



# Journal

## A Quarterly Publication of the Texas Youth Commission

02-0445  
RECD JAN 06 2003

Fall 2002

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## In face of hurricane, facility evacuated

As Hurricane Lili approached the Gulf Coast on Oct. 2, Superintendent Allen Wallace gave the official evacuation order for the Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility just 45 minutes after Emergency Management Officials issued the same order for all of Jefferson and Orange Counties.

For the first time in the Youth Commission's history, an entire facility had been evacuated. Thanks to the quick and professional response of the facility's entire staff, the evacuation was accomplished swiftly and safely.

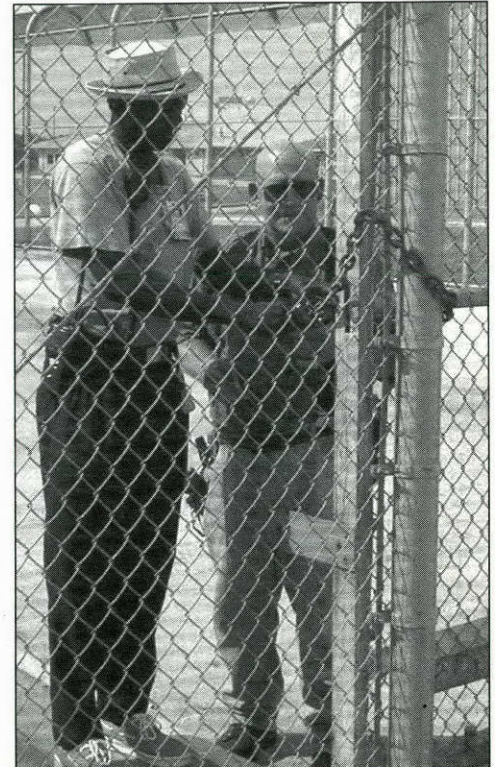
Management and supervisory staff were called in to begin the process of packing and preparing 308 youth to leave. Support service staff began the process of loading youth files, human resources and educational records. Computer equipment was dismantled and packed up.

Seven coach buses arrived at the facility to transport the youth to three sister facilities: The move to Crockett State School was led by Director of Security Glen Reed; the move to Hamilton State School was led by Assistant Superintendent Kenneth Williams; and the move to Giddings State School was led by Wallace himself.

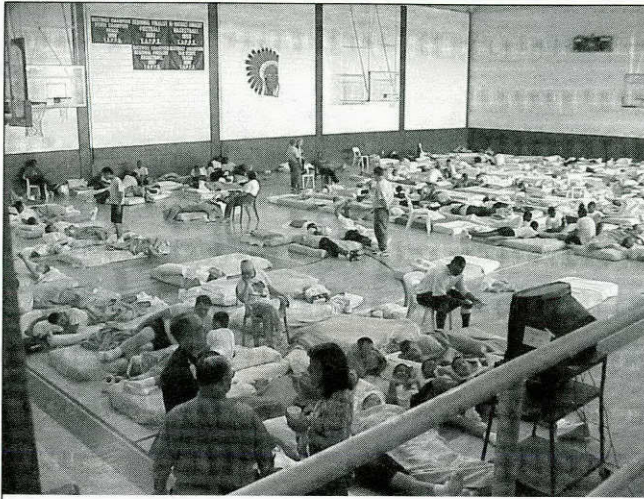
Utilities to the Al Price facility were turned off and the front gates were padlocked.

"I know the host sites really couldn't believe we were coming, but they did a good job," said Wallace. "Besides running their own programs, they had to contend with our needs," he said.

According to the Dow Jones Newswires, "Property-casualty insurers will likely pay about \$335 million in claims associated with Hurricane Lili, according to Insurance Services Office Inc. Lili, which had been rated as high as Category 4 before weakening to a Category 2 storm before landfall, struck near New Iberia, Louisiana. The storm, which at one point had sustained winds above 140 mph, forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Hurricanes, storms



*The front gate of the vacated Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility is padlocked by maintenance employees Sonny Savoy and Arthur Jones as Hurricane Lili approaches on October 2.*



Evacuated from their facility in Jefferson County, more than 100 youth find refuge 150 miles west in the Giddings State School gymnasium under the careful watch of Al Price staff and administrators.

### TYC JOURNAL

Is published quarterly by the  
TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION  
4900 N. Lamar P.O. Box 4260  
Austin, Texas 78765 (512) 424-6133

#### PUBLISHER

Dennis Payne

#### FALL 2002 EDITORS

Pamela Ward  
Tammy Vega

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

Susan Dow  
Ashley Appelt  
Jana Richardson  
Nancy Slott  
Carolyn Beck  
Karen Collins  
Shawna Donop  
Connie Simon

#### PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

The TYC Journal is published in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Submit articles by e-mail to [tammy.vega@tyc.state.tx.us](mailto:tammy.vega@tyc.state.tx.us), or on computer disk with delivery to the Texas Youth Commission, Attention: Tammy Vega. Hard copy articles will not be accepted. Submission deadlines are December 1, March 1, June 1 and September 1. All submissions should be dated. A copy of a signed publicity release must accompany all articles or photos that identify TYC youth.

with sustained winds above 75 mph, are ranked on a one to five scale. Lili, the first hurricane to make U.S. landfall since 1999, hit about a week after Hurricane Isidore threatened the Gulf."

Approximately 105 Al Price employees traveled with the youth, leaving their own families behind. The Al Price team, including correctional officers, caseworkers, secretaries, educational staff, program administrators, recreation staff, human resource assistants, and members of the management team, demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the safety and welfare of their youth even as their own homes and families were threatened by the storm.

The staff shuttled between crowded hotels. Some slept in their cars and emergency shelters, while at least three employees spent the nights on roll-away beds in a hotel conference room between long shifts. Giddings and Crockett staff made their homes available to several individuals.

Fortunately, the Al Price facility sustained no damage from the storm but had to be "brought back on line" and readied for the return. After two long days, the youth returned to the facility courtesy of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, which provided buses for TYC's use. The last bus entered the gates just before 11:30 a.m. on October 5. Throughout the ordeal, no student injuries were reported, and only one staff injury, a twisted ankle, was reported.

Al Price Business Manager Kelly Tyson headed the recovery team, which did a remarkable job of bringing the facility back on-line and arranging and scheduling staff to provide adequate coverage of all the dormitories for the youth's return.

Twenty-three teachers participated in the recovery operations on Saturday and assisted in many ways, especially by meeting all the buses as they returned and helping the youth settle back into their normal routines.

Wallace remarks, "We did something that we all had hoped we never would have to do, and did it successfully. The majority of our staff never questioned what had to be done. They jumped in and did whatever was necessary - and did it well. There are just so many people to thank."

Executive Director Steve Robinson expressed his gratitude to the central office staff responsible for the expeditious, arduous and efficient efforts they demonstrated.

"We had people at Al Price who went home, squared away their own families and situations and then reported back to work for the duration," Robinson said. "What a noble effort that was, and what dedication our employees exhibited. I hope they know just how proud we are of them and how grateful we are for the good care they gave to the kids."

Robinson further acknowledged the following central office administrators for their special efforts: Dwight Harris, Chester Clay, Jr., Marie Murdoch, Sally Degollado, Jeannette Burke, Richard MaCuk, John Stutz, and Tammy Vega.

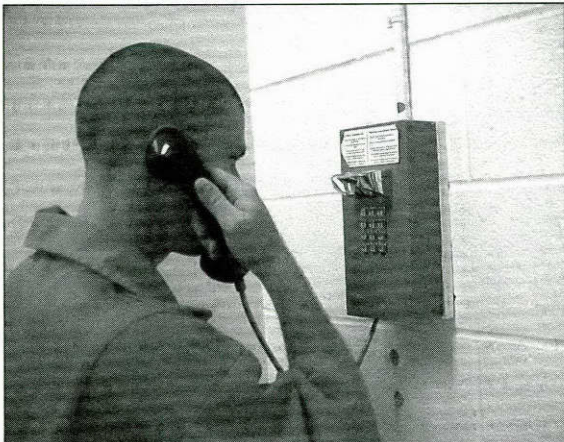
On a final note, Wallace added, "Mr. Robinson has often spoken of the TYC team and the work it takes to operate this agency. Well, our team went beyond the call of duty during the evacuation. Four different facilities had to work together, and we worked together successfully."

# AROUND THE AGENCY

## Student phone call costs reduced

The high cost of collect phone calls from TYC youth is an issue that surfaced during the agency's 2001 family focus groups. Families asked the Commission if costs of their children's calls could be reduced.

Students at TYC facilities are allowed to use special "blue phones" to place collect calls to their families and other approved contacts.



*A youth at Giddings State School uses a blue phone to contact his family.*

A group of central office staff met with Secured, Technologies, the agency's telephone contract provider, and determined that the three best ways to reduce costs are:

- Reduce the commission TYC receives from student telephones. Commissions are deposited in student trust funds at the facilities.
- Make available a pre-paid phone account system (similar to phone cards) where the student or his family pays up-front for student telephone costs.
- Increase the length of time for phone calls from the current 5 minutes to 7 or 10 minutes. A longer phone call time would not reduce the total cost of phone calls, but would reduce the cost per-minute for collect calls.

Therefore, TYC reduced its commission by

one-half on all student telephone calls beginning this month. This action will reduce the cost of the average collect phone call from \$1.43 to \$1.09 per minute.

Beginning November 15, a pre-paid option will be piloted at Giddings State School that will further reduce the cost of the student phone call to 50-cents per minute. Both parents and youth can contribute to the student's prepaid telephone account. The prepaid option is very efficient in reducing costs because it eliminates validation, billing, collection and bad debt expenses. If the Giddings State School prepaid pilot is successful, TYC plans to implement both the collect-call and the prepaid options at all other TYC facilities over a two-year period.

The Central Office Juvenile Corrections Division is currently studying the option of increasing the length of time allowed for phone calls. Correctional professionals agree that kids do better when families are involved in their treatment. The Youth Commission is trying to make it easier for families to be involved with their children.

*~ Patti Hayes*

## Aggressive recruiting proves successful

Since June 2002, Human Resource's recruitment team has been focusing its efforts on recruiting qualified applicants for specialized positions open within TYC, including caseworkers, psychologists, assistant psychologists, teachers, and juvenile corrections officers.

The recruitment team, consisting of Karen Collins Giles, Blanche Quarterman, and Lara Foronda, along with individuals from Hamilton State School, Corsicana Residential Treatment Center, Gainesville State School, Giddings State School, and the Southern Service Area has collected more than 500 applications for vacant positions.

In June, the recruitment team traveled to Houston to host a TYC-sponsored career seminar. With help from Sonia King, Robert Jones, and Jeff Manning from the Hamilton State School, the seminar brought in more than 80 applications. Many of the applications were for teachers at facilities across the state. In addition, the seminar generated more than 200 telephone inquiries.

In July, another career seminar was held in Dallas. This time, Gary Mack and Kelly Cordell



*Crockett State School staff participated in a job fair held at the Houston Reliant Center, presenting information to several prospective employees. Representing Crockett are, from left, Cecil Walther, Security Intelligence Officer; Christy Giles, HR Clerk; Barbara Humphrey, Assistant Principal; Patricia Wyman, Community Relations Coordinator; and Carolyn Samuel, HR Assistant.*

from Gainesville State School and Sammy Wagner, Priscilla Johnson, David McKee, and Dr. Don Brantley from Corsicana Residential Treatment Center joined the recruiting team. This career seminar was just as successful, generating more than 270 applications for a variety of positions throughout the state.

Most recently, the recruitment team hosted its third career seminar in San Antonio. This seminar generated nearly 80 applications. The recruitment team consisted of Dr. Jessica Varnado, Carolyn Jones, Francisco Medina, Loretta Triesch, and Linda Talkington from Giddings State School and Educational Liaison Max Schwarz from the Southern Service Area.

The recruitment team will be traveling to numerous job fairs and seminars throughout the state in the upcoming months. Additionally, there are future plans to expand the recruiting efforts outside of Texas. The growing list of states that will be visited in the near future are Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

The Central Office Human Resources Management recruitment team would like to thank those who have volunteered to assist in these successful recruiting events.

## Human Resources releases recruitment plan

The Human Resources Management Department recently released the Texas Youth Commission's Recruitment Plan for 2003. This year's analysis shows that TYC has a labor force that is, overall, representative of the *available* statewide workforce in Texas.

Having a workforce that "looks like Texas" is TYC's goal, as well as the goal of the state's equal opportunity governing body, the Texas Commission on Human Rights. Overall, 52.9% of TYC's workforce is comprised of minority employees, and 49.6% of the workforce is female.

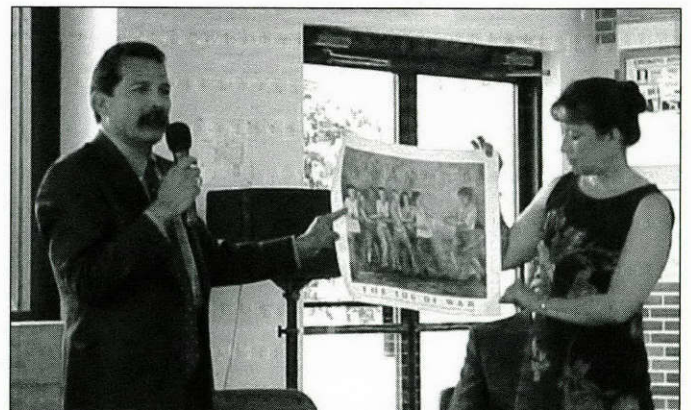
This plan is required by the Texas Commission on Human Rights to be completed annually, and it assesses the representation of the agency's workforce in terms of ethnicity. The analysis provides important information used in developing recruitment plans to ensure that TYC continues to have a diverse and representative workforce. In fact, the Human Resources Management Department is currently in the process of developing and implementing an agency-wide Hispanic recruitment program to ensure that it maintains a workforce that reflects the growing Hispanic population in Texas.

Congratulations are in order for those who have a direct responsibility in assuring that the TYC workforce continues to reflect the population of the people it serves in the state of Texas.

*~ Shawna Donop*

## Judge encourages Evins grads

Judge Fernando Mancias presented the keynote address to the summer GED graduating



*Corrections Director Marie Murdoch helps Judge Mancias show graduates a poster depicting an honorable struggle.*

class at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center. Judge Mancias, who has a long history of being an advocate for youth, urged families, youth and staff to never give up in helping youth to succeed.

To highlight his message, he displayed a poster titled "Tug of War-Families Worth Struggling For" by San Antonio artist Joe Lopez. The print depicts a mother trying to pull her son away from gangs and negative influences. Even though the mother is overwhelmed by six gang members pulling her son in the opposite direction, she grabs her son's arm with equal determination.

The judge also urged the graduates to use the graduation event as a stepping-stone and to continue the education process.

Judge Mancias served as 93<sup>rd</sup> District Court Judge in Hidalgo County for 12 years and recently left the bench to go into private practice.

Rey Gomez, ERJC Superintendent, Marie Murdoch, TYC Director of Juvenile Corrections and Rosalina Ruiz, ERJC Assistant Principal presented diplomas. After the ceremony, students and families attended a reception sponsored by the Evins Volunteer Council.

~ Raul Arredondo

## San Saba reaches out to Army

William ("B.J.") Smith and Leanne Weeks of the San Saba State School were invited to attend the sixth Semi-Annual Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) Job Fair that was held on July 17 at the Fort Hood Officers' Club. Historically, the job fair has attracted well over 3,000 job seekers from the Fort Hood and surrounding communities.

The response to the TYC job opportunities was overwhelming, as hundreds of soldiers and family members expressed interest in learning more about our program and in working with youth at our facilities.

Fort Hood is the largest military installation in the United States, housing more than 60,000 soldiers. It is not surprising that the Fort Hood ACAP is the largest military outplacement center of its kind. Annually, thousands of soldiers and their families leave the military and look to ACAP to assist them in starting a second career. The Fort Hood ACAP has been linking qualified applicants with state and national employers worldwide since the early 1990s.

Smith and Weeks, former ACAP counselors themselves, welcomed the opportunity to be invited back to educate the ACAP staff about the TYC mission and career opportunities. In the weeks preceding the job fair, Smith and Weeks made it their mission to raise awareness about the current positions available at the school and the benefits of employment with TYC. Department representatives from the State School attended a daylong recruitment fair at the ACAP center.

During employee recruitment visits, soldiers and families met with TYC staff to learn about specific positions. The meetings put smiles on many faces and increased the qualified applicant pool.

## Ex-TYC staff visits Evins

Harold Goody, a former juvenile correctional officer at Tamayo House, spoke to youth at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center on June 19 to explain the meaning and history of Emancipation Day.

Goody, who is now a professional chef, also gave interesting information regarding the culinary contributions made by Americans of all cultures.

Following his employment with TYC, Goody studied at the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, California. While there, he entered a culinary competition sponsored by the Maytag Corporation and was named one of the top 20 Chefs in the U.S. for 2000-2001.

Youth were treated to a BBQ dinner after the presentation.

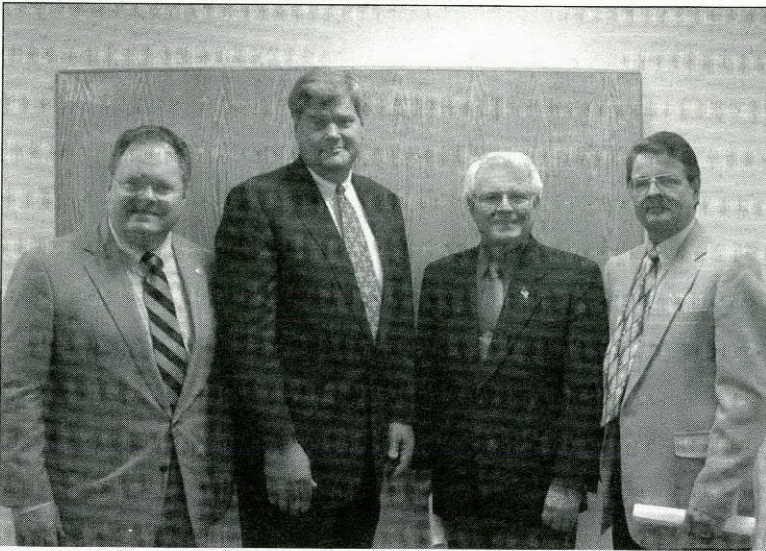
~Raul Arredondo

## Robinson speaks at SECC breakfast

TYC Executive Director Steve Robinson was the keynote speaker at the kick-off breakfast for the Red River Area State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC). The Red River area encompasses 10 counties along and south of the Red River in north central Texas and includes the Victory Field Correctional Academy.

The event was hosted by Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls.

Robinson shared his personal experience in using a community non-profit organization, such as one to which a state employee might donate



From left, State Senator Craig Estes, TYC Executive Director Steve Robinson, State Representative David Counts and Victory Field Superintendent Bobby King helped inaugurate the Red River Area Kick-off Breakfast at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls.

through SECC. He stressed the importance of local campaign coordinators and leadership efforts to launch a successful campaign.

Breakfast attendees included chief executive officers of state agencies in the area, local campaign coordinators, and area state legislators.

~ Jean Bice

## Giddings passes second national test

Giddings State School successfully completed the American Correctional Association (ACA) reaccreditation audit on October 9, becoming the first Texas Youth Commission facility to proceed toward repeat ACA status.

The exit conference conducted by the auditors was attended by TYC representatives Dwight Harris, deputy executive director, Chester Clay, deputy executive director for juvenile corrections, Alan Steen, director of juvenile corrections, Glen McKenzie, ACA accreditation coordinator, Giddings Superintendent Butch Held, and Assistant Superintendent Ross Robinson, Dwain Harris, quality assurance program administrator, and numerous Accreditation Task Force members and other Giddings State School staff.

The audit team consisted of correctional administrators from the states of Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky.

Giddings received 100% compliance with all mandatory standards and 97% compliance

with all non-mandatory standards. The facility will receive the recommendation of the ACA Visiting Committee that Giddings State School be reaccredited at the Commission of Accreditation Panel Hearings in January 2003 at the National Conference of the American Correctional Association in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Harris delivered greetings from TYC Executive Director Steve Robinson, and offered his sincere congratulations to Giddings staff for this noted accomplishment. Clay expressed his deep appreciation to all the Giddings staff for their achievement of being the first institution in the agency's history to be recommended for reaccreditation by ACA. Mr. Steen also acknowledged his appreciation for the dedication of all the staff at the facility and for the sacrifices they and their families made to ensure the successful completion of this monumental national achievement.

Superintendent Held said after the exit conference, "The audit process helped us to scrutinize our practices and to ensure that we continue to operate in a professional, efficient manner. I am also very proud of the staff at Giddings State School and for their dedication for the work they do each and every day."

The accreditation process offers the opportunity to evaluate facility operations against national standards and TYC agency policies, to remedy any deficiencies and to upgrade the quality of correctional programs and services as appropriate.

So far, six TYC facilities have achieved the national accreditation.

## Sheffield opens house for families

Families who often travel great distances to visit cadets at Sheffield Boot Camp in West Texas now have a free place to stay, thanks to the generosity of the Sheffield community.

Superintendent Bill Roach states, "Soon after my arrival at Sheffield Boot Camp I began hearing of a plan in the community to establish a Hospitality House. Jerry Fortune, Sheffield Boot Camp contract Chaplain, and minister at the Sheffield Baptist Church, was probably the first person to tell me of the plans, but others, especially Don Wood, local resident and handyman extraordinaire, spoke as if a mission was in the works. After several setbacks the project

began to take form.”

An old rock motel across the state highway from the Boot Camp was purchased, and Wood began his mission of renovation with zeal.



*Thanks to the efforts of community volunteers, parents now can stay at a hospitality house in Sheffield while visiting their sons.*

Other local residents helped when possible, but much of the labor was accomplished with the aid of high-phase cadets doing community service. It wasn't long before qualified cadets vied for the opportunity to work on the project with Wood. He praised the cadets who assisted him. The cadets developed a sense of pride and accomplishment as they learned basic carpentry and construction skills.

Sheffield, about 100 miles from Midland-Odessa, is a great place for a boot camp and a great place to raise a family, said Roach, but it isn't the best place for occasional visitors to find places to eat or places to lodge. With the completion of the Hospitality House, visitors of the cadets may make reservations for one of the rooms and be assured of a convenient, clean, comfortable night's lodging at a cost anyone can afford – no charge.

As part of a fatherhood class at the boot camp, cadets who are fathers are encouraged to invite their children and the mother of the children to visit. These special visitors are priority guests at the Hospitality House. During visitation, the fathers and the children have time to get to know each other better. The parents of the child are encouraged and expected to discuss the needs and the future of the child.

Plans are for “surrogate” grandparents from the community to assist educating these young parents of the care and needs of their children. This could not be done without the existence of the Hospitality House.

## Gainesville accredited by ACA

The American Correctional Association (ACA) audit of the Gainesville State School was successfully completed on March 22. Superintendent Eduardo Martinez, Assistant Superintendent Britt Canary, and ACA Accreditation Coordinator Glen McKenzie appeared before the Hearing Panel of ACA Commissioners at the national conference in Anaheim, California on August 3.

The Commissioners awarded accreditation to the Gainesville State School saying they were very impressed with the outstanding facility. Commissioner Lynn Branham stated that she had read many ACA audit reports this accreditation period, and that this report is “outstanding.” Commissioner Dr. Lester Wright commended Martinez and Canary for how they are obviously able to address any problem that might arise at the facility. The audit report submitted to the Commission on Accreditation indicated that the conditions of confinement and the quality of life at the facility were excellent.

On behalf of the employees at the Gainesville State School, Martinez and Canary accepted the Certificate of Accreditation in a ceremony following the Awards Luncheon. The Gainesville State School audit team consisted of corrections professionals from the states of Oklahoma, Ohio, and Kansas.

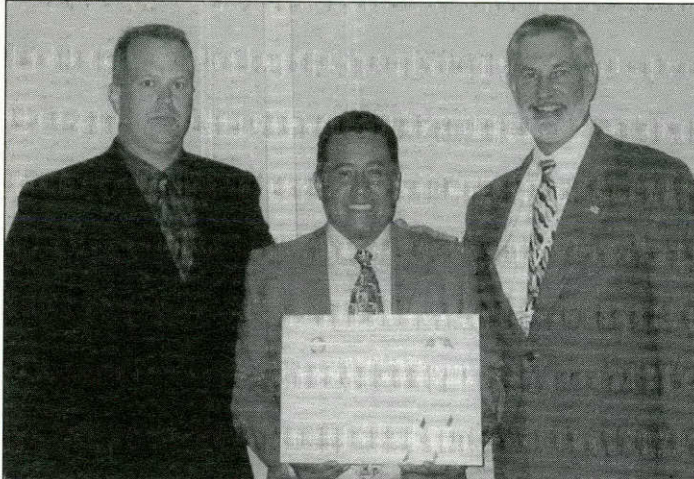
Chair of the ACA audit, Ed Porter, said, “It is obvious that the administrators and staff at this facility are highly dedicated professionals who have the youth under their care in their best interests. Martinez and Canary have shown the importance of intensively managing a large facility and seem most dedicated to the accreditation effort.”

Following the ACA hearing, Martinez said, “I am delighted in the way in which our employees have worked together to implement the accreditation process and how they have gained an awareness of all aspects of the facility's day-to-day operations and set standards in the quality assurance processes. This provided us all a better understanding of TYC institutional policies.”

The American Correctional Association and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections are private, non-profit organizations that administer the accreditation process, currently the only program addressing all components of adult and juvenile corrections.

The accreditation process offers the oppor-

tunity to evaluate operations against national standards and TYC agency policies, to remedy any deficiencies and to upgrade the quality of correctional programs and services. The recognized benefits from such a process include improved management, a defense against law-



Gainesville Superintendent Eduardo Martinez, center, with Assistant Superintendent Britt Canary, left, and Accreditation Coordinator Glen McKenzie, right, proudly display the campus' new certification.

suits through documentation, and the demonstration of good conditions of confinement, increased accountability, and enhanced public credibility for administrative and line staff, a safer and more humane environment for personnel and offenders, and the establishment of measurable criteria for upgrading programs, personnel practices, and physical plant on a continuous basis.

~ Glen E. McKenzie

## PROGRAMS AT WORK

### Boy's Ranch a plus for TYC youth

Since 1985, the Mel Matthews Boy's Ranch in the Northern Service Area has served some of the youth committed to the Texas Youth Commission. A new vocational program that

opened in December 2001 expanded that service and opportunities for success among TYC youth.

The Boy's Ranch vocational program accepts 24 TYC youth who were on parole but had their parole revoked for the first time. The vocational program teaches the youth carpentry, welding, and small engine repair skills.

The Boy's Ranch provides the TYC Resocialization program and additionally focuses on the youth remaining involved in the mainstream community. For instance, this year, two of the boys are playing football for Cisco High School.

Each year, the youth participate in roofing houses and chopping wood for the elderly. Routine community service involves picking up trash around the town of Cisco and along Interstate Highway 20. Throughout the summer of 2002, each youth completed an average of 250 hours of community service. The youth also may attend a local Baptist Church where the members are supportive and make the boys feel welcome.

The Boy's Ranch consistently has the highest number of high school diplomas achieved by youth in Northern Service Area contract care programs. Every year, two to three youth earn their diplomas, and many more receive their GED. Most youth further their education by signing up with the military, attending technical school, or college.

Some of the youth have stayed in the town of Cisco upon release and attend the local junior college. The Boys Ranch receives high scores on Title IV-E monitoring visits and achieves a low recidivism rate among TYC youth. In the past, the ranch has been named the most outstanding contract care program in TYC.

Francie Adcock, TYC quality assurance specialist said, "The ranch is a great placement for TYC Youth. Accomplishments are high and the recidivism is low. Furthermore, the youth like being at the ranch. One youth graduated, got an apartment, and is now working in Cisco. The youth like the small town atmosphere and how the community accepts them. For the first time in many of these youths' lives, they feel needed and wanted."

~Connie Redford



## Employees recognized by TIPC

Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission (TIPC) is a winner for the State of Texas and so are Texas Youth Commission employees who are taking part in the program.

Through TIPC, the State of Texas rewards employees with cash for their money-saving ideas. This has amounted to more than \$72 million in savings since the beginning of the program. In fiscal year 2002, five suggestions from TYC personnel were recognized at TIPC Board Meetings.

Carol Zinstine and Cynthia Sherwood were recognized at the TIPC Board Meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Both submitted suggestions regarding changes that would result in savings on shipping charges. Clara Page, Wilbert C. Noak and Debbie Houser, were recognized at the Board's July 29 meeting. Page's suggestion recommended notebooks with plastic binders replace metal binders as a safety precaution. Noak submitted a door design and installation plan for 96-bed dorms. Houser suggested combining two forms – the Juvenile Court and Probation Officer forms to save time and money.

Besides the possibility of winning cash, having a suggestion accepted by an evaluator automatically enters the employee in periodic drawings for trips, tickets, caps, coolers and other items. TIPC's suggestion program is available online to employees and can be reached through the TYC Employee Gateway.

~Margaret Youngquist

## San Saba starts sociology course

With the help of curriculum specialist Scott Brown, the Sex Offender Treatment Program at San Saba State School is initiating a sociology component for educational credit for the youth at the school.

The caseworkers will deliver the education component, which is closely related to the specialized treatment program, while Assistant Principal David Turrentine will oversee the credits as measured by state standards.

Once youth have successfully completed the educational modules, they will have earned a half-credit in high school sociology. Program Administrator Natalie Reeves directs the Sex Offender Treatment Program and will be assisted

by caseworkers Kashif Haider, Desiree Welsh, Karla Peterson, Kwajalein Johnson, and Mary Bralley. The caseworkers and the students are excited about having started the new program on September 3.

San Saba held its quarterly family seminar on August 17 to inform and train the parents on the new program. Family members of 10 youth attended the successful seminar.

~ Desiree Welsh

## Southern Quality Assurance hosts annual workshop

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Southern Service Area's Contract Care Parole and Residential Provider Workshop was held in Austin on June 3-5 with informative sessions and a "Mardi Gras" theme.

The participants were welcomed in an opening address by Joy Anderson, chief of staff, Nancy Emmert, administrator for quality assurance, and Elizabeth Hague Lee, quality assurance administrator for the Southern Service Area. Roy Robb, quality assurance supervisor for secure programs, was the keynote speaker.

Parole and residential services staff were provided training in their respective areas. Topics included an overview of TYC programs, health-care services, alleged mistreatment, volunteer services, legal issues, specialized aftercare, and special education services. Lori Merkel, quality assurance specialist, held a session for new contract parole officers.



Abel Gonzales, (center), quality assurance supervisor, is honored for 25 years of TYC service by Nancy Emmert, administrator for quality assurance, (left), and Elizabeth Hague Lee, quality assurance administrator for the Southern Service Area.

There was a presentation of storyboard designs submitted by contract parole and residential care staff. Awards were given for outstanding contract programs and community service sites in the Southern Service Area. Those receiving awards were:

- The Brown Schools in San Marcos for outstanding residential contract
- Brookhaven Youth Ranch for the outstanding educational program

- WINGS for Life in Marion for outstanding family involvement
- Caldwell County for outstanding parole contract
- Goodwill Industries in Brazos County for outstanding community service site
- Lisa Ralston for outstanding caseworker for Bell County
- Margo Harrison from Eagle Lake as an outstanding volunteer

The following Southern Service Area staff also received tenure awards at the workshop: Abel Gonzales for 25 years of service, Sylvia Marshall and Marvell Cox, for 10 years of service, and Daniel Collins, for 5 years of service.

~ Vicki Ponce

## FROM THE FRONT LINE

### Clothes may not make the man, but they help

*Editor's note: The following column originally ran October 4, 2002 in the Valley Morning Star in Harlingen. We are reprinting the column in its entirety, with permission of the Morning Star.*

by Deana Landers  
Valley Morning Star Columnist

Clothes may not make the man, but they help. As I stepped out of the elevator at Valley Race Park four young men dressed in tuxedos greeted me. The room was filled with people holding their programs and chatting with each other. There were round tables set with white linen tablecloths and colorful lavender napkins, and the stage was awaiting the presence of the models that would highlight the afternoon fashion show.

It was an event to benefit the Tamayo House, a



halfway house operated by the Texas Youth Commission in Harlingen. Their purpose is to provide rehabilitation and transition for young offenders. The money raised from the tickets will help the young men with their educational needs and reintegrating with their families.

The models for the fashion show were people in the community who wanted to contribute to this worthy cause, and maybe have fun dressing up as models in the middle of a workweek. However, it wasn't the models or the beautiful room that stood out to me. It was the four young men dressed in tuxedos. The scene reminded me of one of O Henry's short stories, (Cops and Robbers) where two men decide to rob a bank. One goes in as a robber, the other dresses as a policeman. As the man dressed as the policeman waits for his friend, he begins to feel the dignity and responsibility of being a police officer. So, when his friend comes out of the bank, he arrests him. The young man waiting to escort me to my table did not look at all like a delinquent.



Juan, a 16-year-old offender from Fort Worth, said he never expected to wear a tuxedo. After all, he had dropped out of school in the eighth grade, so he wasn't planning to attend the prom. He was caught breaking and entering into a house one night. He planned to steal a stereo and some other items to sell to support his drug habit. "I started smoking weed at 12," he said. All my friends were doing it, so I did it too." When he got caught, he was angry because one of the guys that he thought was his friend sold him out. In the 12 months that followed he was put in the detention center in Fort Worth and then sent to Boot Camp and finally the Tamayo House for good behavior.

Debbie Dick, the director, said these boys have earned the privilege to be in the Tamayo House. My escort agreed it was a privilege, because he got a second chance. "The nine months I been here, I have learned not to victimize people, to respect others and to be more responsible, he said. Next week I get to go home and I am going to start back to school."

He said his mom and dad, four little sisters and older brother were sad to see him here.

I thought about his mom and the pain and fear

she must feel for her son. And I remembered my own pain when our son was caught with his so called friend opening doors and taking things out of other people's cars one night.

We went through agony watching him stand before a judge and wondered what this would do to him. He received probation and his community service assignment was in a special education classroom during his first year of college. Six years later our son is working on a doctorate in special education, and is a wonderful teacher who cares deeply for children with special needs.

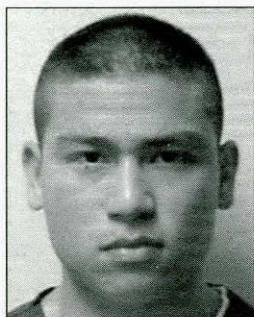
When it was happening it was painful and frightening to see our son in trouble, but now we see it as a blessing because the experience gave him a new direction. Juan wants to be an engineer because he likes to do things with his hands. He wants to build things. He said wearing a tuxedo at the fashion show that day was the first time he felt so happy and excited. So far it was the highlight of his life. The clothes made him feel good about himself. He and the other young men were treated like everyone else and for a moment they could see what it was like to feel great about themselves and be treated with respect. It could be that moment that makes all the difference in the world in their lives.

*You may reach Deana Landers in the Educational Department of the Valley Morning Star by calling 956-430-6227 or e-mail her at dlanders@valleystar.com.*

**Thanks to TYC and staff**

*By Jesus "Jesse" Gomez  
Corpus Christi parole student*

In the past getting locked up was one of the easiest things for me to do in life. I say this because I never really took control over my life—I always let my emotions get the best of me. My problems started when my father committed suicide. Then came the drugs and alcohol mixed with violence. I did not know how to control my addictions and after a couple of months I was placed in boot camp. This didn't



*Jesse Gomez, Corpus Christi Parole Student, is a changed man because of TYC.*

change my life because I enjoyed it. After I finished that program, it didn't take long to get back into trouble.

After several placements I was committed to TYC and placed at Evins Regional Juvenile Center. The programs there were very beneficial but what helped out the most was the majority of the staff—specifically Case Workers Ms. Ramos and Ms. Pena, Mr. King JCO, and Mr. Garza Supervisor of Dorm 4C. These people made me get my thoughts in order and taught me how to handle my anger. I was able to get close to these people even when they told me what to do when I didn't want to here it. I thought at first TYC was a joke and wouldn't help but now that I'm out in society and I'm using the skills that I learned, I thank TYC and their staff.

Since being paroled home to Corpus I have completed all of my community service, drug counseling, and I am currently enrolled in Southern Careers Institute, in the Medical Assistance Program (which is paid for through TYC financial aid). I will start my internship this fall with one of the local hospitals and should graduate by November. Once again I would like to thank TYC for all of your assistance and I hope that you will continue to help change the lives of other youth.

**OUR STAFF**

**A Salute to Dallas County officers**

The Dallas County Coalition of Community Justice Agencies held its third annual National Probation, Parole & Pretrial Services Officers Recognition Luncheon on July 17.

The coalition consists of the Dallas County Juvenile Justice Department, Dallas County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, U.S. Pretrial Service, U.S. Probation Department, and Texas Youth Commission. The agencies meet at the Dallas District Office on a weekly basis to organize training and to plan the recognition luncheon.

TYC's Shalonda Richardson-Grant served on the Dallas County Coalition Committee. She emphasized the importance of all agencies working together to network and share information. Diana Goodwin, Dallas District Office parole supervisor, applauded her parole officers for their hard work and dedication. The luncheon host, Rene Syler of CBS TV-11, also recognized the criminal justice officers for a wonderful job. To top off the event, the Dallas County Coalition featured live entertainment by soloist Renae Dubose of the Cedar Hill Trinity Church Fine Arts Department.

The event was very important in that it recognized parole and probation officers for putting their lives on the line each day in order to ensure a safer community for all citizens. Eleven Dallas County parole officers provide community supervision to more than 775 juvenile offenders annually. Their efforts and responsibilities are very much worth recognizing.

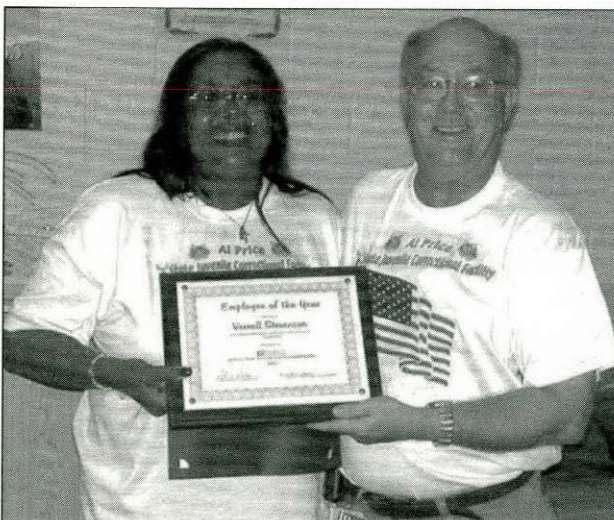
~ Vickie White

## Al Price staff receive recognition

The Seventh Annual Staff Appreciation Day was held at Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility on August 21.

Vernell Windon-Stevenson was selected as the employee of the year for 2002-2003. As a Security Worker IV in the gatehouse, Windon-Stevenson has been employed with TYC since January 1996. She doesn't miss a beat in receiving headcounts from the JCO staff, opening the gates for vendors and staff, and answering questions from visitors at the gatehouse window.

She received a plaque, and another will hang in the Administration Building with her name and the names of the other nominees: Kelly Tyson, Lurline Taylor, Willie Deal, Alice Tatmon, Denise Rode, Bobby Todd, Janis Burge,



Vernell Windon-Stevenson, Security Worker IV, is honored as Employee of the Year at the Beaumont facility by Superintendent Allen Wallace.

Rebecca Christian, and Michael Boneau.

Safety Program Awards were given to employees with no accidents or injuries for the year. Fifteen additional employees received the Safety Pioneer Award for seven accident/injury-free years. They were Patrick Bardwell, Michael Boneau, Marjorie Broussard, Rose Chaisson, Roland Champagne, Robert Criss, Shirley Ford, Barbara Humphrey, Nicole Mitchell, Clara Page, Denise Rode, Carol Smith, Deirdre Thigpen, Donna Tyson and Kelly Tyson.

The festivities were under the direction of the Intercultural Awareness Committee Chairperson, Deirdre Delcambre-Thigpen.

~ Rose Chaisson

## BBQ competition held in Crockett

Each year, staff of Crockett State School get the chance to show off their best cooking abilities by entering the BBQ cook-off competition. Individuals or teams may enter, and the winner's name is engraved on a plaque and displayed in the cafeteria.

A group of three consisting of Terrell Porter aka "Boss," Rodney Jolly, better known as "The Roaster," and Roy "Scorcher" Johnson brought home this year's title as champions of the BBQ pit. "The secret was in our technique, and we plan to be the reigning champions for years to come," advises Jolly.

Superintendent Don Freeman said, "This is a fun time for a little friendly competition between co-workers, and a great time for me to taste some fantastic BBQ."

~ Patricia Wyman

## Grigsby celebrates retirement

Ruthie Terry Grigsby, a 29-year veteran of Crockett State School, was honored with a retirement reception on June 30.

She began her tenure at Crockett in 1971 as a laundry worker and then moved into the position of House Parent and Watchman II. During the Wilderness Program in the late 70's, Grigsby was Warehouse Supervisor, and her primary duties were to transport supplies to the youth and staff who were living at Neches Bluff. Former Superintendent Jerry Day then assigned her to the cafeteria in January 1980, due to the increased number of youth on campus. From that time on, she has focused her attention on providing a good meal for the boys.

Business Manager Thomas Phillips calculated the number of meals she must have served in that period of time. He said, "22 years of 52 weeks, less 88 weeks for vacation, training, and illness is 1,056 weeks of cooking 10 meals per week. That comes up to a total of 10,560 meals, each time planned to feed up to 275 youth and 100 staff. That's a lot of meals."

Grigsby thanked her supervisors, staff, and youth for the best 29 years anyone could have had. She also commented that she had great experiences with everyone she had the pleasure to interact with. She plans to take it easy and enjoy her family and church.

~ Patricia Wyman

## Teamwork emphasized at Al Price

The Al Price Support Services department, which includes maintenance, accounting, network specialists, warehouse, and purchasing was recognized as the facility's "First Team" during staff appreciation day activities in August.

The Support Services department had an outstanding and successful year due to the loyalty, diligence, tenacity and expertise among employees. The maintenance department was able to come under budget by \$10,000 and complete a job three weeks ahead of schedule on one project.

The accounting department was able to clear up all of the outstanding encumbrances for FY-01 without having to re-encumber them for a savings of \$2,300.

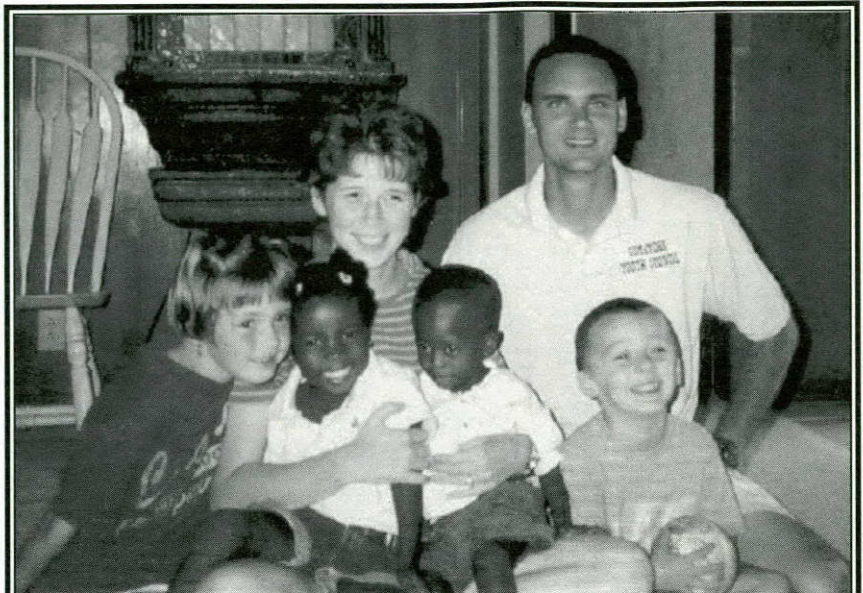
The warehouse staff was instrumental in helping with two surplus property sale efforts that resulted in the collection of \$7,845.

The purchaser saved \$27,441 on purchases due to his diligence of following practice, policy and procedure.

The network specialists were able to meet the challenges of the mandated and required software changes and various computer-related repairs.

"This is the finest collection of dedicated staff that any Business Manager could be blessed with," said Business Manager Kelly Tyson. "Each of them are reliable, selfless and loyal to the welfare and care of TYC youth. They are the textbook definition of the word Teamwork," Tyson said.

~ Rose Chaisson

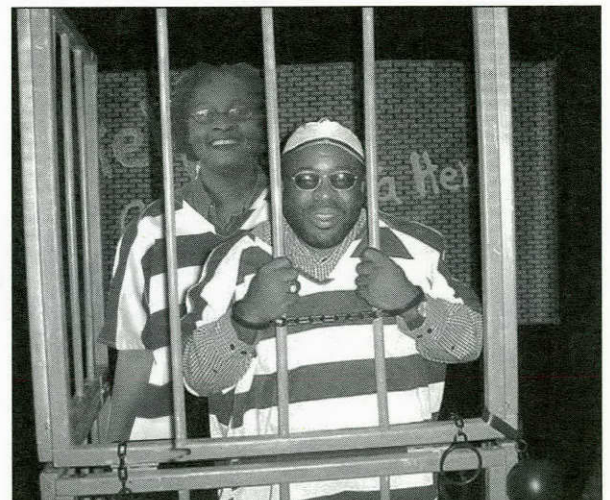


Staff at Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility surprised Business Manager, Kelly Tyson, and his wife, Donna Tyson, Administrative Technician, with a grandparents' shower. The Tyson's daughter and son-in-law, after much time, complications, and legal hassles, adopted two children from Haiti. They were finally able to bring their new son and daughter home to Texas, and the staff at Al Price wanted to ensure that these children received some things they needed. Many staff members contributed to the happy occasion, and they are excited to help the children celebrate their first Christmas holiday. Pictured above, Brandy and Dement Allen proudly hold their new son and daughter.

## TYC employees support MDA Lock-Up

For several years, Bobby Davis of Corpus Christi Parole has participated in the annual Muscular Dystrophy Foundation Executive Lock-up over Labor Day. This year with the help of the Corpus Christi Parole Office, Harlingen Parole Office and the community, he donated over \$500 to the \$25,000 raised in Corpus Christi for MDA.

Crockett State School also participates in their local MDA Lock-up. With the city police department's assistance, many local citizens are placed under arrest, handcuffed and transported to a makeshift jail



Director of Security Pamela Carey poses for her "mug shot" before raising her bail for release at Crockett's Muscular Dystrophy fundraiser. Also behind bars is Corpus Christi Parole Officer Bobby Davis (in front) at the MDA Telethon Executive Lock-Up. We wonder how they wound up in the same cell?

where they are processed and booked in as inmates.

The staff of Crockett State School decided they had had enough of three employees. "Warrants" were issued for their "arrest" and Police Officer Doug King obliged. Assistant Superintendent Blu Nicholson, Director of Security Pamela Carey and Principal Melissa Vonsenden had to "serve time" at the "jail," located at the Golden Corral Restaurant, until they raised their bail, which was donated to MDA.

After their arrest, the TYC Crockett trio began calling friends and colleagues for assistance. They were issued black-and-white striped suits, had their mug shots taken and were treated to a free lunch from the restaurant.

Chaplain Phillips, one of the organizers for Crockett State School, said \$11,039 dollars was raised locally to help Muscular Dystrophy. He added "Crockett State School is an example of employees who work as a team and who contribute everyday."

*~Bobby Davis and Patricia Wyman*

## Verbal Judo aims to decrease aggression

In an effort to reduce the number of aggressive incidents that endanger Texas Youth Commission employees, the Agency is introducing the technique of "Verbal Judo."

Verbal Judo is a course that helps develop verbal strategies to diffuse aggressiveness and to

transform potentially explosive encounters into positive resolutions. It explores confrontational rhetoric and offers theoretical and practical solutions. The process can be used in every verbal encounter.

In fiscal year 2001, there were 774 on-the-job injuries to Texas Youth Commission employees. Those injuries incurred a cost of \$1.4 million for the fiscal year. Approximately 70% of those claims were due to student aggression, while the remainder were attributed to slips, trips and falls. At the end of the third-quarter of fiscal year 2002, there were already 535 claims due to student aggression.

As part of the Executive Field Leadership Program, TYC held preliminary training for superintendents, assistant superintendents, and central office program administrators. Training was conducted by Mike Manley, National Director of Verbal Judo Institute, whose extensive experience includes two decades of hands-on conflict resolution in the streets of New York City. Manley has more than 10 years of experience conducting the interactive seminars.

On August 21-23, thirty-eight TYC staff were certified as trainers in the art of "Verbal Judo." These staff members will train other employees throughout the system. Verbal Judo will take the place of the Verbal Communications Training formerly used and will be required of all direct care staff.

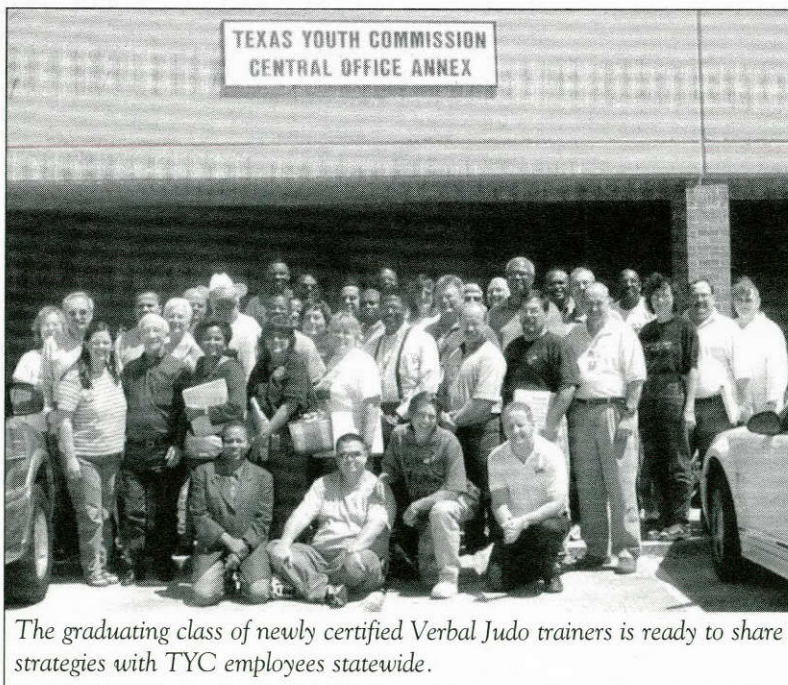
*~Margaret Youngquist*

## West Texas holds annual awards picnic

West Texas State School staff, volunteers and their families gathered in August at Pyote Park for their annual awards picnic. The school's Facility Improvement Committee and the West Texas Community Resource Council for Troubled Youth co-hosted the picnic.

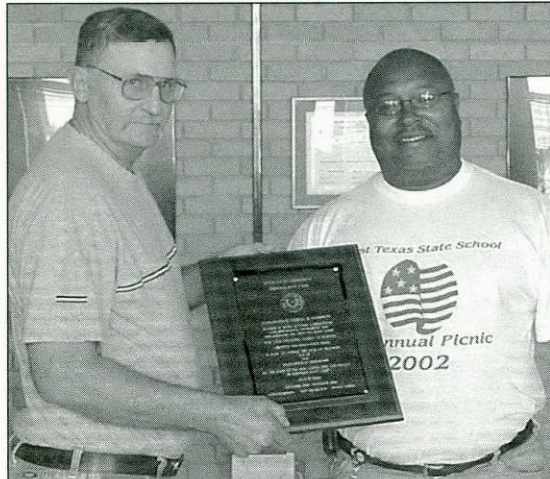
Families brought along desserts to compliment the hamburgers and hot dogs with all the trimmings prepared by Facility Improvement Committee members. This year's celebration featured a "patriotic" theme, complete with wooden lawn ornaments crafted by the school's woodshop students.

Lydia Barnard, TYC director of juvenile corrections, presented volunteers with appreciation plaques, canvas briefcases and pen and pencil



*The graduating class of newly certified Verbal Judo trainers is ready to share strategies with TYC employees statewide.*

sets. Statewide volunteer award nominees were also recognized. Mrs. Virginia Dawson, wife of long-time volunteer council member Julian Dawson, who passed away in April, was present to receive a special award honoring Julian's memory.



West Texas Employee of the Year Robert "Bud" Ware left, is congratulated by Superintendent Lemuel Harrison.

Dan Humeniuk, Superintendent of Brownwood State School, was the guest speaker for the event. Mr. Humeniuk served as Assistant Superintendent at West Texas from 1989 through 1993, and spoke to attendees about many shared experiences. Other visiting TYC guests included Frank Rios, Superintendent of Schaeffer House and former West Texas State School program administrator.

Robert "Bud" Ware, JCO IV in the Security department, was named the 2002 "Employee of the Year". He and the other departmental winners received award plaques presented by Superintendent Lemuel Harrison and Assistant Superintendent John White. Several employees also received recognition for not using any sick leave in FY'01.

A band, led by Dorm 2 JCO Sylvester Hernandez, provided music in the evening.

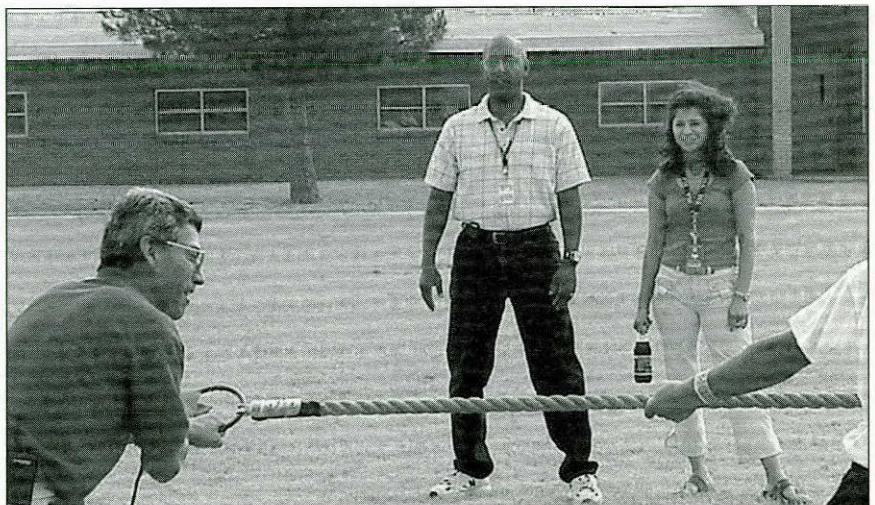
~Donna Garcia

## West Texas committee builds teamwork

The West Texas State School "Facility Improvement Committee" was begun as a means to maintain and boost positive morale on campus, coordinate the annual picnic and holiday party, and help build teamwork among the school's employees.

Another goal of the committee is to serve as an avenue for staff to express campus concerns and ideas for improvement. The committee has been experiencing success.

Many times, staff have good ideas or concerns but are reluctant to share them with administration. The goal of the committee is to provide an environment, which will encourage staff to be less apprehensive in sharing ideas and concerns, and the committee, in turn, will bring these issues to the attention of campus administration.



Roy Gray and Cynthia Cobos judge the Facility Improvement Committee-sponsored tug-of-war.

Committee officers and members for the current year are as follows:

Roy Gray, chairperson, Sonja Nichols, vice-chair, Margo Magness, treasurer, Brad Miller, secretary, and members Jesse Nunez, Mark Zocher, Jennie Clark, Cynthia Cobos, Robert 'Doc' Freeman, Eduardo "Big Ed" Lopez and Angie Walker.

~ Donna Garcia

# VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

## West Texas volunteers host barbeque

West Texas State School volunteers Chuck and Jerry Ann Palmer and the Calvary Baptist Church of Odessa hosted a barbeque dinner for the students at the school on June 13.

Students, staff and volunteers were treated to barbeque brisket, sausage, beans, potato salad and blueberry cobbler with ice cream. Mother nature brought some much-needed rain to the West Texas desert that night, which did not allow the meal to be served outside as originally planned. But the students reported the food tasted just as good inside the cafeteria.

The West Texas Community Resource Council co-sponsored the event along with Calvary Baptist Church. Mr. and Mrs. Palmer served the food with the help of West Texas Community Resource Council Treasurer Marissa Layton, Liz Polanco and the school food service staff Yolanda Cobos, Socorro Martinez and Food Service Manager Bertha Fuentes.

The Calvary Baptist volunteers first began hosting barbeque dinners for West Texas State School students in 1996.

~ Donna Garcia

## Brownwood council members flip burgers for kids

On Tuesday nights during the summer months, members of the Brownwood State School Community Advisory Council have a cookout in which volunteers from the community grill hamburgers for each one of the dorms at the school.

Assisted financially by local churches and civic groups, the Community Advisory Council members work hand-in-hand with volunteers from these same groups to serve up hamburgers with all the trimmings. The goal of this initia-

tive is to demonstrate concern to youth, provide positive interaction with adult role models and to offer youth an opportunity to publicly demonstrate their interpersonal skills.

A lot of preparation goes into each cookout. Sponsors are secured and groceries purchased each week. The Unit II Food Service Department staff, led by Paul Coghlan, prepares the vegetables and condiments for serving. Once the punch is made and iced down, supplies are loaded up and transported to each dorm, where the maintenance department staff have set up and prepared a grill for cooking.

Volunteers cook burgers for forty or more hungry students and staff members. Each student and staff member is served two hamburgers with all the trimmings, chips, cookies and punch.

This year's cookouts began on April 2 and ended August 6. The Brownwood Community Advisory Council members did a great job, and the kids are already anticipating next year's cookouts.

~ Melissa Burney

## Bible study groups visit Crockett

On Thursday evenings at Crockett State School, a group of volunteers from New Life Juvenile Justice Ministries brings an hour of religious training to youth who choose to participate. This group of committed individuals has volunteered with TYC youth



Members of the St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church congregation provide weekly religious training to youth on opportunity dorm.

for almost five years, touching thousands of lives.

Under the direction of Chaplain Bill Phillips, the group follows a manual that parallels the TYC Resocialization Program. Each component lasts a few weeks and is designed to build on the last. Each vol-



unteer sits at a table with five or six youth as they work at their own pace through the manual. During the summer, when many volunteers are on vacation, the youth watch Alpha Courses and a question-and-answer session follows.

"The youth look forward to coming to Bible Study," says Estelle Brown, affectionately called Granny Brown by the boys. "Most come to class with a thirst for learning, while others are a bit shy at first. But if they keep coming each week, they, too, open up and participate. For many youth, this class is the first of its kind that they have attended. Some may have gone to church before being incarcerated or even attended chapel services at Crockett, but as far as studying the stories of the Bible, this is new to some of them."

St. Luke's Missionary Baptist Church adopted the Opportunity Dorm several years ago. On Tuesday nights, members of the congregation are greeted by the eager faces of their youth. Two of these volunteers are retired TYC employees and one is currently working at Crockett State School. They, too, have changed the lives of numerous youth who have passed through the dorm. "It is people like St. Luke's who are not only here to motivate the youth to turn to God, but the volunteer's mere presence that helps them to understand that people are concerned, and it gives them a chance to participate in something that they may never have been exposed to before incarceration," says Superintendent Don Freeman.

Paul Clebourn, Crockett caseworker and St. Luke's volunteer comments, "These youth have a need which is not met by the state, and that is continuous religious training. Volunteers such as New Life, St. Luke's and others can offer this and we have been very successful."

~ Patti Wyman

## Corsicana council hosts incentive dinner

The Corsicana Residential Treatment Center's Community Advisory Council recently hosted an Incentive Dinner for youth who have demonstrated improvement in the Resocialization program. Incentive Dinners are intended to provide encouragement and to promote progress among TYC youth.

Entertainment was provided by a local band, "Grateful We're Not Dead." Jim Stubbs, a local musician, directed the group whose sound is

reminiscent of the big band era. Those attending enjoyed hearing such tunes as "Yakity Sax" and "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The dinner was held at the campus pavilion and youth, staff, and volunteers enjoyed delicious brisket, homemade potato salad, beans, relishes, bread, and watermelon. Tom Peterson, local advisory council member and secretary of the State Volunteer Resource Council, is chairman of the Incentive Dinner subcommittee and the originator of this event.

~ Dotty Luera

## Dallas council member recognized

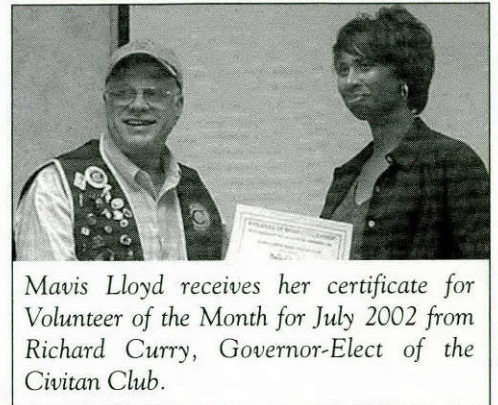
Mavis Y. Lloyd of the Dallas Community Advisory Council was recognized as Volunteer of the Month for July 2002 by the Civitan organization. Lloyd received this award due to her dedication to the youth of the Texas Youth Commission.

Lloyd, who has served as Chairperson of the Dallas Community Advisory Council for two years, also is Youth Services Manager for the City of Dallas, serves as Chairperson on the Dallas Youth Services Advisory Board, is a member of the Dallas County Juvenile Board, and is a member of the Dallas Black MBA association.

Civitan is a volunteer organization dedicated to serving individuals and community needs with an emphasis on helping people with developmental disabilities. Civitan's purpose is to serve the community by fulfilling human needs that are not met by other organizations or by individual efforts. Individuals whose needs are best met through organized group action are prime candidates for Civitan service projects. In all they do, Civitan volunteers seek experiences that provide life direction, character building, leadership development, and the satisfaction of helping others.

Lloyd is an outstanding person who donates her time to helping others. She rarely turns down an opportunity to offer her services. This is what makes her a volunteer to be recognized in July and throughout the year.

~ Vickie White



Mavis Lloyd receives her certificate for Volunteer of the Month for July 2002 from Richard Curry, Governor-Elect of the Civitan Club.

## Dallas Council tours Gainesville

The Dallas Community Advisory Council recently toured the Gainesville State School to have a better understanding of the environment our youth are in while in a TYC institution. This group of volunteers, who represent the Dallas District Office, Tyler District Office and the Cottrell House, were eager to learn all they can about the Texas Youth Commission. It is because of their desire that Community Relations Coordinator Vickie White organized the tour.

Gainesville State School Community Relations Coordinator Fidel Garcia gave the Dallas Council Members an excellent tour of the campus. They toured several dorms, the school, the infirmary and the security unit, seeing first-hand the interaction of staff and youth in a variety of settings. The council members commented on the patience that staff exhibited toward the youth and how well the security staff communicated with youth. They also had an opportunity to ask the staff questions regarding the Resocialization program, which is the cornerstone of the TYC rehabilitation program.

This visit enhanced the volunteer council's knowledge of how institution programs flow directly into the community programs. The council members are very dedicated and have the desire to assist the youth and make a difference in their lives. With their newfound knowledge of the continuum of services that TYC provides, they will be better equipped to assist in

the development of programs that specifically address the needs of our youth.

~ Vickie White

## Faithful Friends return to San Saba

The Faithful Friend group returned for another visit to the San Saba State School the first weekend in June. This group has become a permanent part of San Saba, and staff and youth look forward to their visit each year.

A new face showed up

with the Faithful Friend group this time. Shiloh, Les Castro's new best friend, made his debut. Since the loss of his dog, Ayla, Castro has been training Shiloh to take her place with him during his presentations, and San Saba got to be the first to see him perform.

The weekend started off with a performance by Dave Barnett who shared some of the songs he has written and shared his religious experiences. Next on the agenda was Les Castro and Shiloh. Shiloh didn't even appear nervous and did all the tricks and commands that Castro gave her.

On Saturday, the youth heard the life story of a current FBI agent who shared what it is like being in an organization such as the FBI and being a Christian. The weekend rounded out with Jack Ponder, a longtime Faithful Friend team member, who had been imprisoned for 20 years. He shared what his life has been like since he has been out in the community, sharing his religious experiences. Ponder is in his 70's, so he has been doing this for a very long time. Five other volunteers spent time on the dorms sharing the Gospel and what Christ has meant in their lives.

A group of the San Saba local volunteers were also able to share with this group of committed people. They, too, were inspired by what this group from the Dallas area had to say and for the reasons they were going out to share.

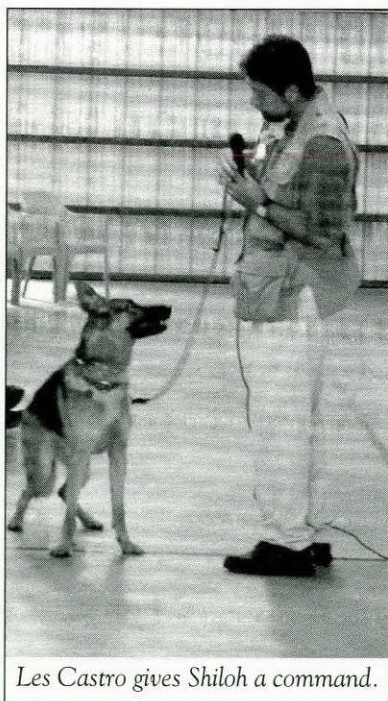
Even though Ayla was missed this year, Shiloh and all who came with him were welcomed and are already scheduled to return in the spring.

~ Dagmar Poteet

## Mart youth experience an epiphany

Reverend Steve Heyduck and the First United Methodist Church of Mart sponsored an Epiphany weekend that began on Friday, August 30. Participants included 50 Epiphany volunteers and 31 youth, led by Tracy Cunningham, program administrator for E-Dorm.

The Epiphany volunteers began early Saturday morning with prayer in the chapel, skits in the conference room, and meals in the dining room. They arranged the Education Department into a haven, so the boys could truly experience an "epiphany." There was music from the guitar and food from the kitchens of many volunteers. The grinning boys ate so much that they could barely stand. Each of the 31 boys



Les Castro gives Shiloh a command.

received an individual birthday cake with their names written across the top and a birthday bag filled with different gifts.

On Sunday, September 1, they spent the day addressing the issue of forgiveness. At the end of the day, a wooden cross was carried into the visitation room. On this wooden cross, each boy nailed a red piece of paper, which contained the names of people they needed to forgive. The symbolism of the gesture is that as God has forgiven them through the nailing of Christ on the cross, so they nailed to that cross the names of the people that caused them pain. As they proceed to release the pain, they can start to heal.

After the nailing of the cross, Epiphany volunteers from all over Texas entered the visitation room carrying a lighted candle and sang to the boys. Many tear-filled eyes watched as changes began to take place. It was obviously overwhelming for the boys to sit there and realize that so many people cared for them and wanted the best for them.

Monday, the finale began at 4:00 p.m. Each boy stood and expressed what the weekend meant to him. Some said much and some not so much. All were sincere and very grateful for the weekend. Sheri Short, Epiphany director, reminded the boys that the end of the weekend was not good-bye, because each volunteer would continue mentoring the boys for one year. Every Tuesday night, the Epiphany volunteers will meet to discuss the boys' progress and concerns. The first Saturday of each month will be a celebration time for the group.

The entire McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility (MCSJCF) has benefited from the Epiphany weekend. Staff that were able to watch and participate are eagerly awaiting the next Epiphany. Because of the Epiphany weekend, MCSJCF will never be the same again, nor will the boys.

## Maternity classes prepare youth for motherhood

To the four expectant teenage mothers at Brownwood State School Unit II, Kyla Berry is a blessing. Berry, who currently serves as the Director of Women's and Children's Services at Brownwood Regional Medical Center, has been teaching a series of childbirth and labor classes for these youth.

The classes, which began in July, meet once a week on Tuesday afternoons. During this time,

Berry teaches the youth many useful skills, including appropriate physical exercises to stretch and relax aching muscles and proper breathing techniques to ease the pain of labor. In addition, she provides literature and an opportunity to view films about the childbirth process. Berry conducts a question-and-answer session following each presentation.

The highlight event for the young women was a tour of the labor and delivery suites at Brownwood Regional Medical Center. Berry and her staff greeted the youth, and the Brownwood State School employees who accompanied them with a pizza party prior to the tour. The tour began with a visit to the nursery, where they were able to observe a newborn that had been delivered an hour earlier. Once the young women were in the labor and delivery suite, Berry explained the purpose and use of medical equipment. She also equipped each young mother to hear her baby's heartbeat and provided a monitoring printout at the end of the tour.

Over the next few months, the classes will expand to include topics such as parenting skills. Other youth who are parents will join the expectant mothers in attendance. Volunteers, including several from the Brown County Home Economics Extension program, will be instructing the classes. The students are looking forward to the classes and the knowledge they will gain.

One student recently wrote a letter expressing her gratitude for the classes. In this letter, she stated,

"Thank you for setting this class up for us...Without you, I would still be clueless as to labor, pregnancy and babies...I can't tell you how much this means to me! No words could describe it. You are wonderful and very considerate to do this, and I wanted to let you know that I appreciate it very much."

~ Melissa Burney

## San Saba challenges 21<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade

What an incredible day June 29 turned out to be! That is the day 31 soldiers from the 21<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade and BOSS (Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers) arrived via helicopter and car from Fort Hood to play softball and basketball with the youth at San Saba State School.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade stationed at Fort

Hood has adopted the campus as its partner school.

After breakfast, the soldiers were eager to get onto the field and court. The guys divided up, and the playing began.

The San Saba Phase 2's, 3's, & 4's were their opponents. The soldiers won the first softball game, but the State School team pulled out a win during the second. On the basketball court, however, the boys were not so fortunate. The soldiers won all games, which was largely due to Command Sergeant Major L. M. Morgan, racking up the points. According to some youth, he was unstoppable!

While almost all of the soldiers were playing ball, two manned the grill. They served hot dogs and hamburgers with all the trimmings, chips, and drinks. The San Saba Volunteer Services Council provided all the food and items for the cookout.

By mid-afternoon, all the players were "played out" and called it a day. San Saba is looking forward to another fun-filled day of activity with the 21<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade and BOSS from Fort Hood. What a great partnership this has become!

~ Dagmar Poteet

## State Volunteer Council renews its mission

The State Volunteer Resource Council (SRVC) is a statewide group of volunteers who give their time, energy and talent to fulfill its mission to "maintain and support a system of local councils who will maximize community resources and utilize volunteers to enable the youth of the TYC to become productive and responsible citizens."

The Council envisions a system of engaged local councils at each of the TYC facilities. Members of the Executive Committee have committed themselves to fulfill this vision in several ways. The committee consists of President Don Scott, Fort Worth; Vice-President Irene Arthur, Bryan-College Station; Secretary Sandy Bergman, San Antonio; Treasurer Tom Peterson, Corsicana; Member-at-Large John Shero, San Saba; and Executive Secretary/TYC Administrator of Community Relations Tammy Vega, Austin.

A Resource Handbook for every local council to use with members and volunteers will be published. There will be an informational col-

umn in each edition of the TYC Journal. A representative from the Executive Committee of the Council will attend each TYC Board Meeting. The Executive Committee will attend local council meetings and events to learn about ideas or concerns of local members. Twice annually, a meeting will be scheduled for networking, training and sharing as a council and as local volunteers.

The State Council and local councils have produced great things. There are approximately 389 volunteers serving as members of local councils, many of whom have been active for several years. These council members have contributed more than 30,000 hours of service during fiscal year 2002, valued at over \$475,000. Donations to the councils, all of which directly benefit our youth, have exceeded \$200,000. These productive activities have occurred through cooperation and shared mission among the SVRC members, the 24 local councils and chapters, and the TYC facilities and local communities.

This group of volunteers forms an enormous enterprise that is changing lives and communities. Spread the good news and encourage others to join the team. Help make the vision a reality!

~Don Scott

## Success, one mentor at a time

Jeff, a 19-year-old, entered the juvenile justice system at age fifteen. He arrived at Crockett State School like so many before him, with an attitude that he would continue acting just as he pleased. Jeff decided he would not work TYC's Resocialization program, continuing to cause trouble. After accruing 117 referrals in a very short period of time, he was referred to the Segregation Unit at Crockett.

Meanwhile, Jeff's mother became very ill and was eventually placed on life support. One



Mentor Boone Vastine speaks with Jeff during their weekly mentoring visit.

day, the decision was made to disconnect her life-support machine. This event happened to be on Jeff's birthday. Jeff's disruptive behavior escalated.

An event occurred that completely changed Jeff's behavior. He was assigned a mentor, a volunteer named Boone Vastine, whose main interest includes regular visits, showing compassion and attention, and listening. Jeff, who has had little trust in people, reacted aloofly at first.

Vastine patiently visited Jeff - talking, listening, praying and encouraging him. Jeff slowly began to open up and reach out to his mentor. In the nine months that followed the visits, Jeff received just one referral to the Segregation Unit.

Jeff now has his sights on becoming free from incarceration. He is participating in the Resocialization program and has achieved Phase 4, which is a requirement for release from TYC. Jeff's plans include becoming a registered nurse, so he can help others in need. Without a mentor, Jeff appeared to be prison-bound.

For delinquent youth - many who have been hurt or ignored by adults - mentors like Vastine are invaluable in showing that people do care about them.

~ Patricia Wyman

aftercare program is a 17-week program for TYC parolees in Houston that focuses on developing positive self-esteem, academics, character, and employment skills. The program provides training, mentor direction and insight for young men.

The Eastern Service Area takes great pride in working with PACE, which has exceeded all expectations and is consistently dedicated to youth. PACE seeks to help the young men understand who they are, and that they can be successful in society.

Holloway and the PACE volunteers have a positive impact on TYC youth and hope to decrease juvenile crime through community involvement.

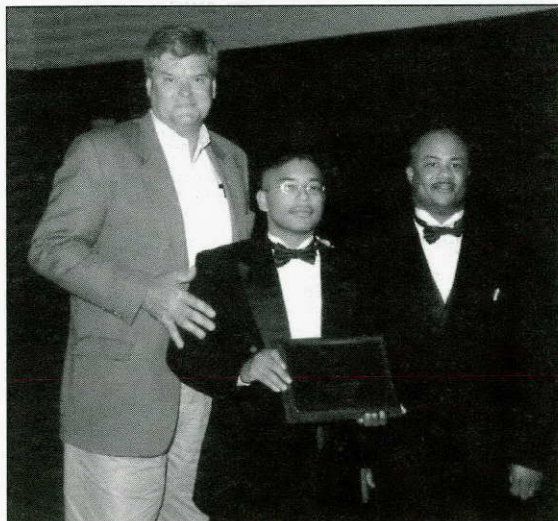
The first pilot program began in January 2001. Three successful groups of youth have completed the 17-week program. The last group graduated in June 2002 and participated in a deep-sea fishing trip, an etiquette class sponsored by Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen, and in the end a graduation ceremony.

The impact of this program was best described by PACE Outstanding Eagle recipient Steve Morgan who said, "I would have never thought that anyone could care this much about me."

~ Brenda Hall

## Volunteers with a vision

Steven Holloway, the founder of the PACE Youth Program, says that his program works to "build youth from the inside out." The PACE



PACE graduate Steve Morgan, center, is honored as Outstanding Eagle recipient during a ceremony for his accomplishments. He was presented with a plaque by TYC Executive Director Steve Robinson, left, and the Rev. Steve Holloway, right.

## Volunteer council receives donation

Director Doris Davila of the Austin-based Mentor Clinical Care, Inc. presented Houston Community Volunteer Youth Council Chairperson Gabriel Hadnot with a check for \$1,000 this past July. The Council will use the money for the emergency needs of TYC students placed in contract care within the Eastern Service Area.

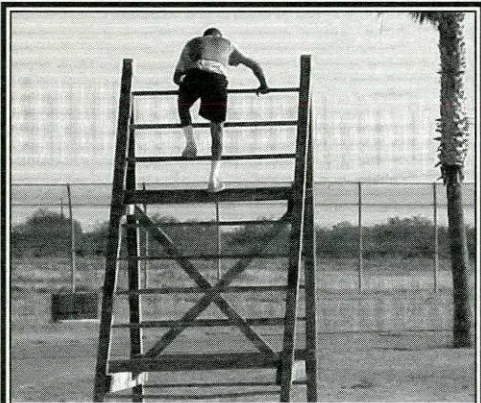
Mentor provides therapeutic care to Texas Youth Commission youth who are placed in Mentor's foster homes. The donation from Mentor will provide for such things as summer learning camps, transportation for families who cannot afford to visit their child, and lunch for students waiting to be transported to a contract program or placement.

~ Denise Kennedy

# FOCUS ON YOUTH

## Houston youth have a busy summer

Many Houston area Texas Youth Commission youth found themselves busy donating their time and resources to many worthwhile causes and events throughout the community during the course of the summer.



Evins Regional Juvenile Center youth recently competed among one another in the annual "Iron-Man" Competition. A youth, shown above, races against time as he clears part of the obstacle course at Evins. Dorms compete in the obstacle course, bicycle races, canoeing, swimming and other physical activities. Activities are structured so that all youth can compete. During the weeklong event, points are earned in each activity. Competition among the dorms was intense, but when the dust settled and points were tabulated, Dorm 3-A was this year's "Iron-Man" Champion. Aside from bragging rights, the winning dorm was treated to a pizza party, courtesy of the Evins Volunteer Council.

and assisted a local youth coalition group to register apartment residents to vote. They also provided the residents with information on voting rights.

August was "Back to School Month" at the Houston Parole Office where 35 backpacks and school supplies were donated to two local area elementary schools to assist children who could

Parole Service Assistants Trennie Hill, Christina Galindo, and Parole Officer John Henry Smith supervised more than 19 TYC youth volunteering at the Houston International Festival, where they served as ticket-takers, concession workers, and activity booth attendants. The Houston International Festival attracts hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world during its two-week span.

The summer was fast-paced with TYC youth donating over 200 pounds of non-perishable canned goods to the food pantry of St. John Missionary Baptist Church. They also participated in a cleanup sponsored by St. James United Methodist Church. In July, Parole Service Assistants and 15 TYC youth over the age of 18 took to the streets

not afford school supplies for the new school year.

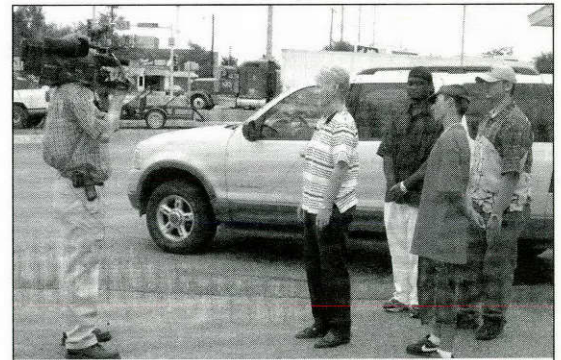
It has been a busy summer, and the Parole Services Assistants can't wait for all of the new projects that TYC youth will be involved in during the fall season.

~Denise Kennedy

## Youth donate fans in statewide effort

Youth on parole earned community service credit this summer by donating fans to help the elderly beat the heat during the TYC Parole Annual Fan Drive. In Lubbock, more than 75 fans were given to senior citizens during the month of June. Youth who contributed the fans had summer jobs and wanted to make a difference in the health and welfare of the elderly. The fans were donated to two Lubbock senior citizen centers with the help of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Eleven Amarillo area youth contributed 23 fans to enable the elderly in their community to have healthier living conditions during the hot summer months. These youth participated in association with the local KVII-TV station and Catholic Family Services. The youth increased their community awareness during the event.



Amarillo Parole Officer Nancy Jones and TYC parolees Mikko Daniels, Brian Lynch and Kelly Brown deliver fans to KVII-TV Channel 7 on July 29 and are interviewed for a news segment featuring the community service project.

Harlingen and Corpus Christi Parole collected more than 50 fans that were later distributed through the Salvation Army. The Valley has two of the top five poorest counties in the United States, with many families unable to afford air conditioning.

The fan drive is a great way for the youth to make a big difference. Being able to talk with the senior citizens helped the youth realize how

much the fans were appreciated. The youth learned an invaluable lesson, which taught them that they could create a positive attitude for themselves and others by helping people.

~ Alan Maria, John Gravell, Dale Richardson, Dee Morales

## Giddings makes it picture perfect

When Flow Becvar, Activity Director for the Country Care Plex Nursing Home saw a large painting on the outside wall of the Giddings Rejuvenation Building in Giddings, she began imagining how nice it would be if someone could paint a beautiful mural on a hallway at the County Care Plex. She understood the importance of pictures that could both relax and stimulate the minds of long term care residents at the nursing home.

Over the years, staff had tried to place pictures and decorations on the hallway wall for residents with senile dementia, but the decorations and picture frames were just too tempting for the residents to touch, and thus a potential safety hazard. As a result, the wall remained barren until Becvar contacted the people responsible for the artwork at the Rejuvenation Center, students from Giddings State School.

Butch Held, superintendent of Giddings State School, thought it would be a nice community service project to allow the students to brighten up the nursing home. Schoolteacher Stephen Cornwell selected four residents of the state school who showed artistic ability and who also were considered low risk and well behaved young men. They all gladly volunteered to participate in the project.

The students spent three weeks sketching plans for the 35-foot by 5-foot. On July 10, the three-day painting project began. The young men eagerly put to work the skills they had learned in Mr. Cornwell's class.

The mural depicts a country scene with a gentle stream, white, fluffy clouds on one end of the wall and gathering dark clouds and a rainstorm on the other end. Throughout the picture are all kinds of farm animals and wildlife. A beautiful doe and fawn are resting at one end of the mural and a bass is about to eat a bug on the other side. Ducks are flying through the clouds and turtles are resting on a log in the stream.

Even before the painting was completed, residents from the nursing home were pointing out parts of the mural they enjoyed and talking

to the state school students about what they remembered when they were younger. What was a plain wall has been transformed into a wide opened window to a beautiful world and time.

The state school students left with good feeling that they may have helped brighten someone's life and a better understanding and respect for their elders.

## TYC honors Goodwill for parolee outreach

*Editor's note: The following article, which ran in the Bryan-College Station Eagle on July 19, is reprinted in full with permission of the Eagle.*

**By Colleen Kavanagh, Eagle Staff Writer**

The Texas Youth Commission honored Goodwill Industries in Bryan on July 18 for its commitment to helping juvenile offenders on parole complete their community service.

In the past year, 14 juveniles have completed 512 hours of community service at the Goodwill Thrift Store on Texas Avenue.

Abel Gonzales, TYC's quality assurance supervisor for a 75-county region that includes Bryan-College Station, said Goodwill has given the teenagers a second chance and an opportunity to learn needed job skills.

"Statewide, it's a limited resource because a lot of counties don't want to work with kids who've had problems before," Gonzales said as he presented manager Irene Martinez with a plaque. "She's supervising youth, and it takes a commitment that many are not willing to do... it's important, and we need to recognize that."

Gonzales said he hoped that the award would encourage other employers to participate in a similar program, which is coordinated by Al Elizondo, Brazos County's contract parole officer. Elizondo said Martinez provides the juveniles with structure, guidance and support.

The parolees help Martinez and her staff hang clothes, take donations, clean the store and greet customers or donors. Martinez said she likes helping the teens.

"I have met a lot of good kids, and I've gotten a lot of hours from them," she said.

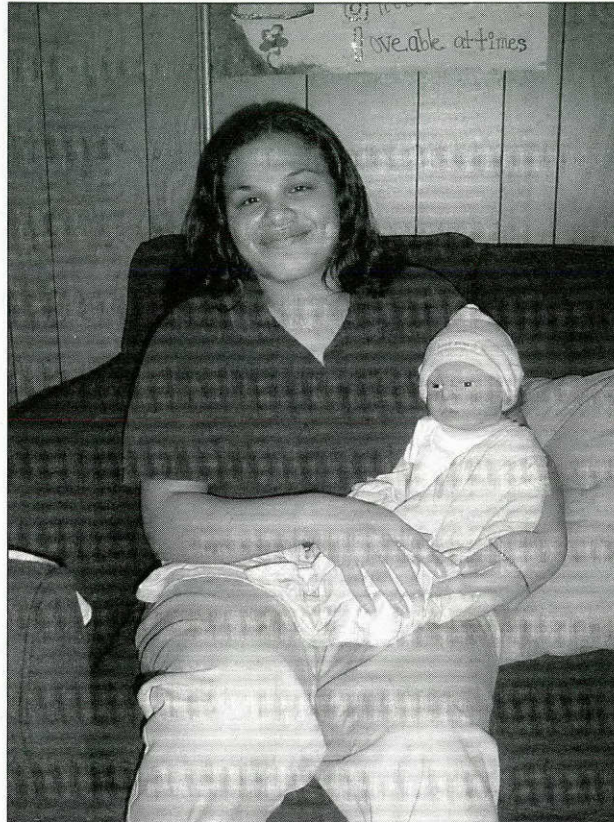
~ Colleen Kavanagh's e-mail address is [ckavanagh@theeagle.com](mailto:ckavanagh@theeagle.com)

# Girls learn realities of parenthood

Many lessons are learned in the classroom at Willoughby Halfway House. In addition to the basics—Algebra, History, and English—the academic program now teaches Child Development. Through a computerized simulation program, called *Baby, Think it Over*, the girls at Willoughby are learning some realities and responsibilities that come with being a parent.

While enrolled in the child development course, the girls are required to carry their “baby” for twenty-four hours. The “baby” is a life-size baby doll that contains a computer. The baby is programmed with more than 25 different schedules.

The students are instructed about the different needs of the baby. They are able to choose from breast-feeding or bottle-feeding. The baby has her own carrier and a diaper bag. The students are then graded based upon the computer information stored within the baby and from an original essay they



*Monica Lopez, a youth at Willoughby Halfway House, attends to her “baby” during a simulated exercise that teaches young girls parenting techniques.*

write when they have completed their simulation exercise.

Initially, most of the students are very excited to have the baby. When they are caring for the infant, however, they become shocked at the amount of time and attention required of them. The girls may experience a lack of sleep, and annoyance at having a baby demand their attention when they would rather play or relax. The students don’t realize that caring for a baby involves much more than feeding it and changing diapers. Because a baby needs nurturing, there are simulated situations that require the girls to rock or simply hold the baby.

The computer records all of the needs of the infant and the ways the student handles each situation. The computer also records neglect or abuse. The information is invaluable and raises important topics for discussion, such as “Shaken Baby Syndrome.”



Texas Youth Commission  
4900 North Lamar  
P.O. Box 4260  
Austin, Texas, 78765