



Protective Services

in Harris County

VOLUME FIVE • NUMBER FOUR • AUTUMN 2009

IREM Golf Tournament is Huge Success!

The 24th Annual IREM Golf Tournament, hosted by Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, was held at Sweetwater Country Club on Monday, September 21, 2009. The tournament raised over \$60,000 in proceeds. The funds will go toward support of the BEAR Necessities Rooms (BEAR...BE A Resource for CPS Kids). The BEAR Necessities Rooms provide CPS caseworkers with new emergency supplies, such as diapers, formula, clothing, shoes, school supplies, and other needed items and serves over 1,000 children each month. The best overall teams received artwork made by children for their awards. ♥



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Editorial

November 2009



The Homeless Youth Network of Houston/Harris County (HYN) coordinates services for youth ages 16 to 24. I currently serve as president of the network. The network hosts two community forums each year. On September 30th the forum was on "Using Civil Law to Stop Human Trafficking and Child Prostitution". Participating in the forum was Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan and Jennifer Solak from Children at Risk, Inc. Mr. Ryan spoke of the work of his office in making certain that individuals where young people work as dancers and wait staff are of age and that such establishments have all required health and safety licenses. Children at Risk, Inc. has published "The State of Human Trafficking in Texas". Ms. Solak spoke of the services that are available to assist international and domestic victims of human trafficking and child prostitution.

Individuals under age 17 charged with a Class B misdemeanor offense of prostitution are taken to the Juvenile Probation Department. Possible victims of domestic trafficking may be detained for other offenses such as drug possession.

Minors picked up by law enforcement officers for offenses such as runaway, truancy, and curfew violations or Class C Misdemeanors are brought to TRIAD Intake housed at the Harris County Youth Services Center. These youth may then be placed in the Kinder Emergency Shelter. Trafficking victims are often picked up for the above offenses. A frustration of law enforcement agencies is that individuals picked up for status offenses are not held in secure facilities and it is difficult to get their cooperation in testifying against those who are promoting child prostitution.

Case management services are available for child victims through the TRIAD Prevention Program and the Community Youth Services (CYS) Safety-Net Program. Youth who may have been in foster care may receive services through the Houston Alumni and Youth (HAY) Center at its new location at 1906 Cochran.

George Ford J. D.
Executive Director, HCPS



Harris County Attorney, Vince Ryan, spoke at the Homeless Youth Network Community Forum.

HAY: One Stop Service for Youth at New Location

The Houston Alumni & Youth (HAY) Center relocated near downtown Houston at 1906 Cochran Street on November 1st. The new phone number is 713-884-3300. The Center provides one stop services for youth aging out of the foster care system and foster care alumni up to age 26.

The Cochran street facility is operated by Houston Works USA, the leading provider of services focusing on job placement, continuing education and vocational training in the Houston area. HCPS is excited about this new partnership with Houston Works USA and the expertise that they can provide in enabling our youth and young adults to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. HCPS also thanks the Texas Workforce Commission for their continued support of this vital program. ♥



As part of National Adoption Day, mass adoptions and other events were held across the state to put the spotlight on the plight of children waiting for permanent homes and a chance at normal lives.

This year, Harris County celebrated the adoption of more than 50 CPS children during Mass Adoption Day on Friday, November 20, 2009 at the Juvenile Justice Center.

Last year, in the greater Houston area, over 900 abused or neglected children and teens were adopted from state care. But, the need has not diminished - more than 1,700 children are still waiting for a home in Region 6. More than half of these children are 10 years of age or older. The older the child, the longer they tend to wait for adoption.

To shorten the wait, CPS has a public awareness campaign "Why Not Me?" aimed at increasing the number of children, especially older children and minority children, who are adopted. After all, thousands of older foster children awaiting adoption ask themselves, "Why not me? Why can't I have a family?" Whether the child is 1 or 17, children never outgrow the need for parents. ♥

For more information about adoption and to meet the children who are waiting go to www.adoptchildren.org or call 1-800-233-3405

CYS Receives Three Year Grant

The Community Youth Services Program received a three year grant from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families: Family and Youth Services Bureau – Basic Center Program in the amount of \$150,000 per year that will focus on providing services to runaway and homeless youth and those at risk of these behaviors.

The grant, called "The Harris County Youth Services Safety-Net Program" has been designed to promote a continuum of care that maximizes the resources and programming that are offered through all of the youth services programs housed at the Harris County Youth Services Center. A youth can enter through any of the program's doors at any time and get appropriate help.

Coordination of services on an ongoing basis will occur between Community Youth Services, TRIAD Prevention Program and the Kinder Emergency Shelter. Other programs linked to the continuum are Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in Harris County, Systems of Hope, Harris County Juvenile Probation, community based youth serving agencies (including faith-based and non-profits) and school districts' homeless liaisons. It is projected that the collaborative efforts of everyone involved will not only reduce runaway incidents and homelessness but will increase the youth's sense of competence and build self-sufficiency skills. ♥

For further information, you may contact **Vanecia Gray**, Safety-Net Coordinator, with Community Youth Services at 713-295-2548.

Happenings at HCPS

The HCPS Board of Directors presented "CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE: Caring, Dedication, and Commitment"

to honor state and county staff on
Thursday, October 22, 2009.

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

Marian Wright Edelman

The world is different because of the work each one of you has chosen to do day in and day out.

Employee Appreciation Committee



Youth on Board Project: Youth to Participate in Achieving Agency Goals

In the early fall of 2008, the Harris County Protective Services (HCPS) Board of Directors, under the leadership of President, Dianne Bynum, made the unanimous decision to establish what was coined the Youth on Board (YOB) Project, a HCPS Board initiative geared toward the creation of a youth position on the general board level. This position would allow a youth to participate in achieving the agency's goals through sharing ideas, perceptions and their talents to address youth related issues.

Vanecia Weathersby Gray, appointed coordinator of the YOB workgroup, began working with the project in January 2009. It is comprised of four (4) Youth Services Programs: Community Youth Services (CYS), TRIAD Pasadena and Gulfton Community Youth Development Programs, Systems of Hope, and PAL In-Care and Aftercare Programs. The Workgroup's focus promotes building positive youth/adult partnerships and engaging in Positive Youth Development (PYD). This philosophy is based on the commitment to enhance and develop leadership skills, self-confidence and trust in young people in an effort to help them achieve their full potential.

Each of the four programs has their own Youth Advisory Council and is represented by two (2) youth. These youth come together (YOB) and share their YAC's individual goals, community projects and youth outreach activities that are then shared at the HCPS Youth Services Committee level for discussion and potential action at the board level. The YOB-YAC initiative began meeting in April of 2009.

On May 28, 2009, a YOB Board presentation addressing the necessary first steps to beginning the process of youth participation on the board level was made. The first HCPS YOB Retreat was held July 23, 2009, at Bo's Place. Twenty-eight (28) people were present. The retreat was a great success! Ice Breakers and presentations on the 40 Developmental Assets, Generational Differences/Similarities, and Youth Culture/Youth Voice were made by YOB YAC members Maya Richardson - CYS Safety-Net YAC and Paris Meltzer - PAL HAY Center VIPs. The youth stated they



From left to right: **Taren Bates** (Systems of Hope YAC), **Samantha Avalos** (TRIAD Pasadena CYD YAC), **Maya Richardson** (CYS Safety-Net YAC), and **Paris Meltzer** (PAL HAY Center VIPs).

most enjoyed the opportunity to “relax and get to know” the board members and finding out how “cool the adults are”. They also appreciated the “funny” personal stories shared by the adults present and the fact that the adults really “wanted to hear” what they had to say and “cared about” how they felt.

Youth participants, Maya Richardson and Samantha Avalos were selected to represent the YOB YAC at the Youth Services Committee level and in a grand show of support, the Youth Services Committee members agreed to push their meeting time back to allow opportunity for the youth to be present and fully participate. The youth make reports on their individual and collaborative activities, and help identify ways to contribute and improve their individual programs and HCPS as a whole. They continue to build and enhance their leadership skills and work toward becoming active members of the board in January 2010. ♥



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