

The Heart of HCPS



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Spring 2016

BEAR gives youth graduation party



Foster youth received certificates and gifts during a graduation celebration that BEAR...Be A Resource for CPS Kids organizes.

More than two dozen Harris County foster youth celebrated their high school graduations at a June party organized by BEAR...Be A Resource for CPS Kids.

"Knowing that it's so many others trying to be successful is great," said Sharda White, 18, who wants to be a neurobiologist. "And not everyone has the means to put on a graduation party."

As part of the celebration, BEAR presented the youth with graduation gifts to help them in their transition to adulthood, including bedding, luggage and gift cards.

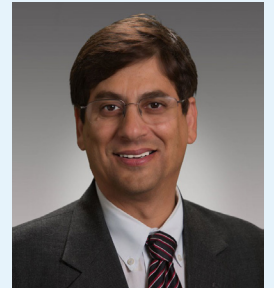
"It's an honor to celebrate these youth that have beat the odds and circumstances to reach this monumental achievement," said Bernadette Cashin, director of BEAR.

For more information about BEAR, visit bearesourcehouston.org.



New HCPS executive director named

Joel Levine, current Children's Services administrator, will take the reigns of HCPS as executive director on July 23.



Joel Levine, incoming executive director

Levine will succeed George Ford, who is retiring July 22 after more than four decades with the department.

"Mr. Levine is uniquely qualified by education and experience with administration and children and youth services with HCPS to be the next Executive Director," Ford said. "Mr. Levine gets things done."

Harris County Commissioners Court will recognize Ford and Levine July 19.

After an extensive selection process, the Harris County Protective Services board unanimously selected Levine. The Harris County Commissioners Court approved the selection June 14.

"It is with great honor that I prepare to lead HCPS, a dynamic department dedicated to the most vulnerable residents of Harris County," Levine said. "I have enjoyed the past 18 years with this department and am eager to continue working with its dedicated staff."

Levine will be the second executive director since HCPS became a county department in 1995. Ford has held the position since then.

Levine has worked in child welfare for more than 30 years. He has held two other leadership roles at HCPS after coming from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in 1998. Levine is also a member of several child welfare organizations.

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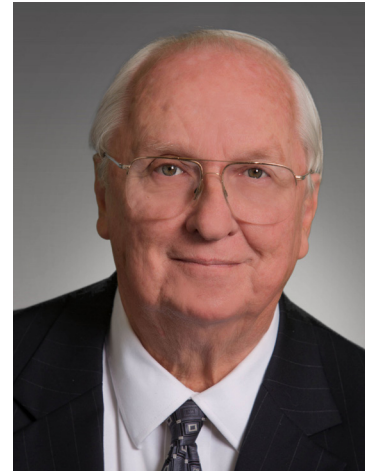
Harris County DFPS Regional Director

CJ Broussard-White, LLM

A word from the Executive Director

In July, I retire as Executive Director of Harris County Protective Services, a position I have had the opportunity to serve in since 1979. In that time, I have witnessed significant growth of this 50-year-old department.

HCPS was not HCPS when I began working as a caseworker in 1970. It was "Harris County Child Welfare," which had been established in 1966. The Director was Gene Lege who had succeeded Fred Souflee, who was the first director.



In 1983, our name was changed to Harris County Children's Protective Services. We became a county department in 1995. In 2003, our name was changed to Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults following the transfer of the Guardianship Program to our department.

With each name change, there has also been an expansion in the services and clients we serve. We now offer care for vulnerable adults through our Guardianship Program, and we offer services to youth in crises and their families through prevention and intervention programs. And we have expanded our programs that aid children in DFPS care, including a one-of-a-kind integrated healthcare clinic and evaluations of children entering care.

Much of our success can be attributed to private/public partnerships. The BEAR Program and the HAY Center Foundation enhance the services provided in our department. The private sector also aided in the construction of the Harris County Youth Services Center, a 24-hour reception point for children and youth served by HCPS.

Trini Mendenhall, who chaired the Capital Campaign for the Harris County Youth Services Center, is being honored at the "At the Heart of Families" Luncheon on Sept. 27. The luncheon is hosted by the Harris County Children's Protective Services Fund, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide funding to HCPS for programming advancements that cannot be afforded through other sources.

In addition to the growth of HCPS, I have also witnessed several changes in the child welfare system, including with close partner DFPS. As I write this, new leadership has once again come to the department. Judge John Specia retired and was replaced by former Texas Ranger head Hank Whitman. Judge Specia is to be applauded for bringing in national experts for guidance on improving the state system; however, these improvements can only take place with a stable, well-trained workforce.

It has been a privilege to work with an organization whose vision is to better the lives of children and adults. Our department has been the beneficiary of generous support from Commissioners Court, a dedicated board appointed by the court, and my fellow staff who carry out their duties each day in a most professional manner. I wish Joel Levine, who was named as my successor, the best as he leads our department into its second half century.

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CPS in Harris County

Texas Department of
Family and
Protective Services
(DFPS)

Harris County
Protective Services
(HCPS)

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.

BEAR the Load gets Jean-erous, raises \$300,000 for CPS kids

BEAR... Be A Resource for CPS Kids raised more than \$300,000 at its annual "BEAR the Load with Love" luncheon in April.

The event, co-chaired by Mary-Charles Davis and Mary Lynn Mannon, featured a denim theme and invited the 430 attendees to "show your jean-erosity" with donations of jeans for abused and neglected children. More than 350 pairs of jeans were donated.

Speaker Louise Bayless Parsley, an author and former columnist, explained "chaos is the norm" for the children in CPS care.

BE A Resource for CPS Kids provides children in CPS care with clothing, shoes, back-to-school supplies and other bare necessities.

For more information on the BEAR visit bearesourcehouston.org.



More than \$300,000 was raised at the 2016 BEAR the Load with Love luncheon, where attendees also donated jeans for children in CPS care.

DFPS, HCPS kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month



Top: Staff hold posters with names and ages of children in the Harris County area who died of child abuse.

Bottom: The Westbury High School choir poses in front of a Houston Fire Department truck after the Child Abuse Prevention Month event.

In April, the Department of Family and Protective Services and Harris County Protective Services kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with the support of the Houston Fire Department and the Westbury High School choir.

During the April ceremony, staff held up posters with the first names and ages of the children who died of abuse and neglect in the Harris County area. The signs included life experiences these children were denied.

The Houston Fire Department blared their horn for 34 seconds during a moment of silence to recognize these children's lives. The Westbury choir sang three uplifting songs throughout the press conference.

Child abuse is preventable. It is everyone's responsibility to report all suspected child abuse to authorities.

To report child abuse, visit txabusehotline.org or call 1-800-252-5400.

First luncheon for benefit of HCPS will celebrate 50 years of service

The golden year of HCPS will be commemorated Sept. 27 with a luncheon, hosted by the Harris County Children's Protective Services Fund.

Chaired by Marilyn and George DeMontrond and Ellie and Jack Sweeney, the "At the Heart of Families Luncheon" celebrates the 50th anniversary of HCPS. It will be held at the Junior League of Houston.

"At the luncheon, we will honor those who have led the growth and impact of this organization," said Ellie Sweeney. "Our honoree, Trini Mendenhall, has long supported HCPS and its mission. We are delighted to have this unique occasion to recognize her for contributions to HCPS and the Harris County community."

The Harris County Children's Protective Services Fund is a nonprofit organization created to benefit HCPS programming.

To support the luncheon, visit hccpsfund.org.



Top: Marilyn DeMontrond, co-chair of the "At the Heart of Families" luncheon, spiritedly thanks hostess Liz Stepanian and attendees of the luncheon kickoff for their support. The luncheon will benefit HCPS programming.

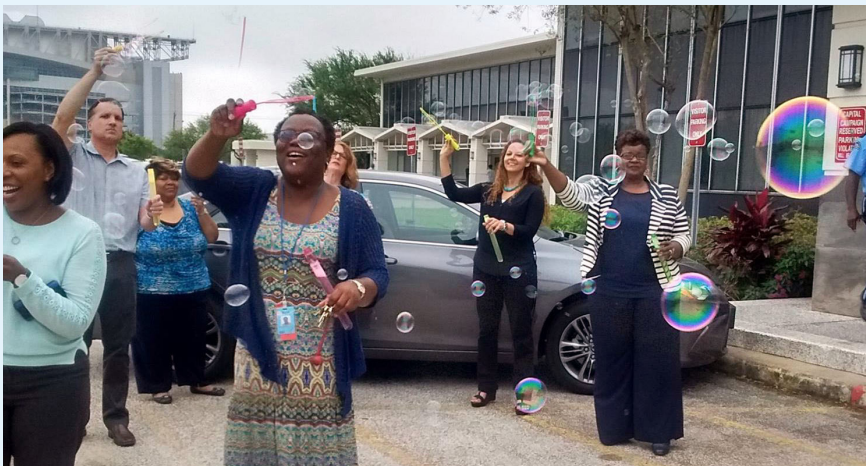


Left: Trini Mendenhall — a businesswoman, philanthropist and community volunteer — will be honored at the luncheon for her contributions to the Harris County community. Mendenhall has long said she enjoys helping the children in need that HCPS serves.



Happenings AT HCPS

HCPS staff plans 50th anniversary celebrations



HCPS staff kicked off a series of internal events to celebrate the department's 50th anniversary, with a synchronized bubbles release at four sites. The events continue with open houses of the department's facilities and culminates with a "Lunch N' Learn" picnic, where staff will participate in activities to learn more about HCPS's 50-year history.

CYS arranges free eye exams for youth



A HCPS Community Youth Services caseworker arranged a visit from the UH Mobile Eye Institute for students at The Summit, Pasadena Independent School District. The youth received free eye exams and eyeglasses.

More than a dozen youth received free eye exams and eyeglasses after a Community Youth Services (CYS) caseworker arranged a visit to The Summit from the UH Mobile Eye Institute.

Celestina Grande, of CYS, said she noticed several students at the Pasadena ISD school squinting as they walked down the halls. Many of the students' families did not have funds for eye exams.

The donated services Grande arranged are valued at \$135 per student. Eye Care for Kids Foundation helped provided eyeglasses.

CYS is a unique HCPS program that partners with Harris County schools to help youth and their families with school and family crises through intervention and counseling.

To find a CYS caseworker available in your area, visit www.hc-ps.org.

Guardianship attends APS conference



Claudia Gonzalez, Adult Services Division administrator at HCPS, spoke at the 11th Older Americans Month Conference about the Harris County Senior Justice Center, where HCPS staff and partners will assess seniors who may be victims of crime. If funding is secured, the project will begin in fall 2016.

Support staff told to dream at Bynum conference

The nearly 200 participants of the annual Dianne Bynum Administrative Support Staff Conference featured training, an educational scavenger hunt, recognition of retirements and a message about pursuing one's dreams.

"If there is a talent that you have, if there is an Idea that you have, pursue it," said Debra Andrews, Training Institute director.

Andrews is one of three key HCPS staff members whose impending retirements were recognized. George Ford, executive director, and Ken Samuel, Training Institute administrative assistant, will also retire.

The conference provides training to support staff, while also showing appreciation for their essential work. It was named for Dianne Bynum, a former HCPS board president who championed the conference.



Attendees enjoy a speech at the Dianne Bynum Administrative Support Services Conference.

How to Help HCPS

BEAR... Be a Resource for CPS Kids

Back to School: supply packs, funds, volunteers. bearesourcehouston.org

HAY Center

HAY DAY: college supplies for foster youth, umbrellas, hygiene items, jump drives. mary.green@cps.hctx.net

Guardianship Program

Kloset: hygiene items for incapacitated adults in HCPS care. claudia.gonzalez@cps.hctx.net