

The Heart of HCPS



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56 adopted at mass adoption event



Maria McCrary and husband Jose Martinez adopted five siblings on National Adoption Day, where the oldest adopted was 16 years old (below).

More than 56 children in the care of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services found their forever homes at the Harris County Mass Adoption Day event.

It was one of many mass adoptions held during November, National Adoption Month, in an effort to celebrate new adoptions and to spread awareness of the children still awaiting adoption.

More than 6,800 children in Texas are awaiting adoption. Of those young people ready for a forever home, more than 1,200 are in the Houston area.

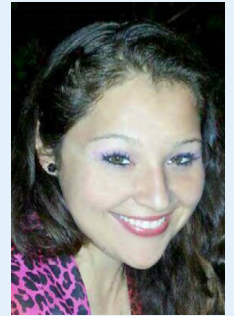
For more information on how to adopt, visit adoptchildren.org.



CYD youth becomes program coordinator

Cristal Atilano grew up to be the coordinator of the very program that saved her summers as a youth — Gulfton Community Youth Development (CYD).

Atilano is the new Gulfton CYD Coordinator.



*Cristal Atilano,
CYD Coordinator*

CYD is a federally-funded juvenile delinquency program in zip codes that have high incidence of juvenile crime.

At age 13, Atilano began spending her summers at CYD's Campo del Sol Summer Day Camp while her parents worked. She went on field trips and did activities she would never have had a chance to do without the program.

"I had no idea it was prevention," Atilano said. "Once I got involved, I grasped the idea of why the program existed."

When Atilano turned 18, she became a camp counselor at Campo del Sol.

"I wanted to watch over kids that were just like me," she said. "I know what it's like to have parents who both work to meet the needs."

She then took the position of the assistant director, followed by the director of the camp. In 2009, Atilano joined the Houston mayor's Anti-Gang office to work with the United Minds Youth Leadership Advisory Council. The program is funded through CYD.

HCPS would like to extend our gratitude to Cristal for her dedication to these youth.

For more information on CYD at Gulfton, call 832-526-3596.

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CPS in Harris County

Texas Department of
Family and
Protective Services
(DFPS)

Harris County
Protective Services
(HCPS)

A word from the Executive Director

The holidays are upon us. It's both the most wonderful time of the year and the most stress-filled time, especially for many of our HCPS clients.

The American Psychological Association says 31 percent of low-income families reported financial stress surrounding the holidays. Research has also proven the shorter days and lack of sunlight in winter can trigger bouts of depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD), according to the Mayo Clinic.

Fortunately, we have programs for our clients during the season that can be so trying.

Our Youth Services Division features several prevention and early intervention programs for youth. We have the TRIAD and CYS (Community Youth Services) programs that provide voluntary assistance to children, youth and their families who are experiencing personal problems through crisis intervention counseling and supports.

The TRIAD Intake Diversion Program provides crisis intervention services twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week to youth and their families. The staff meets with the youth and their families to resolve their conflicts before stressful moments become larger.

CYS has caseworkers housed in local Harris County school districts and some alternative settings to intercede with students and provide services during life crises, including those induced by the holiday months. In the weeks leading up to the holiday break, CYS workers connect families with community resources for holiday baskets and gifts. They also help students whose holiday season will be predictably difficult — the first season without a parent, ongoing sibling family conflicts and illness — to develop coping mechanisms. The staff is also available for any emergencies that might arise during the winter break.

But it's not just children and their families who experience stress throughout the holiday season. Our adult clients also feel a pinch.

Our Guardianship Program is court-mandated to manage the affairs of more than 1,200 incapacitated adults in Harris County. Many of these adults no longer have living friends and relatives, and memories of those loved ones flood back during the holidays. To alleviate loneliness, our case managers take several steps to make the season special.

The program ensures each adult has a gift to open through an annual drive. The gifts are wrapped in bags decorated by school children and delivered. The caseworkers also attempt to make the season familiar through individualized plans, which may include delivered meals, gift shopping for those who have living friends and family, and visits to churches or other groups where they were previously involved.

With the generous support of our community and our department's programs, the holidays of those we serve are more peaceful and brighter.



Working together AS CPS

Harris County Protective Services works in close partnership with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in the delivery of the "Child Protective Services" program to keep children safe in Harris County. HCPS provides enhancement services for DFPS, as well as its own prevention and support services to at-risk children and families.

HAY Transitional Coaching Program needs male volunteers

The Transitional Coaching Program at the HAY (Houston Alumni & Youth) Center has a shortage of male mentors to match with the young men referred to the program, said Laura Meares, volunteer coordinator.

The Coaching program is a mentoring effort for volunteers to help foster youth, who will soon reach the end of state care, navigate their unique course to adulthood. They ensure the youth are on track to graduate, apply for colleges and organize post-care benefits.

The program expanded this year with an added position. Katy Vittoria, a volunteer specialist, joined the team in October to help recruit and train volunteers and match referred youth to mentors.

Meares said at least 20 males are awaiting a mentor.

For more information on the HAY Center, visit haycenter.org.



More than 20 volunteers took their Transitional Coaching Program mentees back-to-school shopping at Memorial City Mall.

Permanency Summit gives insight to plight for foster youth



Amelia Franck Meyer, CEO of Anu Family Services in the Midwest, explains the need for a permanent caregiver. She says the only way for children to begin to heal is to know they have someone to flock behind.

Harris County Protective Services was invited to participate in the Permanency Summit in Region 6 of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Several HCPS employees listened in as the state agency explored the need and possibilities for finding long-term home solutions for children.

Amelia Franck Meyer, CEO of Midwest-based child welfare agency Anu Family Services, spoke passionately about the reason permanency is important to the industry. Children removed from their homes suffer enough loss, she said. They, like all mammals, are hard-wired to bond with people. In order to do so, these children must be provided permanent families to begin healing from whatever loss they have suffered and building bonds with their caregivers.

For more information about Anu Family Services, visit anufs.org.

HAY luncheon raises \$190K, features former pilot as speaker

The HAY (Houston Alumni & Youth) Center raised more than \$190,000 at its annual luncheon in October.

The sold out luncheon was privileged to hear this year's speaker, Major Dan Rooney, a F16 fighter pilot and PGA professional who founded nonprofit Folds of Honor. Folds of Honor provides educational funding to children and families of fallen and wounded soldiers.

Major Rooney inspired all the attendees with his message of hope and making a difference.

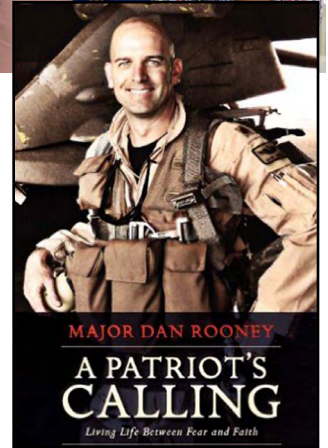
More than a dozen current and former foster youth also attended the event. Major Rooney visited with each youth individually and signed his book, "A Patriot's Calling," for each of them.

The funds raised at the luncheon will support the employment, education and volunteer programs at the HAY Center. This year's event was co-chaired by Krissi and Taylor Reid, Carol and John Gunn, and Nicole and Michael Lactson.

For more information about the HAY Center, visit haycenter.org.



Above: Current and former foster youth pose for a photo at the annual HAY Center fundraising luncheon, which helps support the employment, education and volunteer programs at the HAY Center.



Right: Major Dan Rooney, a former pilot and PGA professional, signed his book about his life's purpose after speaking at the HAY Center luncheon.

Happenings AT HCPS

HCPS speaks to youth at Street Olympics



Harris County Protective Services was among several departments to distribute important information at the Bright Futures Fair during the 2015 Precinct One Street Olympics, founded by Commissioner El Franco Lee.

HCPS Employees take Walk of Fame

HCPS put on a budget-friendly red carpet event for employees. "The Walk of Fame" celebrated employees' years of service. Among the honored was Youth Services Division's Administrator Ginger Harper for her 40 years of dedicated service to our mission.

Thank you to all our employees for playing a starring role at HCPS.



BEAR introduces mobile notifications



A caseworker shops in the main BEAR Room.

BEAR...Be A Resource for CPS Kids implemented a new text messaging notification service to keep caseworkers informed about the BEAR Rooms located throughout Harris County.

BEAR is a public-private partnership that provides goods and services to children in the care of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The program has BEAR Rooms conveniently located for DFPS caseworkers to obtain basics necessities — clothes, shoes and hygiene products — for the children in their care.

BEAR began using RainedOut, a free mobile notification system, this year to deliver updates to caseworkers about the status of BEAR Rooms and special days when most-asked-for items are available in one location.

RainedOut “provides a direct line to caseworkers,” said Luis Morales, Programs, Media and Special Events specialist. “With everything going computer-based and mobile, it lets (caseworkers) stay informed from anywhere.”

To learn more about BEAR, visit bearesourcehouston.org.

Texans donate tickets to BEAR



Children in state care have experienced the Houston Texans up close this season through the generous donation from cornerback Johnathan Joseph to BEAR...Be A Resource for CPS Kids. The children enjoyed the tunnel experience, the game and good eats, as well as participated in Flag Day.

Help HCPS help others have happy holidays

This season, we have two spectacular drives we can use your help with.

BEARing Gifts

BEAR...Be A Resource for CPS Kids provides holiday gifts to children in the care of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services through its BEARing Gifts Program. DFPS caseworkers submit holiday wish lists to BEAR, which relays the wishes to donors.

You can: shop for the gifts, have a toy drive or volunteer with the staff.

For more information about BEARing Gifts, visit bearesourcehouston.org.

Guardianship Fleece Jacket Drive

For a second year, the Guardianship Program is working to ensure each adult in their care has at least one gift to open this holiday season.

You can: donate a new fleece jacket or contribute \$10 for a new jacket purchase.

For more information about the drive, visit the [HCPS Facebook](#) (HCPS1966) event page.

Drive4Change

We would like to send a special thanks to everyone who has ordered a Stop Abuse specialty Texas license plate. Our department is a direct beneficiary of the funds raised from this awareness campaign.

For more information about the specialty plates, visit txdmv.gov.