

The Heart of HCPS



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Record number of volunteers contribute to BEARing Gifts program

More than 700 individuals volunteered to help purchase, sort and package gifts during the BEARing Gifts program in 2015 — the most ever.

“No task was too little or too great to ask of them to ensure each and every child received a toy or gift matching their wishes,” said Michelle Searles, Operations Coordinator for BEAR.

BEARing Gifts ensures every child in the care of Child Protective Services has at least three presents to open during the holiday season. More than 9,000 children were served this year.

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



Above: Volunteers pose in the BEAR warehouse, where donated toys are sorted.

Right: Volunteers select toys for each child in the care of Child Protective Services, based on wish lists.



Guardianship Holiday Drive surpasses goal for adult wards



Above: A Guardianship Program staffer delivers a donated holiday jacket to a ward.

Right: Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart staff load 348 donated jackets for delivery.



The Annual Guardianship Holiday drive exceeded its goal for 2015, with donations coming from as far as New York.

The drive began in 2014, asking the community to donate new pajamas for each of the wards in HCPS care. This year, the drive focused on fleece jackets for each of the nearly 1,200 adult wards.

The Guardianship Program expanded the drive to include an option to donate \$10 for the purchase of a jacket and a Facebook event page. Ultimately, the drive raised \$10,122 and received 689 jackets.

“Many of our wards don’t have the resources to purchase a jacket. Thanks to the kindness of our donors, we didn’t have to worry about purchasing them this year,” said Claudia Gonzalez, Adult Services Division Administrator.

For more information about the Guardianship Program, visit hc-ps.org.

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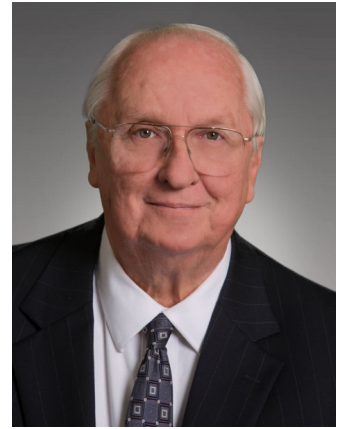
George Ford, J.D.

Harris County DFPS Regional Director

CJ Broussard-White, LLM

A word from the Executive Director

When the news that Commissioner El Franco Lee passed away reached me, I was on the way to a Texans game. It hit me the same as if it were a family member. A wave of sadness spilled into the halls of Harris County Protective Services over the next days, especially coming on the heels of losing one of our dedicated board members, James Olson. These two men spent much of their lives advocating for children, youth and adults in Harris County. It's a role to which we should all aspire.



By Webster's definition, an advocate is: one who supports or promotes the interests of another.

The verb, "advocate," appears in the new HCPS mission statement: to support, enhance and advocate for the safety and well-being of children and adults in Harris County. On every level, this is what HCPS board and staff members strive to do.

At schools, our Community Youth Services case managers push for students who need additional attention to manage mental, educational and familial challenges. Our TRIAD workers advocate for youth having trouble at home, school or in the community. Our Guardianship managers ensure their wards maintain the highest degree of independence, dignity and respect. We have board and staff members, who visit local, state and federal legislators to bring the voice of these populations straight to the decision-makers.

Still, we cannot do our part without community advocates. Among these are the two we lost in just the last few months.

Mr. Olson served on our board for a short time, but he spent a lifetime dedicated to advocacy for mentally and physically disabled persons. He began a nonprofit and also participated on the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities for seven years.

The late Commissioner Lee ensured the voices of youth were well-represented in the community. He began the Harris County Precinct One Street Olympics, which started as a summer camp and grew into a multi-pronged collection of programming that serves more than 10,000 youth. HCPS was a proud participant in the latest expansion, the Bright Futures Fair of organizations with resources for families. Commissioner Lee also started the Northeast Adolescent Program to help address teen pregnancy and participated in SPARK Park to help renovate inner-city school parks.

These big-hearted men helped shape important decisions related to those in our community who do not always have the loudest voices. They did not do this work for the words anyone would one day write about them. They did the work because they answered the call we all hear. "Be your brother's keeper." "Never leave a man behind." Our society is full of idioms.

The question is: What are we all doing to answer this call? Starting a program is wonderful. But starting with just one child, one youth or one adult who needs a hand is equally impactful. From the late Mother Theresa: "Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you."

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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)

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.

Annual Foster Parents Appreciation Dinner celebrates dedication



Left: DFPS and HCPS celebrated 60 foster parents in Harris County with an annual dinner at the Crowne Plaza. Right: George Ford (middle), HCPS executive director, stands with DFPS Region 6 directors Scott Dixon (left) and CJ Broussard-White (right) after receiving an honor for more than 40 years of service to families. Ford retires this year.

Andre Johnson continues Toys R' Us holiday shopping trip



Left: Children in DFPS care shop at Toys R' Us for holiday gifts, sponsored by former Texan Andre Johnson.

Right: Karen Johnson (right), mother of former Texan Andre Johnson (on screen), holds up receipts for a shopping trip for children in DFPS care.

Kids meet potential parents at Hearts Festival



Sixty-five children met with 81 potential adoptive parents at the Hearts Festival. The DFPS event allows children to focus on arts, crafts and other activities to ease the pressure of meeting potential adoptive parents. Several children and parents were matched and could soon be finalized.

Local fraternity donates to the Guardianship Program 'Kloset'

The Nu Phi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi donated items to the Guardianship Kloset this holiday season.

The group heard about the Guardianship Program, which oversees the well-being of nearly 1,200 adults in Harris County, through a member who donated to the program's holiday drive. They asked if there was anything more they could do for the incapacitated seniors and disabled adults served through the program.

The Kloset includes basic necessities wards in the Guardianship Program typically cannot afford on their meager budgets.

For more information about the Guardianship Program, visit hc-ps.org.



The Nu Phi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi pose with Guardianship Program staff after donating several items to the program's Kloset, a go-to place for case managers to find basic necessities for the adults in HCPS care.

Happenings AT HCPS

HAY Center gives foster youth a holiday party



The HAY Center staff (above), along with community support, provided current and former foster youth with a special holiday celebration. Youth were able to invite family members and guests. Small children and adults enjoyed pictures with Santa, gifts and great food.

Pepper Mint, a HCPS holiday visitor

Special guest Pepper Mint visited HCPS throughout the holiday season to help spread the word about HCPS programs offered for families to grow and thrive.



Community groups make holidays special for youth in Kinder Shelter



The Houston Insurance Professionals decorated stockings with the Kinder Emergency Shelter youth during a holiday party the business sponsored.

Several community groups shared their time with the youth at the HCPS Kinder Emergency Shelter throughout the holiday season.

The Kinder Emergency Shelter is a 24-hour facility where youth in crises can find short-term refuge after abuse, neglect or extreme family turmoil. The holidays can be tough for these youth, but the community made them as special as possible with outings and events at the shelter.

Among the community partners who worked with the youth are: The Houston Insurance Professionals, Platinum Pools, Fountain of Praise Church, Thermo Fisher, Monument of Faith Church, Texas State Representative candidate Edward Pollard, Live Out Loud and Synergy.

For more information about the Kinder Shelter, visit hc-pc.org.

4Cs staff designs colorful mural



Staff of the Children's Crisis Care Center (4Cs), an HCPS program, spent part of their holidays creating a cartoon jungle scene for the children visiting them for assessments. The team will continue artwork throughout the area.

HCPS to develop new 'Prevention CANS'

The founder and creator of a widely-known communication tool which provides a common language for all youth and children serving entities to discuss the needs and strengths of youths and their families has given the green light for HCPS to develop the first-ever version for preventative services.

Dr. John Lyons, a Senior Policy Fellow at Chapin Hall, is the developer of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. This multi-purpose tool was developed for children's services to support decision making at the service planning level in child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, schools, and early intervention systems. Versions of the CANS are currently used in every state with statewide applications in 36 states.

However, none of the versions address prevention services, such as those offered at HCPS. Dr. Lyons has agreed to allow HCPS to create a "Prevention CANS," the working title for the one-of-a-kind tool. Under his direction, HCPS will develop a tool an effort to target changes that can be made within the community infrastructure to reduce the number of youth entering the child welfare and criminal justice systems.

The development plan for the "Prevention CANS" is currently in the works. HCPS will continue to update the public on its creation.

To volunteer with HCPS programs, visit hc-ps.org.