. Here's the scoop:

### **AARP Tax Aid**

Mondays, 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Free Walk-in Service

(No session Monday, February 18)

Trained volunteers from AARP prepare individual tax returns for free at the library beginning February 2. No appointment is necessary; first come, first served. Bring all tax-related documents, including last year's tax return, social security cards for all dependents, and a photo ID. Sign in no later than 30 minutes before the end of the session.

The PODER After-school program recently received two generous donations from long-time supporters. One was from American Veterans Post TX-104. The other was from Kevin J. Lizama-Reyes & RJ P. Lizama-Reyes. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of these good friends.



# February 2019



**Sun                      Mon                      Tue                      Wed                      Thu                      Fri                      Sat**

The Latin word februum means purification. The old Roman calendar considered the winter season a monthless period so the year consisted of only 10 months. The month of February was added, along with January, around 700 BCE so that the calendar would reflect a standard lunar year of 355 days. February became the second month of the year around 450 BCE, although it was originally the last month of the year.

<b>1</b> Orientation Workforce Solutions, 10 AM	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Discipline for Kids < 5 CALC @ 6 PM*
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Job Readiness KAD @ 10 AM
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> SMHA OFFICES CLOSED
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Orientation Workforce Solutions, 10 AM
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Board of Commissioners 5:30 PM
<b>27</b> Refund Planning* CALC @ 6 PM	<b>28</b> Food Wise Cooking Class CALC @ 6 PM

\* For events on Feb. 6 and 27, activities for kids will be in the Chapultepec Community Room, next door.

<p><b>LEADERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Board of Commissioners</b> Maggie Moreno — Chairperson Vacant — V. Chairperson Vacant — Resident Commissioner Rose Brooks — Commissioner Richard Cruz — Commissioner</p> <p><b>Executive Director</b> Albert Sierra</p>	<p><b>HOUSING OFFICES</b></p> <p><b>Allen Woods Homes (Main Office)</b> 512-353-5059</p> <p><b>CM Allen Homes</b> 512-353-1116</p> <p><b>Chapultepec Homes</b> 512-396-3364</p> <p><b>Housing Choice Voucher</b> 512-353-5061</p> <p><b>Springtown Villa</b> 512-396-3363</p>	<p><b>RESIDENT SERVICES</b></p> <p><b>Chapultepec Adult Learning Center</b></p> <p><b>Family Self-Sufficiency</b> 512-396-3364</p> <p><b>CM Allen KAD Korner Store</b> 512-392-6273</p> <p><b>Allen Woods PODER</b></p> <p><b>Learning Center</b> 512-396-3367</p> <p><b>Springtown Villa</b> 512-353-7343</p>
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