

bear news

PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR CHILD VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



A Day in the Life of BEAR Necessities

Marcus is a 12-year-old who has suffered from both abuse and neglect. He came to the BEAR room with his caseworker early one morning. He had on jeans that were well above his ankles and a t-shirt that was not only too small, but it also had several rips in the shoulders. Marcus was removed from his home in the middle of the night after he ran to the neighbors asking for help. They called the police after seeing that Marcus had been beaten. The marks from the beating were visible and Marcus seemed exhausted. He did brighten up when the BEAR room volunteer found some jeans and t-shirts that fit him. Marcus also needed a new pair of shoes. He told the volunteer that his house had a "plumbing problem" and his shoes were wet and smelled funny. Marcus was profoundly thankful for his clothes and shoes even though the volunteer could tell he was in pain and not feeling well. About one month after this visit, Marcus stopped by the BEAR room again to say thank you. Since that day, every time Marcus is in the CPS building for a visit, he stops by BEAR, not to ask for anything, just to say hello and to thank the volunteers and staff for helping him.

Adam, a frail and dirty five-year-old boy was brought into the BEAR room by a caseworker wearing only a grimy pair of shorts and no

(continued on page 2)

BEAResource
for CPS Kids

Hope and help for abused and neglected children

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

shirt nor shoes. The caseworker told a staff member that the little boy had been found by a law enforcement officer wandering down a street. The caseworker and the staff member began to pull jeans and shirts from the rack trying to determine his size. They then proceeded to start pulling down various sizes of tennis shoes, since Adam didn't know his size.

Michelle, a high school senior, was out shopping with her foster mother for a prom dress. Michelle eagerly picked out her prom dress, but the foster mother soon realized she had left the clothing voucher at home. As the foster mother and Michelle started heading for the exit to go home to get the voucher, the foster mother became gravely ill in the store and

...after the caseworker cleaned and dressed Adam, ...he looked and acted like a totally different child. ...the boy, who barely spoke when he was brought in, had played and talked with staff members.

After the caseworker and staff member finished gathering clothing and undergarments, the caseworker politely asked the staff member if there were any towels and soap in the BEAR room. Since Adam was covered in so much dirt, she wanted to clean him up before putting on his new clothing. The caseworker and Adam headed off down the hall, but not before Adam selected a Hot Wheels car. Later on that day, the supervisor in the caseworker's unit stopped by the BEAR room to say thanks. It seems that after the caseworker cleaned and dressed Adam, the supervisor said he looked and acted like a totally different child. Before leaving to go to a foster home, the supervisor said the boy, who barely spoke when he was brought in, had played and talked with staff members. She said he actually seemed to have forgotten about his situation, at least for a little while.

had to be rushed by ambulance to the hospital. Michelle had to be placed in a respite (substitute) foster home. Because of her placement in a new foster home, Michelle could not get to her clothing voucher. With her prom on Saturday, Michelle's caseworker stopped by the BEAR room early one Tuesday morning to ask if BEAR could possibly purchase the dress. After getting approval for the special request, the staff member set up a time to meet the new foster mother to purchase the dress. About a month later, the same caseworker stopped by to give the staff member a picture. She said that Michelle was so happy and thankful to have her dress that she wanted to give BEAR one of her prom pictures as a token of appreciation.

BEAR CALENDAR

December 1

Bearing Gifts Christmas Warehouse Opens!
Volunteers are needed!

December 18

Over 5,000 Christmas gifts will be delivered to six CPS offices.

March 3

The Underwriter Party for the **BEAR The Load Luncheon** Graciously underwritten by Neiman Marcus.

March 4

BEAR The Load Luncheon
River Oaks Country Club
Catherine Mosbacher Founder's Award
Honorees: Immy Papadopoulos and Joanne Pinkett. **Laura Bush Award**
Honoree: The Children's Fund

May 1

Shoe Drive begins! **Volunteers are needed!**

July 12

Back to School Project begins!
Volunteers are needed!

If you are interested in volunteering for any of these events, please contact Charlotte Penny at 713-696-5149.



FROM THE GUILD

Looking ahead, we have already selected a date and location for the 2004 BEAR The Load Luncheon, our annual fundraiser for BEAR. The luncheon will take place on Thursday, March 4, 2003, at the River Oaks Country Club. Our keynote speaker will be Lauren Weisberger, author of *The Devil Wears Prada*. Heather Herrold will serve as chair, Kathy Britton and Farley Erikson will be our underwriting chairs, Courtney Hopson will be our invitations chair, Joy Randall and Mary Eliza Shaper have agreed to serve as reservations co-chairs, Shannon Braniff and Leigh Kins will be in charge of decorations, Candace Dickerson and Stephanie Shanks are heading up the raffle, and Sandy Campion will serve as entertainment chair. If you would like to find out more information about the luncheon, please contact BEAR.

If you are interested in becoming a Guild member, PLEASE join. There are two levels of membership: Active is \$35 per year, for those of you interested in volunteering, and Sustainer is \$50 per year. Both levels of membership will be expected to support the BEAR luncheon, and benefits of membership will include a coffee and tour of the BEAR Necessities room, as well as other fun opportunities to gather throughout the year.

VOLUNTEER PERSPECTIVE

by Katherine Kardesch
Junior League of Houston, Inc. Volunteer

When I was approached to write an article on my experiences as a volunteer with BEAR, I jumped at the chance. I knew this would be a great way to convey my feelings about BEAR and my Junior League experiences with the Agency. It is hard to sum up, in a small space, the feelings of being so fortunate to be a part of both of these incredible organizations.

BEAR...BE A Resource for Children's Protective Services (CPS) Kids meets the immediate needs of children who become involved with Children's Protective Services. Over 1,000 children are seen each month in the BEAR Necessities rooms. BEAR also provided school supplies, school uniforms, and shoes to more than 2,000 children for the 2003/2004 school year. BEARing Gifts, a program of BEAR, provides holiday wishes to more than 5,000 children each year.

After returning from a year of maternity leave, I scoured the Junior League placement website to find a perfect fit for my needs. I was a new full-time mom after working for 11 ½ years for the same company. My children and family were my priority, but I wanted to continue my devoted commitment to the Junior League. After reading many descriptions, my first choice was the summer concentrated placement at BEAR. When I found out that I did indeed receive this as my placement, I was thrilled.

Soon after training in May 2002, I dove into this new project with excitement. That feigned excitement never faded. BEAR is a placement where the volunteers are extremely helpful, since most of the work is done by Junior League volunteers. Mary Green, BEAR Director, once said, "The Junior League truly helps us to exist." How amazing to really know that our time there makes such a difference! Also, the staff at BEAR is amazing and a delight to be with every day. It was and is a real treat to volunteer with a wonderful group of people.

In the spring of 2003, I was approached to chair the BEAR placement. I was flattered to have been considered and more than delighted to accept. I thought, another year to be a part of this fantastic organization and another year to make a difference with these children.

In July, the first BEAR Back to School Party for CPS Kids was held. More than 200 children involved with CPS, and their caregivers, attended the party. Multiple stations, run by volunteers (many of whom were Junior League volunteers), were set up to provide manicures and face painting. Volunteers assisted in all aspects of this event from serving food to serving stickers. With volunteer assistance, the children decorated book covers and chalkboards. Each child received two school uniforms, a pair of shoes, school supplies, hygiene items, undergarments, and socks all packaged in a bright, blue duffel bag. More than 100 children received a haircut; more than 30 children were able to have their immunizations updated; AND more than 400 hotdogs and 400 donuts were consumed! Many of these children started school for the first time with new clothes, shoes that fit, and the appropriate school supplies. The volunteer efforts allowed these children to feel very special and to know that many people do care about them.

I am so grateful to be a part of BEAR and The Junior League of Houston, Inc. I only hope my efforts affect BEAR and The Junior League half as much as BEAR and The Junior League have affected me.

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF BEAR

As the year draws to a close, we would like to stop and take a look back at a year of exciting new programs and exceptional service that was provided to children under the care of Child Protective Services.

The first annual BEAR Back-to-School Party kicked off the BEAR Back-to-School Drive in grand style. More than 150 children enjoyed an afternoon of food, crafts and entertainment. This was followed by the distribution of school uniforms, school supplies, and new shoes to over 2,000 children under the care of Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults.

Another first for BEAR is a new program aimed at refurbishing the family visitation rooms at the six CPS offices in Harris County. A total of three rooms will be completed by the end of the year, with more to come in 2004.

In addition to the new and expanded programs, BEAR continues to serve approximately 1,000 children each month in the two BEAR Necessities rooms.

BEAR owes much of its success to the continued support of the Houston Community. I would like to extend a special thank you to all of our long-term supporters. Through their generous spirit of giving, they have made a difference in the lives of thousands of children.

BEARING Gifts, the Christmas project of BEAR, is in full swing ensuring that over 5,000 children will have a wonderful holiday memory by having their wishes filled. In 2002, more than 10,700 new gifts were provided to 5,400 CPS kids. We anticipate filling even more wishes this year!

And last but not least, we would like to say a special thank you to the creative professionals from the American Marketing Association (Houston Chapter) and the Public Relations Society of American (Houston), who donated their time and expertise to the CreatATHon. Thanks to these individuals BEAR received a new logo and other marketing services free of charge.

Thank you once again for your continued support of BEAR.

Clay Crawford
Board Chairman

Mary Green
Director of BEAR

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bear news

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BEARING GIFTS

KIDS CAN BE A RESOURCE ... BEAR

Justin Treat is a young man who recently completed his Eagle Scout project by helping BEAR in a big way. After meeting with staff members at BEAR, Justin decided to conduct a drive for new fleece jackets and new board games for the BEAR program. Over the course of two months, Justin sent out letters to members of his Boy Scout Troop, spoke at his stepfather's breakfast club meeting, and distributed 1200 flyers to homes in his neighborhood requesting support for his drive. Thanks to Justin's hard work, BEAR now has 240 new jackets and 18 new board games for children under the care of Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults.

If you would like to become involved with the Kids Can Be A Resource program, please contact the BEAR office at 713-940-5296.

BEARING Gifts, the Christmas project of BEAR, provides Christmas gifts to children under the care of Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults, who would otherwise have no Christmas at all. To help, simply call BEAR to request a gift card or cards with a CPS child's name, age, and wishes. Any individual, family or organization can make the requested gift purchases and bring them to the Christmas warehouse. Gift cards can also be picked up in any Bank One lobby as part of the Bank One Spirit of Christmas. Anyone in the community may select a card, make the requested gift purchases, and return the gifts to Bank One. This past year, more than 10,700 new gifts were provided for 5,400 CPS kids.

If you would like to make Christmas brighter for a child under the care of Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults, contact BEAR at 713-940-3087 about sponsoring a child for Christmas.

CreateAThon gives BEAR a new look

BEAR was recently one of only five local nonprofits selected from a pool of 30 agencies that applied to participate in CreateATHon. Developed in 1998 by Riggs, a South Carolina marketing solutions agency, CreateATHon is a national network of communications associations and agencies looking to help their nonprofit communities by pooling their advertising, marketing and public relations talent.

Professionals from the American Marketing Association Houston Chapter and the Public Relations Society of America Houston Chapter worked on Thursday, September 11, 2003, from the early evening into the late night developing new marketing materials for BEAR, including a new logo, brochure and marketing communications plan for BEAR's various projects all pro bono. Thanks to the diligent efforts of Eydie Pengelly, Bart Darling, Lynette Malone, Greg Smith, Keri Stooksbury, Barbara Bronstein, Jodie Brivic, Allen Brivic, Anton Sirlin, Sandy Flint, April Sutton and Susana Valenzuela, BEAR is proud to unveil its new logo in this newsletter.

BEAR APPRECIATES OUR DONORS

BEAR would like to extend a special **THANK YOU** to the following individuals and corporations that made a monetary or inkind donation in 2003:

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FAMILY VISITATION
ROOMS RECEIVE A
MAKEOVER COURTESY
OF **BEAR**

The “before” and “after” pictures will explain BEAR’s determination to meet the challenge of redecorating 20 family visitation rooms by August 2004. These previously dark, dreary spaces are now bursting with color, fun carpet, storage space and interactive pieces. Family visitation rooms are used for family visits between children who are in CPS custody and their parents and other family members . Most children are able to visit their parents only twice monthly for one hour each visit. BEAR would like this limited time to be as meaningful as possible. BEAR has completed three rooms with new cheerful paint and seating including a rocking chair. BEAR is also planning to develop the upkeep of the rooms as a service project for various school groups, church groups and other organizations. If you are interested in sponsoring a room or its upkeep please contact Mary Green at 713-940-5296.



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