

The Heart of HCPS

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SUMMER 2015



BEAR ends one school year and welcomes another



Above: Youth enjoy the BEAR Graduation Celebration with dancing.

Right: Volunteers prepare bags of supplies for Back to School drive.



Staff with BEAR... Be A Resource for CPS Kids ensures children in the care of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) have the necessities to get them from the first day of school each year to the last day of high school.

In June, BEAR celebrated 37 foster youth who received diplomas throughout Harris County. They ate, laughed, danced and received gifts for their next step in life.

"When you've had some of the adversity that these kids go through and still manage to graduate, that's commendable," said BEAR director Bernadette Cashin.

In July and August, BEAR began preparing children still in grade school with supplies for the new school year. The BEAR program expects to supply more than 4,000 children.

For more information on BEAR, visit www.bearesourcehouston.org.

Professional photos let foster children shine for adoption prospects

This summer, 50 foster children were sponsored by Harris County Protective Services to be photographed for Houston's Heart Gallery.

The photos are shot by professional, local photographers to best capture their personalities. These portraits are then displayed throughout the Houston area, in hopes of attracting adoptive families. The local event is sponsored by the HCPS Board. It is a collaboration of Houston Center for Photography, American Society of Media Photographers and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Foster/Adopt program.

To learn more about the adoption, visit adoptchildren.org.



Foster youth poses for professional adoption photo in the Heart Gallery.

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CPS in Harris County

**Texas Department
of Family and
Protective Services
(DFPS)**

**Harris County
Protective Services
for Children and
Adults (HCPS)**

A word from the Executive Director

Harris County Protective Services has three direct service divisions that touch the lives of vulnerable persons in just about every age group and every kind of life crisis. But much of this work would be impossible without assistance from our community.

Last month, Harris County Commissioners Court approved a new position for our Houston Alumni & Youth (H.A.Y.) Center to help manage the Transition Coaching Services Program. This program, a public-private partnership, depends on volunteers to be the mentors to foster youth who are

approaching their departure from care. The coaches help older teens navigate their unique course to adulthood. They ensure the teens are on the right track to graduate, apply for colleges, and organize post-care benefits and resources. The coaches even took their mentees back-to-school shopping this year.

Volunteers are also a staple in other activities we have for youth and families. At the annual H.A.Y. Center Prom event, volunteers are on-sight tailors, personal shoppers and advisors on makeup and tying ties.

Each year, BEAR... Be A Resource for CPS Kids has several major drives that benefit children in foster care, including school supplies and Christmas. Last year, more than 600 volunteers assisted in these efforts. Year-around volunteers also help manage the BEAR rooms, where Texas Department of Family and Protective Services caseworkers access supplies for the basic necessities of children involved with DFPS.

Community members also volunteer their time and resources outside of the programs the department operates. In addition to the drives for BEAR, our Guardianship Program benefits from the donations of products and funds for its Pajama Drive for the elderly and disabled adults under the Guardianship Program's care.

A special volunteer at the Kinder Emergency Shelter arranges once a year to take the youth on an outing and to dinner. Another volunteer lends the children his ranch. In countless other instances, Harris County residents have banded together for the sake of HCPS clients.

I want to give a special thanks to these special people who have the heart to reach out to our clients. You not only enrich our programs for children, teenagers and adults, but – more importantly – your involvement convinces them that the entire Harris County community stands behind each of them.



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.

5 foster children matched at annual Adoption Festival



At least five children were matched with adoptive families at the fourth annual, "Summer Fest: A Day at the Lake," in June.

The event allows children between ages 8 and 16 to enjoy a day of fun in an environment that allows them to be themselves as they mingle with prospective adoptive families.

The four-hour event was held at Faith West Academy in Katy, Texas.

We are happy for these five children, but there are over 1,200 children in the Houston area who are still waiting for a forever home.

To learn more about adoption, visit adoptchildren.org.



H.A.Y. Center gives foster youth Summer Jobs experience

The Houston Alumni & Youth (H.A.Y.) Center, in partnership with Workforce Development, kicked off its annual Summer Jobs Program in June.

The program provides youth in foster care with mentoring, financial literacy skills and exposure to a professional environment. With the help of a Workforce Development grant, the program pays the salaries for these teenagers to work at local businesses and organizations.

The program also provided the 40 youth with \$150 each to shop for work attire at a major retailer.

To learn more about the H.A.Y. Center, visit haycenter.org.



More than 40 foster care youth were given \$150 each for appropriate work attire at their respective summer jobs.

Klein Forest CYS workers care for students after grad's death



Omar Rodas, 18, died in a car crash on his way to graduation. The Klein Forest High School staff is helping to pick up the pieces.

As the new school year begins, the Community Youth Services (CYS) workers in Klein Forest High School are preparing to help returning students with lingering grief following the death of an 18-year-old student who died on the way to graduation in May.

Omar Rodas died in a car crash on the way to NRG stadium for graduation. Judi Herold, a CYS worker in Klein Forest ISD, was notified almost immediately. From that point, the five-member area CYS team helped Omar's friends grieve the loss of their friend, including organizing a vigil that drew more than 200 people. CYS also provided services to Omar's family and pregnant girlfriend after the tragedy.

These CYS workers (Herold, Jarrett Boykin, Lori Cook, Diana Marquardt and Tasha Rogers) exemplify the heart of the CYS program. The CYS program contracts with schools to employ staff housed within the buildings to manage every kind of crises youth face as they navigate life towards graduation day. Throughout the school year—and sometimes over the summer, these workers are one of the first phone calls when these moments occur.

To learn more about our CYS programs, visit hc-ps.org.

Happenings AT CPS

Support staff learns at Bynum Conference

More than 200 participants from several Harris County organizations attended this year's Dianne Bynum Administrative Support Services Conference, themed, "Empowering Our Empire: Serving Those Who Serve Others."

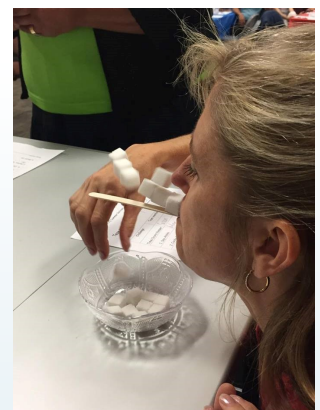
Harris County Protective Services began the conference six years ago as a way to ensure that support staff, such as administrative assistants and desk clerks, receive training tailored to their positions and acknowledgement of their value to the organization.

Thanks to the Training Institute for organizing the event!

CYS workers retreat, decompress

After the school year, the Community Youth Services (CYS) supervisors plan, organize and pay for a team building and stress relief day for their staffs, who deal with personal crises of every kind for students around Harris County. The day ranged this year from yoga to balancing sugar cubes on a stick.

Thanks to CYS for all their patient and caring work!



HCPS welcomes 3, extends farewell to 1



New board members greet each other at June HCPS board meeting.

HCPS had a significant board member changeover this summer, with three new members and one departure.

The board welcomed Dr. Carmel Bitondo Dyer, who serves as Chief of Staff for Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital and Associate Dean of Harris County Programs for University of Texas Health; Rose Swain, director of operations for the Harris County Budget Management Department; and Terry Morales, senior vice president with Amegy Bank of Texas.

Each brings different insights. Dyer holds research and publication experience in the area of elder mistreatment, Morales has over 30 years in finance, and Swain has been with Harris County over 33 years.

We also bid farewell to former board member, Ron Davis. Davis spent 14 years on the board. His service has been greatly appreciated. Thank you for all you've done.

Who's going to fill their shoes?

Harris County Protective Services began looking towards the future this year, with leadership training classes designed to groom the next generation of leaders.

The first "Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" leadership class graduated from the eight-month course in May. The goal is to encourage exchange of knowledge, guidance and support.

The training developed from a realization that HCPS's longevity rate of 10 to 12 years is a blessing and a curse. If and when these leaders retire, more than 200 years of combined experience will also depart. HCPS is preparing the next generation to fill their shoes.

Congratulations, Class of 2015!

BEAR arranges bowling with football star Andre Johnson



Harris County Protective Services helped arrange for Andre Johnson, former Houston Texan and advocate for area foster youth, to bowl with children involved with the Department of Family and Protective Services.

