

# TYC Journal

A Quarterly Publication of  
Texas Youth Commission

February 2000

## Agency employees give \$74,000

*Twelve hundred TYC employees gave \$24,000 more than last year. Local coordinators lauded for energy and creativity.*



*Pictured left to right. Front: Michael Lukowiak, Karin Hill, Denise Kennedy, Cathy Martinez, Virna Gomez, Wanda Rawle, Rosy Moreno, Christi Mallette. Middle: Steve Robinson, Butch Held, Penny Riggs, Judy Briscoe, Paula Morelock, Gladys Smith, Tammy Vega. Back: Dan Humeniuk, Renee Johnston, Roy Washington, LaNelle Gallant, Colleen Waring, Al Elizondo, Dora Ramirez-Itz.*

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**E**mployees of the Texas Youth Commission contributed \$74,120.48 to aid the many charitable organizations throughout our nation during the 1999 State Employee Charitable Campaign. The agency increased charitable giving by \$24,000 from last year. Twelve hundred employees participated during the annual campaign.

The success of this year's campaign is largely due to the local coordinators who led creative and energetic campaigns. An awards presentation was held in January at the Texas Youth Commission's central office recognizing the programs and coordinators who led the most successful campaigns.

The Evins Regional Juvenile Center and its campaign coordinator, Rosy Moreno, were recognized for making the highest contributions among institutions (see story and photo on page 7). Other outstanding campaigns recognized within institutions were the Brownwood Complex, led by Penny Riggs, and the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit, led by LaNelle Gallant.

McFadden Ranch and campaign coordinator Wanda Rawle were recognized for the highest level of contributions by a halfway house.

*(continued on page 2)*



## Halfway house renamed for Tamayo

Valley Halfway House in Harlingen received a new name in honor of former TYC Board vice-chair Edna Tamayo during a ceremony in September. Tamayo had served the Texas Youth Commission as a board member since 1990.

Several dignitaries attended the renaming ceremony, which was held in Harlingen. Governor George W. Bush honored Tamayo with a plaque commemorating her contributions to the agency and the State of Texas. Deputy Executive Director Dwight Harris was the Master of Ceremonies.

TYC Board chairman Dr. Leonard Lawrence, attorney Ruben Peña, Representative Jim Solis, and Executive Director Steve Robinson made presentations recognizing Tamayo for her accomplishments. Guests were treated to mariachis and a Mexican feast.

Tamayo said the renaming of Valley House after her was a humbling experience. She credited the people who have helped her throughout her career for much of her success.

Tamayo said, "I've been involved in a lot of things, but I've never been involved alone. Everywhere I go, no one has turned his or her back when I have asked for help. I've been so lucky to find people who are dedicated."

Former Governor Bill Clements appointed Edna Tamayo to the TYC Board in 1990. She was subsequently reappointed by former Governor Ann Richards and

was approved to continue by Governor George W. Bush. Tamayo has retired from the TYC Board, but continues to be active with the halfway house and is currently an active member of its volunteer council.



*Edna Tamayo is presented a plaque, sent by Governor George W. Bush, by TYC Board Chairman Dr. Leonard Lawrence. Pictured left to right are Ed Tamayo, Edna Tamayo, Dr. Leonard Lawrence*

*Submitted by Ade Adenrelu-Baker*

### **\$74,000** (continued from page 1)

Other outstanding campaigns among halfway houses were Cottrell House, led by Diane Irvin, and Ayres House, led by Virna Perez.

The Eastern Service Area and campaign coordinator Denise Kennedy were recognized for their generosity, along with the San Antonio District Office and campaign coordinator Cathy Martinez.

Central office recognized the extraordinary participation by its own Information Resources Department, led by Patricia Clark. Other departments recognized were the Juvenile Corrections Department and the Internal Audit Department led by Karin Hill.

Numerous programs had 100% participation in the campaign.

# Around the Agency



## Corsicana youth "take steps" to prevent child abuse

Corsicana Residential Treatment Center youth, along with community volunteers and staff, took steps to help end child abuse and neglect during the third annual Walk for Families walk-a-thon. The students raised \$1000 during the walk-a-thon to benefit Parents Anonymous of Texas programs. Thirty-four Corsicana youth, accompanied by facility staff and volunteers, walked a total of 139 miles within the campus walkways during the hour-long walk-a-thon. The event was begun with the release of balloons. The students celebrated their hard work with pizza, drinks, and treats that were provided by local businesses and individuals.

Sponsors of the walk-a-thon, held in Corsicana, included the Kiwanis Club, K-Mart Distribution Center, Good News Committee, Corsicana National Bank, the Corsicana Community Advisory Council, and several other local businesses. Corsicana council member Kelly Berry hosted the event. Parents Anonymous communications director Amy Crabtree and outreach coordinator Amalie Hofbauer personally visited the Corsicana campus to talk with youth about the services provided by the organization.

Students at Corsicana, Crockett State School, Giddings State School, and each of the TYC parole offices demonstrated their artistic abilities by creating works of art for the Parents Anonymous Prison Art Auction and Sale, which raised \$25,000. Crockett youth submitted charcoal drawings that were framed by fellow students. Several parole officers offered an incentive of 25 hours of community

service credit to youth who participated. Parolees were asked to draw pictures representing family involvement.

The Fort Worth Resource Council held its own art contest, offering up to \$35 for first-, second-, and third-prize art pieces. Volunteer coordinators who directed the student art activities were Connie Redford and Priscilla Monson, Northern Service Area; Denise Kennedy, Eastern Service Area; Bill Bradbury, Giddings State School;



Patricia Wyman, Crockett State School, and Lucy Humbert, Corsicana Residential Treatment Center.

Parents Anonymous has been involved in strengthening families and preventing child abuse for more than 25 years. Parents Anonymous provides services at no cost to Texas families. Their services include a statewide crisis hotline, parent support groups, children's programs, and recovery programs.

*Contributions by Lucy Humbert*

### Highlights...

- The **Evins Regional Juvenile Center Intercultural Awareness Committee** has published "Tantalizing Temptations," a cookbook, as a fundraising project. The professionally bound book costs \$15 and features recipes from ERJC employees. Shipping is available for an extra charge of \$5. To order the book by mail, submit a \$20 check or money order payable to "The Intercultural Awareness Committee" and mail it to Cookbook Sales, 3801 East Monte Cristo Rd., Edinburg, TX 78539.
- **Students in the woodworking class at the Brownwood State School** experienced the true meaning of giving this Christmas by building and donating wooden toys to the Toys for Tots campaign. Twenty-five students who enrolled in the vocational class hand-crafted more than 70 toys for children in the Brownwood community. Vocational Instructor **James Cavitt** said, "The project began as an effort to teach the students how to give back to community." He added, "The students were proud of the finished product, and it was a good learning experience for everyone."



# Programs at Work

## Houston parolees learn the joy of giving

Houston parole caseaides spear-headed a Christmas food and toy drive for the community and enlisted the help of parolees in the Eastern service area. More than 45 youth demonstrated the spirit of giving this holiday season by donating 80 lbs of food and new toys valued at over \$1,100. The gifts were donated to the multicultural education council of the Arts and the Park Central Shelter.

Youth participated in a variety of holiday community projects such as the annual Jingle Bell Run benefiting YMCA, the Luther's annual toy giveaway and carnival, and the Comidas food drive sponsored by Fiesta Mart Inc., Houston police department and Keep Houston Beautiful.

The Houston community volunteer youth council and Fiesta Mart Inc. granted Christmas wishes for parole youth in need during the annual Christmas Wish List project. These youth are referred by caseworkers based on need and family resources. This year's wish list resulted in \$1,100 in donations from the Council.

St. Luke's Catholic Church youth department sponsored a holiday party for TYC youth placed at the Southwest Key Residential Treatment Center. The party included refreshments, gifts and bibles for each youth who requested one.

*Submitted by Denise Kennedy*

## Giddings staff save \$35,000

Marilyn Baca, Randy Pietsch, Dinah Akin, and Peggy Ott, employees at Giddings State School, saved TYC over thirty-five thousand dollars through the State Employee Incentive Program, by suggesting that Giddings change the way linens are laundered to eliminate an outside contractor and minimize loss and damage to linens. The Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission, which administers the SEIP for state agencies, has presented these employees with a cash award. In addition, the suggestion was one of only six finalists at last week's 1999 Governor's Productivity Awards. Ms. Baca, Mr. Peitsch, Ms. Akin, and Ms. Ott received a certificate from Lieutenant Governor Rick Perry at a ceremony in Austin on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

*Submitted by Kelly Mason*

## Community service program growing

Since the community service requirement was added to the TYC parole program expectations, over 80 local non-profit agencies and churches within the Eastern Service area have opened their doors to parolees to perform community service. More than 35,000 hours of community service have been contributed by TYC youth who reside in the Houston/Galveston area.

With such growth in the community service program, volunteer coordinator Denise Kennedy, along with the parole services department saw the need to conduct a two-hour workshop for the community organizations to learn more about the Texas Youth Commission and its programs and the essentials of community collaborations and partnerships. More than 40 agencies were represented at the training held in November. The training participants were given an overview of TYC and parole's core services. At the conclusion of the training, participants were treated to a tour of the local parole office, and introduced to the officers and staff.

One of the participants commented at the end of the training that, "I had heard about TYC but thought it was just a place for 'bad kids.' I never knew that TYC was structured and dedicated to helping kids with problems or even interested in what community agencies think. Today I learned a lot."

*Editor's Note:* Halfway house and parole youth throughout the agency have contributed more than 240,000 hours of service to Texas communities since fiscal year 1998. The TYC Parole Department added the community service expectation to their program in July 1998.

*Submitted by Denise Kennedy*



# Volunteer program soars

Every week, Bobby Ross volunteers his time to drive to Brownwood State School to visit with two juvenile offenders. They talk about their interests, hopes and dreams, and choices in life. Mostly they just talk. Ross is a volunteer mentor who says he receives more than he gives from the weekly sessions.

"The word 'mentor' means 'to advise,'" Ross said. "However, I do much more than that with the students. We discuss everything: dreams, goals, childhood, adulthood, happy times, sad times, etc.... We share our deepest feelings, and I learn just as much from them as they learn from me. The experience is something we will both remember for a lifetime."

Ross said he was fortunate to grow up with a mother and father who taught him values, morals, and common sense. "However, the majority of youth committed to the Texas Youth Commission and residing in one of the agency's facilities are usually not as fortunate," he said. "The mentoring program at the Texas Youth Commission seeks to fill a void within a young person's life by providing an adult to listen and advise."

Ross is just one of the hundreds of Texas Youth Commission volunteers who contributed a record-high 100,766 hours last fiscal year through mentoring, tutoring, religious services, council membership, and many more activities benefiting troubled youth.

The value of those donated hours and cash donations totaled \$1.2 million, the highest level of community involvement in the history of the state agency, said Tammy Vega, TYC Chief of Volunteer Services.

Volunteers have made a dramatic impact within Commission programs, complementing the services provided by juvenile authorities, Vega said. Many TYC facilities rely solely upon volunteer involvement for all religious activities and special events provided to our students.

There are now 23 volunteer advisory councils throughout the state

that have actively supported TYC by supplying needed resources and aiding in communication with the public sector.

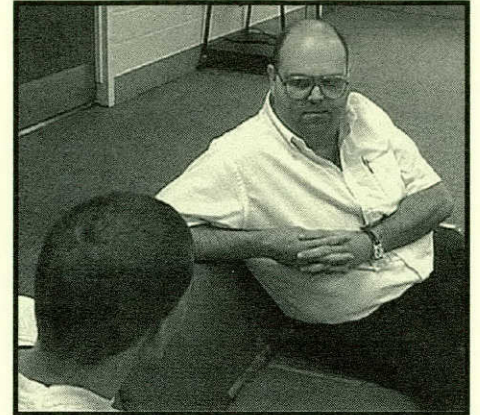
The Texas Youth Commission believes that, through volunteers, the community has the ability to enhance the lives of youth by providing activities and resources that promote pro-social, educational, emotional, and spiritual growth. Volunteer involvement is intended to expand the services provided by the agency's juvenile correctional staff. The mission of the TYC Volunteer Services Department is to maximize community resources and utilize volunteers to provide opportunities that enable youth to become responsible and productive citizens.

The mentoring program is the fastest growing volunteer initiative and involves community role models who commit to working with individual youth. Youth advisors also serve as mentors for parolees. Volunteers provide the trusting, unconditionally supportive relationships that juvenile delinquents desperately need.

Tony, a student at Brownwood, said Mr. Ross has meant a lot to him. "Before," he said, "I felt uncomfortable around others. I had problems being open and honest with my feelings. I also felt that I really wasn't that important. Mr. Ross has helped me feel comfortable around people and to learn how to trust people. He's also helped me express my feelings. He has encouraged me to see that I am an important person."

Juan, another student, said that "Mr. Ross has helped me with my reading. Now I can read better. When I first got here I barely knew how to read. I had trouble pronouncing some words. Thanks to Mr. Ross, I can read better. I'm grateful that he helped me."

Ross said, "At times, I reluctantly go to the facility because I have so



**"The mentoring program at the Texas Youth Commission seeks to fill a void within a young person's life by providing an adult to listen and advise."**

*Bobby Ross, volunteer mentor*

*(continued on page 12)*

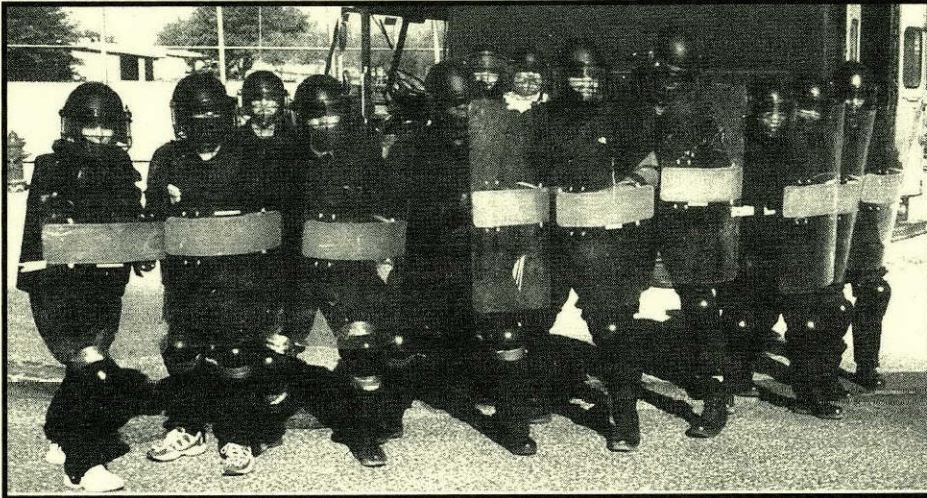


## West Texas STAR shines

The youth and staff of West Texas State School know that if there is ever a campus disturbance that requires specially trained staff to quickly bring it under control, the STAR team can handle it. The STAR team, an acronym for Special Tactics And Response, is a group of 20 highly trained and equipped staff members, male and female, who can provide a rapid, tactical response at any time to bring a disturbance on campus under control. The team may also provide help for a sister Texas Youth Commission facility that calls for emergency support.

WTSS superintendent Lemuel Harrison says that he strongly supports the STAR Team. He said, "There have been a few incidents through the years where we have needed a team like this. We need to be prepared to handle any possible major disturbance by youth or an escape attempt. The fact that the students know about this team and its extensive preparation is, in itself, a deterrent."

Every TYC institution has formed its own STAR team to maintain a constant readiness for dealing with



**Every TYC institution has formed its own STAR team to maintain a constant readiness for dealing with any youth-related disturbance that requires an emergency response.**

any youth-related disturbance that requires an emergency response. An emergency command team has also been formed at each institution, comprised of key administrative and management staff, whose job it is to manage the control of major disturbances or crises at the institution, whether they are youth-related or not.

The STAR team works under the overall supervision of the emergency command team, which is under the auspices of the agency's emergency command organization in Austin.

The WTSS STAR team has trained extensively over the past several months and has completed three mock emergency response situations. Key staff from the agency's central office in Austin awarded the team high marks for its response and its proficiency.

Tommy Bayes, TYC's contingency planner and founder of TYC's STAR program, said, "The West Texas State School, as well as all other TYC state schools, did an outstanding job preparing themselves for our mock disturbances conducted over the last several months. The teams trained extensively and were motivated to resolve the mock disturbances in a timely, organized manner. It's important that all STAR teams maintain that level of readiness, and not just for youth disturbances, but for any emergency.

"The agency should take comfort in knowing that it has dedicated employees with enough pride in their facilities to volunteer to be a member on these STAR teams. In my opinion, they are the cream of the crop."

Selection criteria for team members require high standards of fitness and job

*(continued on page 10)*



## Drug awareness at JCSS

Jefferson County State School participated in a variety of activities during drug awareness month. Students from the chemical dependency dorms prepared a Just Say No and Drug Awareness Month sign in the fence using paper cups. As part of community service projects, many students made presentations to public schools in the Jefferson County community. The students were able to give first hand information to the students and advise them of the pitfalls of using drugs.

For the third year, students from JCSS participated in the drug awareness parade and rally sponsored by the City of Beaumont. Seventy-five TYC students performed routines for the parade under the direction of juvenile correctional officer Herman Lockette. The young men did an excellent job in their precision performance for the parade watchers.

*Submitted by Rose Chaisson*

## Aramark, Project RIO-Y youth recognition

A ceremony was held at San Saba State School to recognize sixty students who completed the Aramark, Inc. vocational training and Project RIO-Y programs. The event began with the posting of the colors by the color guard team, followed by a skit by nine students who demonstrated the correct and incorrect way to be interviewed. An essay and poem written by students about the value of vocational training were read. Lane Yardley, Project RIO-Y coordinator at the school, and Ida Kraft, Aramark, Inc. food service director, presented certificates to students. Lane Roos, TYC's director of Project RIO-Y, also attended the event.

The Aramark program consists of successfully completing fifty hours of vocational training in the school cafeteria and viewing twelve hours of videotapes on food safety. Students in the Project RIO-Y program are tested to determine what profession they would be most suited to pursue and then search for jobs to go to when they are released. *Submitted by Buck Martin*

## State Employees Charitable Campaign at Evins



*Left to right: SECC campaign members Debra Garza, Rosy Moreno, Campaign Chair, and Sue Smith.*

**T**he State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC) at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center in Edinburg achieved dual honors in 1999. Employees at ERJC contributed \$13,314 to the campaign which was the highest amount among TYC Institutions. The Rio Grande Valley SECC also honored Evins with an award for the highest percentage increase among all area state agencies. Through hard work, perseverance and dedication, the Evins campaign was coordinated by three Evins employees, who made presentations to all campus groups.

## Christmas tamales bring parents, youth together

The sixth annual Parent-Son Tamale Day at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center was a day of fun, fellowship and work as 85 parents from all over the state participated in the South Texas tradition of making tamales for the Christmas holidays. ERJC's cafeteria was turned into a production line, intermingling veteran tamale aficionados and novices just learning the technique.

Youth proudly joined their parents in work, conversation and smiles. One parent commented, "It has been so long since my son and I did something like this together. Thank you for having this event. We have really enjoyed it."

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## Innovative case planning

**W**est Texas State School will begin using an innovative case planning guide written by its institutional placement coordinator, Miguel Balisnomo. Balisnomo has spent years preparing the guide. The quality of its content led WTSS administrators to adopt it as an additional training guideline for its casework staff.

The manual teaches systematic and logical steps in developing individual case plans for youth, which reflect and comply with the TYC resocialization phases and components. Specifically, the manual addresses an individual treatment problem, includes an appropriate treatment strategy, has a realistic goal, and must provide observable measurement.

Balisnomo is scheduled to start training WTSS caseworkers in its use in January 2000.

*Submitted by Allan Spearman*

## Students honor victims at Christmas

Sentenced offenders at West Texas State School celebrated Christmas a little differently this year. Caseworker Jerri Dixon and juvenile correctional officer Rudy Rodriguez coordinated a tree-decorating activity in remembrance of victims of crime.

Sentenced offenders were asked to create an ornament for the tree to honor their victims. They were provided with glitter, styrofoam balls and cups, popsicle sticks, garland, ribbons, and other decorating items.

Each youth then presented his ornament during core group and explained how the ornament represented his victims. The tree was aptly named the "Tree of Life" to remember the lives taken or permanently altered. Many youth expressed appreciation for a chance to change their own lives.

The ornaments were discussed during a larger group involving the entire dorm during an emotional presentation.

One particularly memorable presentation was by a youth who had maintained his innocence in the sexual abuse of a small child. During the presentation, the youth openly accepted responsibility for his crime, saying that he felt selfish and could no longer withhold the truth, even though his sentence will be completely served in less than six months.

The "Tree of Life" activity reinforced resocialization concepts and promoted victim empathy, as well as providing a unique way to celebrate the holidays. The spirit of Christmas became very real in an unexpected way in West Texas.

*Submitted by Allan Spearman*

### TYC JOURNAL

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### PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

The TYC Journal will be published in **February, May, August, and November**. Articles submitted for publication must be 1) submitted electronically, via e-mail, or on computer disk (hard copy articles will not be accepted); and 2) received by the publisher on or before the first working day of the month preceding the month of publication. For example, submissions for the May issue of the **TYC Journal** will be due April 1. All articles submitted for publication must be dated. All photos submitted that picture a TYC youth must also be accompanied by a publicity release.



## Chaplaincy program goes beyond the fences

There are twelve churches involved in the Adopt-a-Group Bible Study Program at Victory Field Correctional Academy. Each church adopts a platoon of twenty-four cadets (two churches have adopted two platoons) and is responsible for the weekly bible study. Rev. Derrell Patterson and his church, First United Methodist, are responsible for the Bravo III platoon. Last June, a cadet who had been in their bible study group for over a year graduated from the VFCA program and went home. In September, the young man was killed. We will call him Cadet John Doe. The following is a first-hand account by Rev. Patterson of how he and his church helped this boy's family during this most difficult time:

*On June 11, Cadet John Doe graduated from Victory Field Correctional Academy. He also received his GED during the ceremony. His mother, father and two brothers were there to support John and take him home. Volunteers from the church who led bible study in his platoon every Thursday night were also there to congratulate John, encourage him, hug him, and wish him well on his promising future. We believed in him, because from our perspective John was an exemplary cadet; he never missed bible study, he was polite, attentive, and appreciated the love and encouragement we tried to offer all the cadets. Besides that, he had a smile that would warm your heart.*

*When John got home he showed every sign of being a productive citizen. He got a job, bought a car, was making plans to attend college and attended church services every week. But on September 23rd he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. While waiting in the car for a friend to buy something at a 7-11, someone drove by, fired gunshots into the car and killed John. To the best of our knowledge he had not been in any trouble. There are still no suspects in the killing.*

*Needless to say, John's parents were devastated. They continue to search for answers. They want to know as much as possible about the last year of John's life. They drove to Victory Field to speak to anyone who may have had pictures of their son, or something that may have belonged to him.*

*When I found out about what happened and told our youth minister, Jennifer Renfrow, she went back to look through the prayer cards that the cadets write out every Thursday at bible study. She found all the prayer cards John had written through the months at TYC. We knew his parents needed to have those prayer cards. Through the staff at Victory Field, John's parents were told about the prayer cards and given the opportunity to contact me if they so desired. I did receive a call from John's father. He was glad to hear about the prayer cards and was willing to have me visit the family in Dallas and bring them the cards.*

*I was privileged to visit the family on November 4<sup>th</sup>, see the pictures of John they had (with hair!), and hear their stories. It was very touching to read the prayer cards together with the family and to hear John's own prayers for each of the family members. All five of us wept as we looked back to a time before John was killed, and yet still feel the spiritual power of those prayers even now. On one of the prayer cards the cadets had been asked to write something that had happened at TYC for which they were thankful, even if they couldn't be thankful that they were at TYC at the time. John's card listed two things:*

- 1. The weekly bible studies on Thursday nights.*
- 2. That he had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior while he was at TYC.*

*I've spoken to John's parents and their pastor several times since that first visit. God is working in their lives in a beautiful way. They are working through their grief. It has all proven to me once again that we can't always know the full extent of our influence on other people's lives. Leading bible studies, caring about other people, and doing the right thing certainly have their eternal rewards, but there are also great spiritual rewards in the here and now. We have the privilege of ministering to the cadets at Victory Field, but our ministry doesn't stop when we get outside the gate. I believe our volunteers are making a difference in the lives of the cadets and in the lives of their families.*

### Highlight...

The reading department at San Saba State School recently sponsored a Teen Reading Week in conjunction with the American Library Association. The event's theme was "Reading Rocks" and it began with a local radio station announcing the celebration. Students participated in the D.E.A.R. program (Drop Everything And Read) daily for thirty minutes. Twenty employee volunteers, including Superintendent Lydia Barnard, read to students in eighty classes during the week.



## Giddings improves Lee County courthouse

For years, public announcements had been posted in a glass case inside the Lee County courthouse. When county judge Robert Lee was asked by a citizen how the information center might be more readily accessible to the public, he knew just the place to call for help.

Within two weeks, a new weatherproof message board center was built and installed outside the courthouse by the sidewalk and handicap-parking driveway. Students from the Giddings State School vocational department constructed the message center with materials provided by the Giddings community advisory council.

Judge Lee expressed his appreciation for the skilled job done by the Giddings State School students and staff and stated, "It won't be the last time Lee County turns to the State School for help."

*Submitted by Bill Bradbury*

## Crockett celebrates drug awareness week

As part of their resocialization program, the students at Crockett State School learn the dangers of drug and alcohol addiction. During the national Drug Awareness "Red Ribbon" Week, they were given ribbons to wear which promoted a drug-free lifestyle. This nationwide celebration has become a major force in raising public awareness and propelling communities to combat alcohol and drug use among youth. Many teachers used this opportunity to teach the dangers of tobacco use as well. Posters and videos were shown to the kids, and each one received a no-smoking bookmark and teen fact card. Styrofoam cups in the state school's fence were used to spell out the words, "TYC is drug free." "If our actions can keep just one kid from turning to drug abuse, then we have done a positive thing," said superintendent Rey Gomez.

*Submitted by Patricia Wyman*

## STAR Team *(continued from page 6)*

performance and an ability to arrive on campus within 30 minutes of being summoned. Upon selection, members are provided the latest special tactics training, utilizing the most up-to-date gear, equipment and communications. The STAR team leadership is comprised of the facility's director of security, supported by several supervisory-level juvenile correction officers.

All members are clothed in black special tactics clothing and protective gear. The STAR team logo is emblazoned on the shirts, coats, and other gear. The team has an equipment room, a training area and a specially equipped transport van to get them to the site of the disturbance as a full readiness team. Members train weekly in special tactics and close order drill. They have been able to

carry out their mission with such calculated efficiency and control in their training regimen that their very appearance on the scene in full gear can have the effect of de-escalating a campus disturbance. Their training and leadership gives them the ability to handle campus disturbances quickly, but they may request backup support through the emergency command team.

The mission of WTSS is to provide for the public safety and to resocialize the state's most violent youth. The STAR team now adds the ability to handle and contain major disturbances on the West Texas campus and other facilities. "I hope we never have to call the STAR team in on a real emergency," Harrison said, "but if we do, I am confident they will be successful in their mission."

*Submitted by Allan Spearman*





Wanda Drew, JCO IV,  
Brownwood State School

*The following guest column is a first-hand account of the joys and disappointments involved in working with troubled youth. It is hoped that this shared experience will deepen understanding about working with TYC youth, and lend support to those of us who work on the front lines. This column was written by Wanda Drew, a Brownwood State School juvenile correctional officer IV who has been with TYC for 11 years, six as a supervisor. The student's name was changed to protect his identity. All other details are as Wanda experienced them.*

I received Roy, fresh out of security, in early December of 1995. At that time I had been a IV [juvenile correctional officer supervisor] for two months.

He had just had a third hearing that added another year to his minimum length of stay. This was the third year that had been added to his sentence, all for assaults, making his projected release date a month or so after his 21st Birthday.

Roy had entered TYC hooked on heroin. He received no treatment for this addiction, and I believe that his assaults were related to his addiction to or need for heroin. He came to me a "bad boy" with a "bad" reputation, and not many staff on this campus were willing to give him a chance since he had a history of assaulting staff as well as students.

I had no idea that he had been assigned to my dorm, so to say the least I was shocked and maybe a little nervous about this "bad boy" being under my supervision. I called Roy into my office and told him that I knew about his behavior, the assaults, and his reputation. I also told him that from that day forward he would not be judged for his past behavior and that he had a clean slate with me until he proved he didn't deserve one.

The first couple of months, Roy struggled on the dorm. He did not assault anyone, but he did have behavior problems. He would get mad, ball up his fist, start breathing hard and rapid, and in general, gave the impression that he was on the verge of assaulting someone. On one of these occasions, I saw that he was extremely angry, but he also had tears rolling down his face. And at that moment I knew that he was not angry with staff or what was happening on the dorm, but that his anger was much deeper.

My instinct told me that he needed some sort of contact so I walked beside him and placed my arm around his shoulder and patted him, telling him that I didn't know what was really wrong, but that I knew he was not mad at me or staff and that I would listen if he would talk.

Roy burst into tears, slumped down to his bed and started sharing some of the most horrendous stories I have ever heard.

I continued to pat him on the shoulder and listen to him, and by the time he finished talking, I was also teary-eyed. It was all I could do not to cry. Even harder, though, was to tell him that I understood his problems but I could not accept his negative behavior. Roy looked at me and told me that he understood that his behavior was wrong and that he would try to come to me to talk when he felt overwhelmed instead of acting out or hurting someone. He held true to his word with the exception of one assault. He worked hard to earn his phase, had a campus job, and earned the respect of the dorm staff. He went for months without a single incident until his last assault.

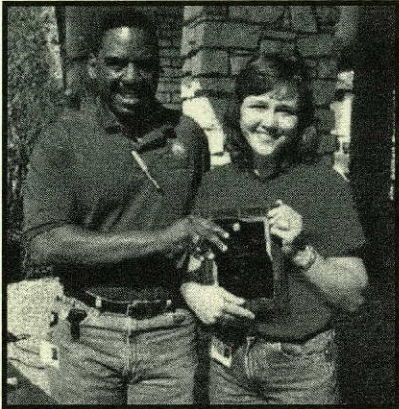
I remember the incident, but not the exact date it happened. We were having some problems with students lined up in the foyer. I was confronting the negative behavior of a new student who had only been on my dorm for a week. The student started cursing me, calling me extremely vulgar names. Roy asked him to stop, but he only got worse. Roy ran at him and hit him. I began yelling for him to stop, and he did. He turned and walked to the back door and began crying. He told me that I was like a mother to him, and that he could not stand there and listen to someone disrespecting me. He then hit the window and broke it, not out of anger but out of frustration over feelings and emotions he didn't understand.

*(continued on page 14)*

## From the Front Line...



## Giddings appreciates staff, students, volunteers



*Judy Westbrook, Admin. Tech. II, was selected as the Giddings outstanding employee of the year. She is recognized by superintendent Chester Clay.*

On November 16, 1999, Giddings State School held its annual Staff, Student and Volunteer Appreciation Day. Throughout the day, numerous activities were held, bringing everyone together to recognize the contributions made by staff through the year.

Activities included a BBQ chicken contest; dessert contest for cookies, brownies and cakes; and spades, domino and bingo tournaments. During the day, students had an opportunity to participate in a track meet, weight lifting contest, pool tournament and soccer match.

In the center of all the activity, a recognition ceremony and luncheon was held. Safety awards were given to staff with years of accident free service. Awards also included: 10 years of service – Texas shaped plaque, 15 years of service – pen and pencil set, 20 years of service – nylon jacket, and 25 years of service – wooden desk clock.

Over one hundred community volunteers were recognized for direct-

service volunteering. Four organizations in the community were praised for their willingness to employ our youth including the City of Giddings, Sonic Drive Inn, Pizza Hut and Dairy Queen. The Community Advisory Council and seven organizations were introduced and presented coffee mugs. The academic department honored numerous students for their academic achievement during the past year. In all, over 50 trophies were presented to the various winners that day.

All volunteers and staff who participated in the day's event were served a delicious BBQ chicken lunch donated in part by the Community Advisory Council.

The traditional staff-student softball championship game was played at the end of the day, resulting in a resounding victory by the staff. However, everyone came out a winner that day.

*Submitted by Bill Bradbury*

# Our Staff

## JCSS staff appreciation

In August the Jefferson County State School celebrated its fourth year anniversary by recognizing its employees. The intercultural awareness committee treated staff to a delicious meal. Director of juvenile corrections Tom Tye joined executive director Steve Robinson in expressing their personal gratitude during a keynote address and thanked the staff for their hard work.

Herman Lockette was selected as the JCSS 1999-2000 employee of the year. He was presented with a plaque and a parking space for a year.

Department managers presented their staff with certificates. Business manager Kelly Tyson presented t-shirts and certificates to 125 employees who had gone without an accident for 12 months. Twenty-five employees who had worked for 4 years without an accident received a special plaque.

*Submitted by Rose Chaisson*

## Volunteer program

*(continued from page 5)*

many demands for my time. Yet, when I arrive at the facility to meet the youth and see the looks on their faces and as we begin to talk, I forget about all of the other things I could be doing."

Volunteers like Bobby Ross help youth learn the ethics of service and citizenship. Through structured community service programs in parole offices, halfway houses and institutions, TYC youth last year contributed a record 138,475 hours of service.

The Texas Youth Commission is working to increase the level of direct volunteer services with youth, particularly through mentoring services. If you would like more information about volunteering within the Commission, you may contact Tammy Vega at 512-424-6245 or through email at [tammy.vega@tyc.state.tx.us](mailto:tammy.vega@tyc.state.tx.us).



## Corsicana promotes literacy improvements

The education department of the Corsicana RTC hosted an open house in November for teachers of reading from TYC facilities across the state. Visitors were treated to an overview of the accelerated reader program and a balanced approach to teaching reading was noted.

Guest teachers were provided a tour of the campus and Corsicana stabilization unit classes. Students shared their experiences using the "Read Naturally Program." Students participated in "Read Aloud" lessons for the guests and their work was on display in the library.

Round table discussions for teachers were held to discuss concerns and to determine ways to improve TYC reading programs.

Also in November the education department sponsored a reading literacy program for the students. Guest presenters were W. D. Wyatt, author, and Pat Spiller, director of the Corsicana public library. Students took part through the presentation of readings. Some of the students enacted characters as they read from biographies.

*Submitted by Laura Cohen  
& Lucy Humbert*

## San Saba delivers Thanksgiving baskets

Students and staff at San Saba State School delivered Thanksgiving food baskets to sixteen families in San Saba.

This is the fourth year the school has participated in this activity. The project was under the direction of juvenile correctional officers Xiomara Navarro and Monica Coward and students of dorm seven. Canned and boxed food was collected from staff in the front lobby of the school. Additional food, including turkeys, was purchased with money donated by the students and funds raised in a bake sale.

Students working in the kitchen baked pies, brownies, cakes, and cookies that were sold to staff and students. One student stated, "We, the students of San Saba State School, really appreciate everything the community of San Saba does for us. We not only see this as an opportunity to perform community service but see it as an opportunity to use what we have learned through the resocialization program to help people in need."

*Submitted by Buck Martin*

## Evins Y2K ready for anything

Like all TYC institutions, Evins Regional Juvenile Center got ready for the potential Y2K crisis and possible system shutdowns. In preparing for the worst and hoping for the best, Evins was prepared for anything and had a supply of technical support, portable water tanks, generators, rations and "port-a-potties." The more than thirty units seemed like a small neighborhood as they were lined up side by side.

*Making last minute inspections were (left to right): Rick Rivera, maintenance manager, Sheridan Wingrove, business manager, Butch Held, superintendent and Steve Spilman, assistant superintendent.*







*John Shroyer, caseworker,  
Crockett State School  
Outstanding Employee  
of the Year*

## Crockett celebrates staff contributions

Crockett State School held its annual staff appreciation dinner in October. Members of the facility's management team sponsored the barbecue meal. Steve Robinson expressed his personal appreciation to the Crockett employees for a job well done and for helping make 1999 a successful year for the agency.

Superintendent Rey Gomez praised the staff for their hard work and dedication. Numerous employees were recognized for outstanding contributions during fiscal year 1999. Among those recognized were departmental employees of the year, tenured staff, and employees of the month. Each received an engraved plaque.

The highlight of the awards program was the presentation by John Shroyer, the facility's outstanding employee of the year. Shroyer, a caseworker for nearly twelve years,

takes an active part in the educational lives of the youth on his caseload. He spends time in school and works with youth having problems functioning in the school setting. He also brings outside current events into youths' lives and builds discussions about resocialization topics around these issues. "Looking at current events in terms of victim empathy, values and thinking errors makes the material even more real," Shroyer said.

Door prizes, such as a porch swing made by the CSS wood shop class, a barbecue pit made by the welding class, a CSS logo cap and shirt, and a TYC cap, were given to employees. Others in attendance were several CSS retirees, members of the local community advisory council, local nursing home residents, and the newly organized STAR team.

*Submitted by Patricia Wyman*

### **From the front line...** (continued from page 11)

Later Roy told me that he couldn't remember the last time his mother or father had hugged him, and that I had really started him to thinking and feeling the night I put my arm on his shoulders and patted him. From that point on he had his ups and downs, and always that bad reputation following him, but he tried and tried and tried until he earned his phase back.

Eventually, he was transferred to one of our Independent Living Programs. The night before he left, I gave him his GED certificate that I was holding for him in my office. We said goodbye, he promised to write, and I told him I would always think of him like a son and would always remember him and pray for him.

The next day when I came to work, Roy's GED certificate was on my office floor where he had slid it under my door with a little note that said, "This is the best thing I have ever accomplished, and I want you to have this certificate."

Roy was released from the Independent Living Program on his 21st birthday. He called the night before he left to tell me that he missed me, and he would stay in touch when he got home.

I had not heard from him until tonight. He is not doing well. He states his reputation is still following him and making it hard for him to get a job. He is not out committing crimes, but he has started using heroin some and says he is afraid he will be completely hooked before long. I offered all the words of encouragement I could, but I could tell he was either using drugs or drunk.

I told Roy that I still thought of him like a son and that I would always remember him and pray for him. He said he would write and send pictures and asked me to do the same. I think I will send him his GED certificate. Maybe he will remember this "best thing he ever accomplished." I pray that he accomplishes much, much more in his life.



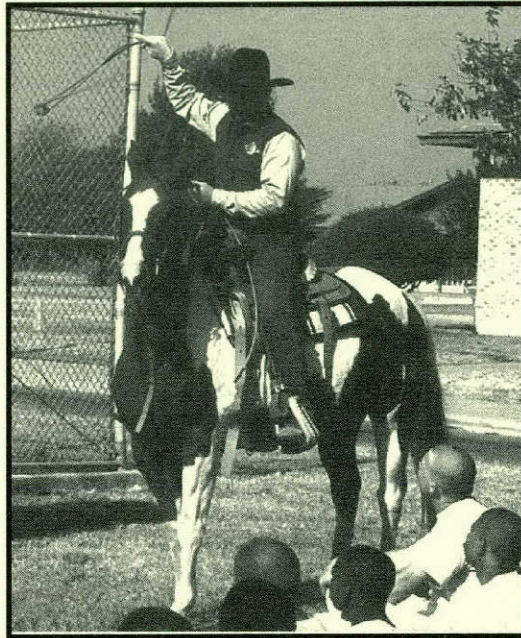
## Corsicana celebrates Texas heritage

The Corsicana Residential Treatment Center featured bits of Texas culture and history during the recent Texas heritage celebration held on campus for the youth, staff, and volunteers. The day kicked off with various demonstrations and exhibits that featured “chili-makin” with the “Stardust Cowboy,” quilting and crochet, horseshoeing and roping, animal viewing, ice cream and lemonade, and making lye soap and hanging laundry. Many volunteers and employees made the day possible by sharing their talents.

The intercultural awareness committee sponsored Texas Heritage Day with the leadership of Rauslyn Canady, Ruth Vasquez, Willie Brown and Lucy Humbert.

After some Texas culture and tastin’, the youth played games in the campus gym with Willie Brown. Competition prevailed as relays took place. One game included team members taking turns on their hands and knees blowing balloons to the finish line and back.

Events culminated in the afternoon with Zanada Tally performing country and western singing and line dancing.



*Submitted by Lucy Humbert*

## ERJC staff and youth attend conference

The Evins Regional Juvenile Center was well represented at a conference sponsored by the Hidalgo County Legal Alliance of Women. State Representative Juan J. Hinojosa opened the conference, which was titled “School Violence, Tragic Consequences.” The event featured a wide array of speakers from the community. Kenneth Williams, ERJC director of clinical services, spoke on the “Warning Signs of Violent Children and Adolescents.”

Two TYC youth joined Alex Longoria, McAllen police chief, and Mario Sotelo, Edinburg ISD superintendent, on a panel discussion titled “A community response to school violence.” This diverse panel was the highlight of the conference, as the audience was able to ask questions on varied topics. The youth were straightforward with their testimony and commented on how their mistakes had led them to delinquency and how TYC had positively impacted their lives.

Afterwards, many participants came forward to thank and congratulate the youth, calling their messages articulate, honest, and powerful. According to conference sponsors, the event was a complete success, with capacity attendance composed of a wide cross-section of the legal, educational, and law enforcement communities.

*Submitted by Raul Arredondo*



## Pie-in-the-sky fundraiser at Giddings

To raise money for a staff Christmas party, director of security, Melody Vidaurri came up with a sweet idea. After thirty minutes and a barrage of flying pies and lots of laughter, \$100 was raised among staff. It was decided that next year, more pies were needed.

*Submitted by Bill Bradbury*



**Assistant superintendent Lynda Smith stands ready with the last pie. Superintendent Chester Clay looks ready too!**

*Those who made the ultimate sacrifice are shown left to right: Christopher Dalton, Sharon Sanchez, Robert Toney, Lynda Smith, Chester Clay, Melody Vidaurri, Walter Stevens, Ann Kelley, Dwain Harris, Carol Carmean and Al Garza.*

## Christmas tamales

*(continued from page 7)*

The tamales are prepared, wrapped and then frozen. They were not cooked until Christmas Eve when all Center youth enjoyed the final result, which this year amounted to 230 dozen tamales or about ten tamales per youth.

Some youth whose parents were not able to attend were "adopted" by volunteers who joined in on the event. Staff volunteers included Jacob Torres, Yolanda Herrera, David Ellison, Elita Ellison and Maria Elena Lopez who also brought her mom Minerva Lopez. Paula Montgomery, quality assurance director of UTMB/TTUHSC also attended. Volunteer coordinator Raul Arredondo drove to Corpus Christi that morning and brought back nine parents who needed transportation to Evins. The ERJC volunteer council provided bus transportation back home.

*Submitted by Raul Arredondo*

## Marlin council on the move

The community advisory council looks back on a successful year of champion achievements. From the first organizational meeting on January 14, 1999, when officers were elected and by-laws were adopted, the great leadership ability of the council members has been evident. With 28 active members, the council has invested time and energy to inform itself about the student needs at MOAU.

With "seed money" from the state volunteer resource council, the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit community advisory council implemented its first fund-raiser, "The Friendship Treelighting" held on December 8, 1999, in the administration lobby. Over 43 individuals, businesses, civic organizations, and churches contributed \$1,954.60 or sponsored dorm parties during the holiday season.

Superintendent Roy Washington welcomed the many friends of MOAU and introduced special guest Paula Morelock, director of juvenile corrections and contract care. The voices of the students from St. John's Episcopal School choir enhanced the holiday spirit. Council president Sharon Cantrell shared that the mission of the council was to *bridge the gap* between the community and the unit. She asked the crowd to see the lighting of the tree as a symbol of community friends and MOAU working together for the benefit of the youth.

Woven in and out of the branches of the tree, the white friendship banner was brightly colored with stars bearing the names of volunteers and contributors who championed this first fund-raiser.

*Submitted by LaNelle Gallant*



## Statewide conference in May 2000

The statewide volunteer conference, sponsored annually by the Texas Youth Commission and the state volunteer resource council, has been scheduled for May 19-21 in Corpus Christi at the Omni Bayfront Hotel.

The conference provides a forum for volunteers throughout the state to network and gain additional information. The state volunteer resource council holds their semi-annual meeting on the first evening of the conference, electing the new slate of officers for the upcoming year. Outstanding volunteer awards will be presented during the Sunday awards brunch.

The conference's organizers promise informative workshops and exciting keynote speakers on issues regarding volunteerism and service to youth. Registration information will be distributed to volunteer coordinators and local volunteer councils by March. Additional information about the conference can be obtained by contacting the agency's administrator of volunteer services, Tammy Vega.

# Volunteers in Action

## Tamayo House honors volunteers

Debbie Dick, superintendent at TYC's Tamayo House, presented awards to members of the volunteer resource council for Rio Grande Valley youth for their significant contributions and volunteer service to the welfare of the youth of Texas.

*Submitted by Ade Adenrelu-Baker*

*Pictured left to right are Pam Neely, council treasurer, Luis Lopez, Akin Popoola, Mandy Mitchell, vice president, Ann Wieland, Lilly Cortez-Herrera, secretary, Saul Herrera, Lt. Joe Rubio Jr. and Ade Adenrelu-Baker, volunteer coordinator. Not shown are council president, Joey Ruedas Jr. and Deanna Landers.*



## Valley council back in business

After seven years of being inactive, the volunteer resource council for Valley youth is back in business. The volunteer council serves the Tamayo Halfway House and Harlingen Parole District Office. The council members recently elected the following officers: Joey Ruedas, Jr., a former TYC employee who now works for the Harlingen Fire Department, council president; Mandy Mitchell, vice president; Lilly Cortez-Herrera, secretary; and Pam Neeley, also a former TYC

employee who currently teaches at Darrell Hester Juvenile Center, as treasurer.

The council's first order of business was sponsoring the re-naming ceremony of Tamayo House in September. In October, the council members teamed up with Tamayo House students for the first fundraising project raising over \$300. The money raised will benefit TYC youth at the Tamayo House and on parole in Harlingen.



## Volunteer appreciation event held at San Saba

The second annual volunteer appreciation dinner was held in September recognizing volunteers at the San Saba State School. Buck Martin, coordinator of volunteer services, served as master of ceremonies at the dinner attended by over two hundred volunteers, staff and students. The student color guard team posted the colors and the student choir provided entertainment. Superintendent Lydia Barnard provided opening remarks recognizing the contributions of the local volunteers.

The San Saba volunteer council, mentors, tutors, employee and chaplaincy volunteers were among those recognized for their service to the youth. Outstanding volunteer awards were presented to David Williams, outstanding individual volunteer of the year; Rose Murray, outstanding individual religious volunteer of the year; Second and Wallace St. Church of Christ, outstanding religious group of the year; and Toni King, outstanding staff volunteer of the year.

TYC chief of volunteer services Tammy Vega expressed her appreciation during closing remarks to the San Saba volunteers for their dedicated service and value to the Texas Youth Commission.

*Submitted by Buck Martin*

## Volunteers ensure a merry Christmas

The holidays are often a lonely time for Texas Youth Commission students, especially those in our institutions. Once again, TYC volunteers provided comfort, fun, and gifts to our students in enormous proportions this holiday season. Individuals, groups, and businesses turned out for dormitory parties, campus special events, caroling, games, and gift giving. Santa Claus and several elves and reindeer were even reported at various sites.

In Marlin, 43 community groups sponsored parties and gave treats to students to enjoy Christmas morning. The Marlin volunteer council raised \$2000 from their Christmas direct appeal letter to underwrite holiday expenses. In Houston, the volunteer council granted the holiday wishes of some students on parole during their annual Holiday Wish List project. Houston families in need were given gift certificates to local grocery stores.

Giddings State School enjoyed numerous holiday parties and recorded 1,185 hours of volunteer time during December. The El Paso resource council provided a traditional Christmas lunch for residents at Schaeffer Halfway House. The community provided new pants and shirts for paroled youth in El Paso.

Corsicana Residential Treatment

Center welcomed over 100 community businesses and organizations in celebrating Christmas. A turkey and ham dinner was provided to students, and families across Texas were assisted with traveling expenses to visit youth. The Corsicana volunteer advisory council raised \$9,420 to make holiday celebrations possible.

West Texas State School youth enjoyed bags of fruit, nuts, and candy. Staff provided personalized stationery for students to send holiday greetings home. Santa and Rudolph, complete with antlers, accompanied a sleigh full of employees and volunteers who sang Christmas carols for students.

Youth at Jefferson County State School enjoyed food and games with various community groups. Area churches provided entertainment and holiday parties to youth at the San Saba State School.

Tamayo House youth did their own caroling at a local nursing home and the children's ward in a Harlingen hospital. A local television station highlighted the efforts of our students in bringing cheer to others.

The agency is very grateful for the support demonstrated by communities for our youth, especially during the holidays.



## McFadden Ranch launches rocket project

The summer skies above McFadden Ranch have been echoing the roar of rocket power. No, it isn't a NASA project, but the work of 48 science students.

For summer school last year, a new approach was taken to physical science. Instead of just reading about rocket science, they performed it.

Each student constructed a rocket from a kit consisting of a paper body tube, a plastic nose cone, and pre-cut balsa wood fins, a cardboard engine mount and a plastic streamer. Assembling the kits required the use of sandpaper, non-toxic glue and a pencil. Students practiced their skills of measuring and calculation to build their rockets.

Each student launched his model three times. A pre-manufactured motor that is electrically ignited and replaced after each flight powers the rockets. The first flight was a test to check out the rockets, teach safe launch procedures and accustom the students to their model's sudden acceleration and high altitude.

Next came a quick lesson on altitude tracking (an introduction to triangulation). During the second launch, students tracked the altitude of each other's flights using measuring devices made from protractors. By finding the angle of elevation along a known baseline, they were able to calculate the altitude of the rocket.

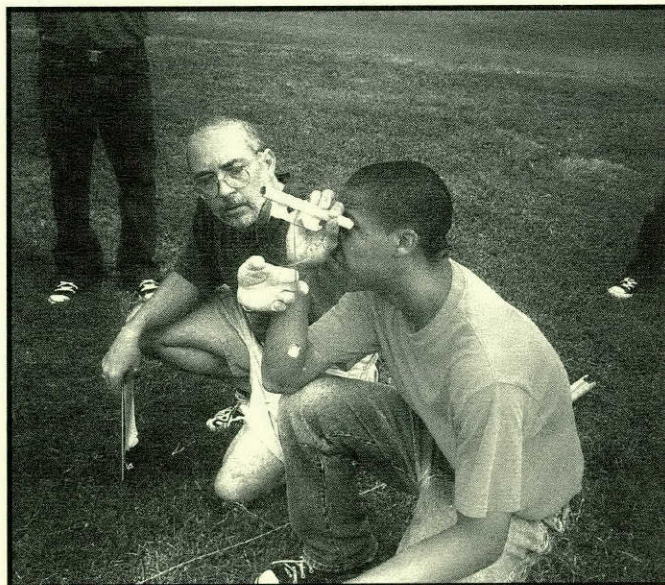
For their third flight, each student was issued a more powerful motor, and everyone took turns tracking altitude.

Building models and launching rockets may be fun, but the students learned curriculum concepts that addressed Newton's three laws of motion, rocket propulsion, and aerodynamics. Students exercised their math skills in several ways. They had to measure and calculate to build their rockets. They had to practice computational skills to work velocity and acceleration problems. They were even introduced to trigonometry to find the altitudes of their rockets.

More important than academics, however, was the feeling of accomplishment that each student earned. Most of the youth who come to McFadden Ranch never have had the experience of building anything. Many of them do not believe that they are capable of working with technology in any way. To actually build a rocket, launch it to a high altitude, and recover it to fly again was a real boost to their self-esteem.

The McFadden Ranch Summer Rocket Program cost less than \$500 and was funded through the generosity of the McFadden Ranch advisory council. It demanded a lot from the students in terms of self-discipline and hard work. It required extra commitment on the part of teachers and staff. The improvements in academics and attitudes however, made this project well worth the price.

## Focus on Youth



*McFadden Ranch science teacher Billy Scoville teaches a student how to track the altitude of his rocket before a launch.*



## Hamilton students collect food for families

Twelve Hamilton State School students participated in the fourth annual KBTX-TV, "Food For Families" food drive on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1999, at the Brazos Center in Bryan, Texas.

As a result of the hard work and dedication that Hamilton students provided at last year's event, the students were invited back this year to help with the sorting, packing and loading of the donations. The twelve young men worked diligently on the "back line" from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., making sure that all donations were loaded onto the trucks for distribution to the Brazos Valley Food Bank. The students were invited back the next day to the food bank to help unload the trucks of all the food donations. They spent the day unloading the community contributions, sorting the salvage food, and restocking the food bank shelves.

Jim Titus, Brazos Valley Food Bank warehouse manager welcomed the assistance of the Hamilton students this year for the food drive. He has gotten to know several of the boys since they perform community service at the food bank each week, helping to separate salvaged food from the weekly community donations. Jim has been so impressed with the student's weekly work performance, and their performance last year at the food drive, that he helped to make sure that Hamilton was a part of this year's event.

*Submitted by Nancy Jo Kuder*

## Schaeffer Youth contribute to International Festival

Schaeffer House residents set up more than 3,000 chairs and several booths for a Mariachi Mass with Bishop Armondo X Ochoa during the Festival International de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe.

The festival was a celebration of unity, peace and heritage. The Hispanic Leadership Institute sponsored the event in which Schaeffer youth worked in food booths, served as hosts, helped with the parade route and with game booths. The Schaeffer youth enjoyed helping the community in this way.

*Submitted by Kevin Birdwell*

## JCSS students win sportsmanship award

The Jefferson County State School Bobcats were unanimously awarded the sportsmanship award at the Second Annual Cottrell House basketball tournament. The award is presented to youth who demonstrate teamwork, respect to competitors, individual abilities and care for all of the supporters of the tournament.

The Bobcats placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the tournament among 16 teams. The Bobcats won two of four games. Coaches Kenneth Hardy, Barry Ford and their team were recognized during winter graduation ceremonies.

*Submitted by Rose Chaisson*

## Victory Field cadets participate in symposium

Two Victory Field cadets participated in an open community symposium entitled "Trends into the New Millennium," which was held at Vernon High School. The symposium was sponsored by the Vernon LULAC chapter and aimed at middle school and high school students and parents. The cadets talked about their experiences with the law enforcement and judicial systems, including TYC, and how their bad decisions caused them to be locked up.

They also talked about how they had hurt their families and victims and how TYC enabled them to straighten out their lives and become productive citizens. Other speakers were Sal Ochoa from the Crisis Barrio Center in Dallas, Sgt. Tommy Hall from the Vernon Police Department, Armando Urquidez from Vernon High School and Rev E. J. Tyson from the Weed and Seed Program. Other speakers included U. S. Department of Justice officials and several community leaders.

The goal of the symposium was to get parents and students motivated to make a positive difference in their community.

*Submitted by Jean Bice*



## Evins baseball team wins trophy

The Diamondbacks, Evins Regional Juvenile Center's own baseball team, is off to a great start. The team was created by superintendent Butch Held and members of the ERJC recreation department. With no equipment, lots of ideas and 268 kids to scout, the group had quite a challenge ahead of them. Ex-Houston Astros pitcher Harold Allen assisted coaches in selecting the first team. Each ERJC youth was given an opportunity to try out for the team over a two-week period, and 25 youth were selected.

On December 12, 1999, the ERJC Diamondbacks captured second place in the Mid-Valley Fall Classic Tournament. They competed against seven other 5-A high school teams. After winning only one regular-season game, the Diamondbacks came out of hibernation during the first day of the tournament, sweeping a double header from the McAllen Memorial Mustangs. The first game was won by a two-run triple in the last inning for a 14 - 13 win. The Diamondbacks beat the Mustangs 20-7 during the second game.

ERJC faced the Edinburg North Cougars in the finals of the tourney, where they were defeated 12 - 6. The opposing teams' coaches were all complimentary of the progress the Diamondbacks made during their first season, and the local sportswriters were scratching their heads and asking, "Who are those guys?" Ruben Trevino Jr., Mike Balderas, Jimmy Reyes, Omar Trevino and Jose Castellanos did a great job coaching the team.

The Diamondbacks would like to thank the ERJC Volunteer Council for their financial support, the ERJC campus improvement committee for the t-shirts and caps they sold to show support on campus, and the many staff who supported them by attending the games.

*Submitted by Maria Salinas*

## Tamayo House youth prevent crime

Tamayo House students recently gave presentations to public schools in the Harlingen area in the hopes of preventing juvenile crime. The TYC youth talked to teenagers who already are on a self-destructive path, but still have the chance of avoiding commitment to the agency.

Presentations have been so successful that the TYC students are in demand for speaking engagements at local schools and at the Darrell Hester Juvenile Detention Center in San Benito. Youth may talk about their families, life in TYC, resocialization, the wrong choices they have made in their own lives and the steps they have taken to rectify the mistakes they've made.

*Submitted by Ade Adenrelu-Baker*

## Marlin students gain GEDs

Since initiating the general education development program last September, all students who have tested for their GED at the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit have passed the test. To date, 47 students have received their GED certificates.

Marlin teachers Beth Mullins and Kyle King conduct classes in GED skills. Students ages 16 and older who score 9.0 or higher on the Test of Adult Basic Education in reading and math qualify for the GED preparation class and testing program.

Before taking the official GED practice tests, students sharpen their skills in reading, math, writing, social studies, and science. Upon successful completion of these practice tests, test administrator Shirley Young then gives the students the GED exam.

Students remain in the GED class after completing the test and continue to improve their academic skills. They begin work on the Texas Academic Skills Program and other college entrance exams, or they may continue to study life skills or career materials. Depending upon their subsequent placement from MOAU, these students have the option of continuing high school, beginning college, or choosing from a wide range of vocational opportunities.

*Submitted by LaNelle Gallant*



## Hamilton students make good impression in Mart

For the past four months, several Hamilton State School students have been performing community service in the city of Mart, by cleaning the Mart community center.

In August, the Texas Youth Commission hosted a job fair in Mart at the community center. Six Hamilton students cleaned the center after the job fair. The community center is used each week by the senior citizens as a place where they can meet, play games, and eat a meal.

The director of the community center, Aileen Carter, was so impressed with the job that the Hamilton students performed, that she asked that they return the next month. The students were even featured in the local newspaper, the *Mart Texan*, the Neighbor Section of the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, and were interviewed by KWTX-TV Channel 10 News.

The students returned to Mart each month for four months, cleaning the community center, and giving local residents a preview of how the opening of the McLennan County State Juvenile Correction Facility can positively affect the city. It also provided the opportunity for the people of Mart to see TYC's commitment to becoming a contributing member of their community.

*Submitted By Nancy Jo Kuder*

### Victory Field cadets clean-up graffiti



When the restrooms at three Vernon city parks recently were defaced with graffiti, public works director Ronnie Richie called on the help of Victory Field cadets. The clean-up involved 20 gallons of paint and more than 20 hours of work by three cadets. "It doesn't come right off," stated Richie. "It would be nice if those who did the spraying realized how much work it is to get it off."

## Brownwood students graduate

Four students obtained high school diplomas in November at the Brownwood State School, while 42 others received GED certificates.

Sue Jones, assistant superintendent for Brownwood independent school district, presented the keynote address, and TYC superintendent of education Dr. Judy Huffty conferred the diplomas.

Superintendent Dan Humeniuk welcomed everyone and congratulated the students on their accomplishments. Immediately following the graduation, students and family members attended a reception sponsored by the community advisory council. Williamson Photography of Brownwood provided each student with a complimentary graduation photo as a memento.

*Submitted by Shelly Dobbins*

## Schaeffer House residents participate in Sun Bowl

Schaeffer House residents assisted the Sun Bowl Association in preparing for the 66<sup>th</sup> Wells Fargo Sun Bowl. The youth hung banners throughout the Bowl stadium despite cold weather and high winds. They worked diligently in unloading souvenirs. They were pleased to have the opportunity to visit with players from each of the teams

who gave best wishes to the TYC students upon their release from the agency.

The halfway house youth were surprised when they received game tickets and an assortment of Sun Bowl souvenirs from Steve Wagner and Larry Brancher of the Sun Bowl Association.

*Submitted by Kevin Birdwell*



## McFadden Ranch youth serve others through the holidays

**M**cFadden Ranch youth were involved with two service projects over the holiday season. Francie Adcock, assistant superintendent, and John R. Johnson, caseworker, coordinated the projects, which made an impact on both the youth and surrounding community.

The first project was supporting a food drive for the Roanoke food pantry. Local businesses donated the necessary paper for flyers and bags for donations. The youth distributed bags with flyers requesting canned food donations to surrounding communities, and later returned to collect the donations. They delivered more than 500 canned food items to the food pantry, which was a great help in

restocking their depleted supply after the Christmas holidays.

The second service project involved five youth who served homeless people at the Gospel Mission in Fort Worth. The youth worked the serving line and later cleaned up the kitchen.

After the outing, one of the youth who participated in this project became upset when one of his peers complained about receiving a diet drink. He scorned his peer for his complaining, and told him there were people who had no drink that would have appreciated his diet drink.

The youth who participated enjoyed this project and were truly affected by their experience.

*Submitted by Jackie Davis*

## Judge addresses JCSS graduation

Judge Thurman Bartie, former chairman of the Jefferson County State School community advisory council, delivered the commencement address honoring 55 graduates during the winter graduation ceremonies. Four youth received their high school diploma while the other 51 youth received their GED.

ESL supervisor Terry Whaling and JCSS superintendent Allen Wallace accepted the class and turned the tassels of the graduates. The class valedictorian and salutatorian were recognized for their accomplishments.

Trophies were awarded to students with high achievements in math, social studies, science, literature, writing, citizenship; awards were given to the class historian and for the most improved GED and most dedicated GED.

The community advisory council donated all of the awards and the tassels that the students received.

*Submitted by Rose Chaisson*

## San Saba participates in Christmas parade

A float built by San Saba State School junior high students won first place in the annual Christmas Parade of Lights, an event sponsored by the San Saba County Chamber of Commerce. The theme of the float was "San Saba: The merriest place in cyberspace."

A replica of each department within the state school was constructed and featured superintendent Lydia Barnard's house, maintenance supervisor Mike Wadsworth's Y2K power station, kitchen supervisor Ida Claus's kitchen, security supervisor Ray Brookins's house and principal Lisa Pasholk's Elf School. Four students rode on the float and wished the community a Merry Christmas.

*Submitted by Buck Martin*



# Speakers experience first empathy panel

**B**ob and Kathy Connell of Crockett became first-time speakers at the Crockett State School victim impact panel. The couple lost four of their children – Allen, Laurel, Lee and Sara – to a drunk driver two years ago. Though the loss wasn't directly related to a violent crime, it involved an involuntary crime that changed the Connell's lives forever. The couple communicated their loss in a way that seemed to have an impact on the boys.

Mrs. Connell spoke to the boys about the difficulties she had to face immediately following the deaths of her children, such as planning the funeral – finding 24 pallbearers, signing her name to four death certificates and other difficult duties. And she had to arrange for someone to tell her parents and in-laws what had happened to their grandchildren.

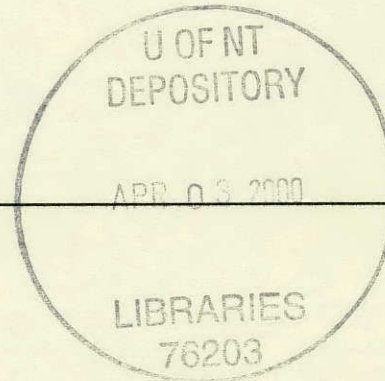
Mrs. Connell remarked, "... you don't have to be a violent criminal to be involved in a violent crime. It is a conscious decision to drink alcohol then get behind the wheel of a car. If you give into these substances, you lose everything."

During the presentation, a table was set up in front of the students which held items relating to the four children – photos of each one, a bent belt buckle that Laurel was wearing that night, an FFA jacket that arrived after Laurel's death and a homecoming mum that arrived with a sympathy card instead of a bill.

Mrs. Connell said things get a little better as time passes. Her focus now is to raise Emily, age 2 and Gus, age 1. "They will not grow up in a sad house," she said. "God does not give you things you cannot bear. Whatever your circumstances are, God will help you get through it. He will talk to you, but you have to listen. You have to take a tragedy and make the best of it. God loves you even if you cannot put your finger on anyone else who loves you."

Victim Empathy Panels are held in several TYC institutions across the state. The main focus of this program is to instill empathy for the victims of crime and reduce juvenile crime.

*Submitted by Patricia Wyman*



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