



The Education of our Children

By Stewart Dale Spencer & Other Contributors

As of this writing, our residents do not know if their children will be attending SMCISD schools in person next week and what the schedule will be. We have been hearing many things from parents and volunteers serving the children in our modified “after-school” program, which is happening in the mornings and afternoons. I want to share those observations and concerns with the public because it is important to understand the perspective of all elements of our community.

The families we serve are all low-income. Some are officially “very low income” but most are “extremely low income,” by definition. For a single mother with two children, that means a total, annual household income below \$26,400. When you consider that the Fair Market Rent for a 2-bedroom unit in this area is \$1,434 (rent + utilities), it is no wonder so many people cannot afford a decent home without some assistance.

One of our parents in the Family Self-Sufficiency program is doing online training from home as part of a new, full-time job she just started. She is so relieved that her two children can go to the PODER Learning Center and get help with their education as she works to secure the financial future of her family. She reported that the kids were very happy to get out of the home and be around a few other kids and adults. She said their attitude has improved greatly.

Let us hear from some others, in their own words:

For those of you that are parents, I know you struggle as much as I do when it comes to your kids and school. Home learning is interesting, convenient and frustrating. Not all of us are teacher worthy but we try. I, myself, have two kids...a 3rd grader and an 8th grader but I am also helping three of my neighbor's kids...2nd grade, 4th grade and 5th grade (I think I need to get paid for this because I now have my own classroom). But that aside, I also struggle with making sure that they have enough to eat for lunch. I do not make the cut off line for food stamps and we live pay check to pay check. During the summer, my kids had access to the school lunches but now, they don't. I don't have a car

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In most years, October brings the first cold nights. The first time you use the heat in your home, the smell of burning dust on the heat exchanger in the furnace is normal. It's a good idea to open a few windows and turn the heat on for a few minutes *before* you need it. The burning dust will sometimes set off the smoke alarms and that's no fun in the middle of the night.

Beginning Thursday, October 1, the SMHA Maintenance Department will begin servicing all maintenance work orders and will

also begin performing monthly HVAC filter changes. Since the shutdown in March, they had been responding only to certain urgent and emergency work orders. They will take appropriate precautions. You can find the air filter change schedule for 2020 on our website: <https://smpha.org/>



ALLEN WOODS HOMES — PODER LEARNING CENTER

Back To School Days



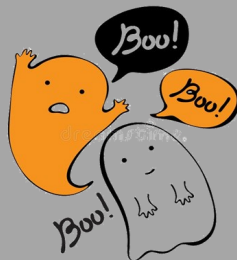
School days are looking a little different this year. Instead of asking kids to limit their screen time, we've asked them to now add it to their daily schedule as the only way to connect with school.

Instead of a center full of kids coming every day, we are keeping our kids program limited to small groups, on a specific schedule, coming only 3 times a week. These changes have been a challenging adjustment to both our families and staff, but we've been able to continue to provide a safe, supportive environment for our kids at the center. We still provide homework help and de-stressing activities. As changes in school schedules continue, we will do the same in an effort to help our kids. If you are interested in signing up your kids to our program, please contact Maria Calcaben, Senior Service Coordinator, at 512-396-3367 or maria@smpha.org.

PUMPKIN CONTEST!

A fun safe way to
celebrate Halloween
and WIN a prize!

Call the PODER office at 512-396-
3367 for more details!



Welcoming Fall

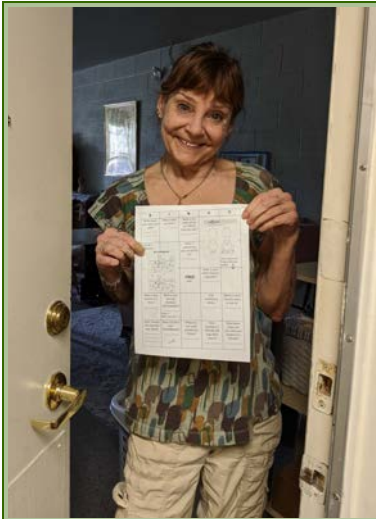
We've kick started our Take-Home Activities with a "Welcome Fall" sign contest. Residents were given a piece of wood and a bag of craft decorations to help them create their works



of art. Our families were excited to work on a fun project together with their kids and our elderly residents showed off their creative side. Twelve residents and families participated in the contest. Residents used fake leaves, foam pumpkins, paints, popsicle sticks, and other materials to put together their masterpiece signs. They proudly displayed their signs outside while the judges (our interns and Service Coordinator) went around to rate them. Congratulations to the Sanchez Family for their creative design. They won a real pumpkin and a goody bag!

Springtown Villa

Winner, Winner!



Bingo is back but with a twist! Bingo sheets are printed and sent to resident doors so they can work on it at home. Residents then fill out the sheets and take them to the brown envelope on the

2nd floor at the Resident Services office for a chance to win a prize. Two winners have already received prizes for turning in their pages: Tracy Frank and Edna Gilmore. These are just some small steps being taken to bring back participation and activities to Springtown in a safe and limited manner. The more responses we get back, the more we can do creative activities to keep our residents engaged. If you are interested in taking steps towards community involvement by participating in activities, please call Maria Calcaben, Senior Service Coordinator, at 512-396-3367.



Don't Forget:

November 1

Daylight Savings
Time ends

November 3

Election Day



CUT & PLAY

Answer the riddle & color the picture. Then, deliver to the 2nd Floor office at Springtown & get a free treat!

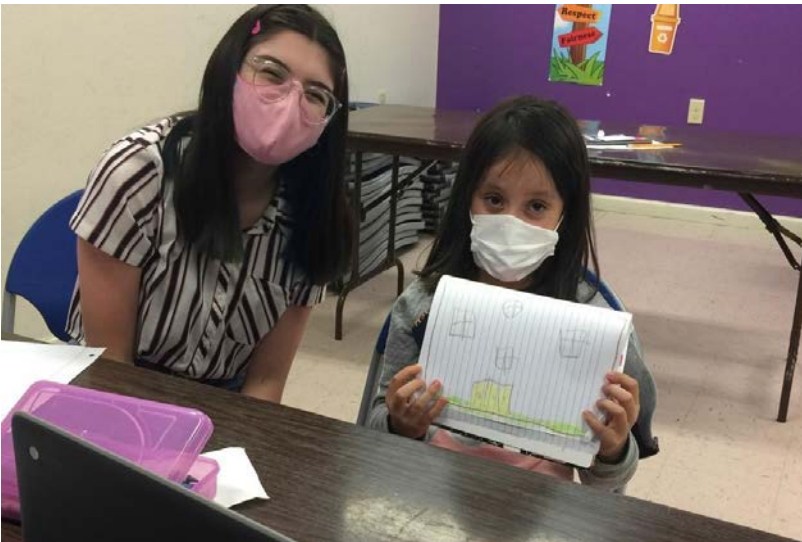
Riddle: What begins with an 'E' and ends with an 'E' but only has one letter? _____

Color the picture:



C. M. ALLEN HOMES — KAD KORNER STORE






The KAD students have been enjoying their Thursday evening science classes with Professor Dickinson. They have learned some interesting facts about substances and the classes have continued to challenge their thinking. Our most recent class had the kids thinking critically about which substances were solid and which were liquid. We ended that science night with some donuts donated by Krispy Kreme and we determined that those donuts were definitely solid!



Texas State social work volunteers are helping many students as they continue with virtual learning. Pictured above is volunteer Tais Gomez with Valentina Santos, working on social studies homework. Tais is passionate about doing everything she can to help our children succeed and we are very thankful for her and all of our volunteers.



OCTOBER EVENTS!

-  **HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST JUDGED BY SAN MARCOS POLICE MONDAY OCT. 21 FROM 4PM-6PM**
-  **NUTRITION CLASSES WITH TEXAS STATE WILL BEGIN THIS MONTH!**
-  **PROFESSOR BERGLUND FROM TEXAS STATE WILL BE BACK WITH A FUN STORY AND ACTIVITY**
-  **KRISTEN WITH CENIKOR WILL BEGIN ACTIVITIES WITH STUDENTS**
-  **THURSDAY NIGHT SCIENCE CLASSES WITH PROFESSOR GAIL WILL CONTINUE THROUGH DECEMBER**

CHAPULTEPEC HOMES & ADULT LEARNING CENTER

*Lets take a moment to thank all
of our community partners*

*The Mobile Librarian Sandra
Martell continues to deliver books
to our residents each month.*

*Ms. Donna at Cenikor delivers
family packets each month filled
with activities and resources for
our families.*

*Randolph Brooks Federal Credit
Union provided " Back to
School" goodie bags to help
students prepare for the
upcoming school year.*

Tips for Distance Learning

- ☺ Give your student a dedicated workspace.
- ☺ Establish routines and expectations.
- ☺ Stay in touch with teachers and administrators.
- ☺ Help students 'own' their learning.
- ☺ Begin and end the day by checking-in.
- ☺ Establish times for quiet and reflection.
- ☺ Encourage physical activity and exercise.
- ☺ Manage stress and make the most of an unusual situation.
- ☺ <https://www.acs-schools.com/parents-guide-distance-learning>

The Challenges of Distance Learning

While talking to the residents, and community I have noticed a trend. Everyone says that they are struggling with distance learning and cannot wait for the kids to go back to in-person learning. One thing that I want to express is that I know that everyone, parents, teachers, administrator, are all doing their best to make sure that the kids are getting the education that they need. However there is a distinct disconnect between everyone involved. Some children are not suited for distance learning and are struggling. Parents are overwhelmed with technology that school officials have chosen to use, multiple children doing multiple lessons all while they are trying to work and provide for their families. I know of some parents that have had to take a leave of absence from work to make sure that their kids are doing their lessons. Administrators and teachers are learning as well, they are all learning how to adapt their curriculum, they are learning how to use technology to communicate with their students and their parents. Everyone is struggling and we are all failing to give each other some grace. We need to support one another and present a united front. We all want the same thing: We want the kids to learn. Teachers, parents and administrators need to work together to provide an education for the children. They deserve it. One day they will be the ones making the decisions and we owe it to them to make sure that they get all of the support they deserve. ~ Kathryn LaPlant-Israel

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most of the time to go get their lunches from each of the schools. My kids are getting fed but those lunches sure did help relieve the food situation in my home and I'm sure a lot of you feel the same way. My kids will still be learning from home once some of the kids return to school so my struggle will continue. Stay safe everyone. ~ A.S.

I'm a parent of a student in C. M. Allen homes. This pandemic is really affecting everything that I'm, trying to do for my child. For some, it is computer issues. It's quite difficult to accomplish the work that's requested. Log in is difficult for homeschooling students. The connection for the students to receive their assignments aren't working. Homework isn't being turned in. And a lot of families aren't able to receive lunches for the children, from the lunch program. Those meals are seriously needed in times like these. Parents are unable to pick them up. It was so much better when we could drive by in our area to pick them up. This whole thing is a mess. I hope there is a game plan to resolve these issues. We as parents would be very grateful. ~ Cathy Carson

On the other side of the equation, are our college interns and volunteers. Their own words say it best:

This year has been unusual, to say the least. Because of COVID, our daily lives have changed and look completely different than they did before March. But the school day is without a doubt the most radical change we've had to get accustomed to. While online school has its perks, like allowing children to work at their own pace, in my opinion, there are way more negatives that outweigh the positives.



As a college student, I'm familiar with navigating my way through online courses on my own, but elementary-aged children are unrealistically expected to do the same now; we even use the same programs, like Zoom and Canvas. And although I've only worked with them for a few days, I've noticed the same recurring problems- zoom fatigue, lack of focus, and inaccessibility to special needs education resources. On top of that, working with technology is very sensitive and the slightest technical issue could cause a major setback. With all these problems working together against these kids, it's easy for them to fall behind on their schoolwork.

Unfortunately, at this time there is no better alternative, but the rest of the volunteers and I are passionate about doing everything we can to help these children succeed. This is just as new to us as it is for the students and educators, but we are constantly finding new ways to navigate through each problem. For instance, in order to help the students maintain focus, we are working on implementing a rewards program. We've also been focusing on directly working one-on-one with the kids who are falling behind or might need a little extra help.

While this situation is unfortunate, it is great to see everyone coming together. I've seen amazing teamwork and maturity in these kids when one of them helps another, or when a student explains a program or concept that a volunteer doesn't understand. Because of everything going on, the students and volunteers can connect on a deeper level, and that means the world to us. I feel so fortunate to be able to help these kids during such an important time, and when the kids do go back in person, we will be eager to help them transition back to school. ~ Tais Gomez, Social Services in the Community Volunteer.

Virtual school seems like so much fun. It is nice for college students like me

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7 who are commuters and no longer have to make a trip to campus. It is also nice for children who have well-educated parents at home that are able to assist them; however, that is not the reality for most of our children here and it can be a nightmare for parents. Not all parents have the luxury of working from home while also teaching their children, and sometimes I feel like the decision makers forget that. The children of CM Allen are struggling with virtual school. Some have little help from parents at home, and it is no fault of their own. When we ask parents who are not sufficiently educated to teach their children at the same standard as the school, it causes serious frustration.

I am a senior in college and believe myself to be knowledgeable, yet I still had trouble helping a fourth grader with math homework. Imagine this: A child has several other siblings who are in school and their single parent works all day. How are children expected to learn the fundamentals of language arts, math, science, and social studies when some don't have anybody present to help them. And again, this is no fault of the parents because they have to work to provide for their family. Now they are in a difficult spot where they must choose between financially providing for their family or making sure their children get a good education. Which do they choose? The thing is, this shouldn't be something a parent has to choose between.



Holographic teachers are not here yet.

Virtual school is a nightmare for kids and parents. Being stressed out, frustrated, overwhelmed, and exhausted from school is the new norm for our families here at CM Allen. What are leaders going to do to make sure parents aren't put under so much pressure to educate their children, because virtual school is not cutting it for our children.

This is the truth behind virtual school and this does not even include the issue of our children getting fed. We have children getting help with school at KAD and they bring a bag of chips for lunch or they sneak food out of their house because they are hungry. The school could do a far better job of serving those who are at a socio-economic disadvantage. Some of our children don't have transportation to the schools to pick up lunches because their parents are working all day. What are our leaders doing to make sure that all students are served? As of now, their plan is not working, at least not for the families at CM Allen. ~ Callie Torres, Texas State University School of Social Work Intern

I, and some of my colleagues, are concerned about what will happen when kids can return to the schools. We are aware that some of their more affluent peers have moved to home schooling or into charter schools. It is possible that we will see an increase in the concentration of poverty in our public schools. We have seen what this has done to so many inner-city schools in the big cities.

Regardless of the outcome, it is apparent that public education in San Marcos is in need of new approaches. We understand how difficult it is for large institutions and entrenched systems to change course. Nevertheless, it is time to consider new approaches and, when you do, don't forget to listen to the people who are being left behind in an economic system that often does not seem to value the contributions of the people at the bottom of the pyramid.

[Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in the Oracle do not necessarily reflect those of the SMHA management or the Board of Commissioners.]

hello october,
please be good. ♥

October



Sun

Mon

Tue

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Sat

October (from the Latin *ôctō* meaning "eight") was the eighth month in the old Roman calendar. Among the Anglo-Saxons, October was known as *Winterfylleth*, because at this full moon (*fylleth*), winter was supposed to begin. There are two full moons this month!



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9 Bring Your
Teddy Bear to
Work/School Day

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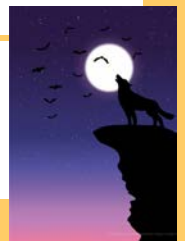
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27 *Board of
Commissioners
5:30 PM*

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LEADERSHIP

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Richard Cruz — Chairperson
Gloria Salazar — Vice-Chairperson
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HOUSING OFFICES

Allen Woods Homes (Main Office)

512-353-5059

CM Allen Homes

512-353-1116

Chapultepec Homes

512-396-3364

Housing Choice Voucher

512-353-5061

Springtown Villa

512-396-3363

RESIDENT SERVICES

Chapultepec Adult Learning Center

Family Self-Sufficiency

512-396-3364

CM Allen KAD Korner Store

512-392-6273

Allen Woods PODER

Learning Center

512-396-3367

Springtown Villa

512-353-7343