

NON-CIRCULATING
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Journal

A Quarterly Publication of
the Texas Youth Commission

Winter 2003

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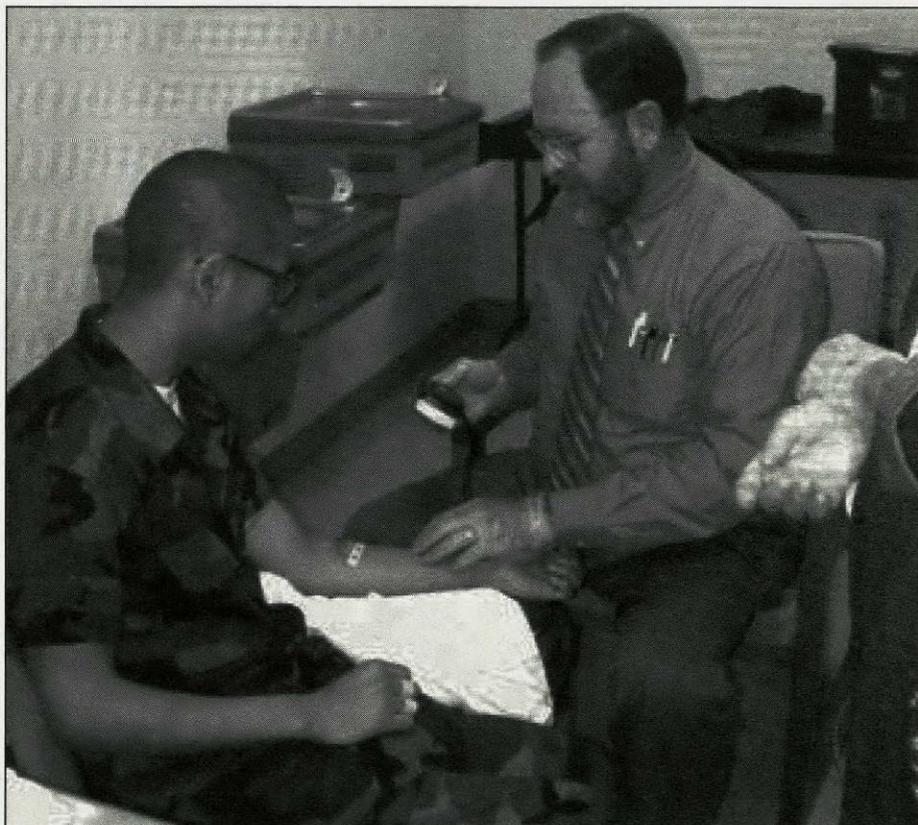
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Tattoo removal project becomes reality

Members of the Vernon Victory Field Community Advisory Council dreamed for two years of implementing a tattoo removal program on the campus of the correctional facility.



Dr. Len Ouzts, right, takes a picture of the tattoo on the arm of a Victory Field cadet before beginning the process to remove the tattoo.

“We want to do all that we can to ensure that the youth at Victory Field have every opportunity to become positive and productive citizens,” said Doug Hill, president of the non-profit council. In April 2002, the dream became reality when Victory Field cadets began getting their gang-affiliated tattoos removed.

The council needed two things before starting the program – money and a licensed medical doctor that was willing to donate many hours of his or her time. Len Ouzts, M.D., made finding a doctor easy. The Vernon

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The TYC Journal is published in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Submit articles by e-mail to 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.

radiologist, and a council member since 1997, agreed to donate his medical expertise.

Funding for the infrared coagulator machine and other needed items came from a local anonymous donor. With these resources in place, the council began to work with Texas Youth Commission Corrections Specialist Jeannette Burke in Austin to implement program guidelines.

The council decided its primary purpose was to provide cadets of Victory Field with a safe, medically acceptable option for the removal of offensive, socially unacceptable tattoos. They also decided that the same opportunity would be offered to any TYC youth outside of Victory Field who live in Wilbarger County.

Superintendent Bobby King said the program "provides a great opportunity for our young men to undo what they've done in the past and get a fresh start in life." He added that Victory Field is grateful for the support and assistance provided by its community in making this project a success.

Interest in the project began five years ago when tattoo removal services could not be located to help TYC youth. Burke, who works in Austin, participated on the Attorney General's multi-agency task force to submit a grant to the Governor's Office-Criminal Justice Division. The Governor's Office funded the purchase of tattoo removal machines for 14 Texas sites that are operated by non-profit organizations interested in overseeing tattoo removal services. In 2000, Austin-based tattoo removal services became available to TYC youth as well as members of the community. Once the youth were able to access services through this community-based program, efforts began in TYC facilities to start an institution-based program.

After utilizing the Wichita Falls community-based tattoo removal services, the Vernon Victory Field Community Advisory Council implemented the first institution-based program. Several other community resource councils associated with the Texas Youth Commission – at Giddings, Mart, and Hamilton – are working to combine their resources to purchase a tattoo removal machine so that services can be made available to their youth. These communities are currently developing partnerships with local physicians who are willing to volunteer their professional services in the program.

Other councils interested in creating a tattoo removal program should contact Burke in TYC's Central Office.

~ Jean Bice

Around the Agency

K-9 unit expands statewide

The Security Operations Department within the Juvenile Corrections Division expanded its K-9 Unit this winter, providing additional



The K-9 talent and their handlers showed their readiness for work during the graduation ceremony at the Hamilton State School. From left are George Cole with "Iris", Andrew Mackenzie with "Kera," Deputy Executive Director Dwight Harris, Kevin Mahr with "Herta", Jarrod Jordan with "Bailey", and TYC Security Operations Director Melody Vidaurri.

narcotic detection services to the agency. The K-9 Training Academy is based at the Hamilton State School under the supervision and instruction of Kevin Mahr.

"We are very proud of the new K-9 Unit and want to thank all of those involved in the development of this program," says Security Operations Director Melody Vidaurri.

In November 2002, the first K-9

graduation ceremony was held at the Hamilton facility. The new K-9 teams are divided into four areas of the state.

Andrew MacKenzie and "Kera" provide narcotic detection services to the Northern Area, including the institutions in Gainesville and Corsicana, and the Cottrell, Willoughby, and McFadden Ranch Halfway Houses.

The Western Area is covered by Jarrod Jordan and "Bailey", encompassing the institutions in Brownwood, San Saba, Coke County, Sheffield, and Pyote, and the Schaeffer Halfway House.

Kevin Mahr and "Herta" were assigned to the Central Area that includes the facilities in Bryan, Giddings, Marlin, Mart, and the Turman Halfway House.

George Cole and "Iris" cover the Southern Area, covering the institutions in Beaumont, Edinburg and Crockett, and the York, Ayres, and Tamayo Halfway Houses.

Specialized caseload thrives in Dallas

Five youth from the female caseload provided guests with tours and information explaining the specialized programs at the newly relocated Dallas District Office this winter. Parole Officer Shalonda Richardson-Grant supervises the "Female Teens First" program that focuses on the unique challenges faced by girls on parole.

Grant explains, "Sometimes people forget that the young ladies we work

with need guidance. I feel that guidance and a good role model are tools they need to help them make reasonable decisions.”

The girls have begun supporting one another by listening and giving helpful advice during a monthly support group. The group has empowered the youth to become more independent. Guest speakers have provided educational development presentations. There have been seminars on subjects such as skin care and beauty, exercise and fitness, and sexually transmitted diseases. The response to the groups has been so great that they were recently increased to twice monthly.



At the Dallas District Office Open House, Sherria Wooten, Cassy Batten-Longona, Lindsey Edwards, Sarina Brantley, Penelope Cox and Shalonda Richardson-Grant explain the benefits of a specialized caseload for girls.

In November, a special baby shower was given to several of the parolees who were pregnant. The purpose of the shower was not only to give needed supplies for parenthood, but also to emphasize the responsibility of having a child and the importance of motherhood. The Dallas Community Advisory Council sponsored the shower that was coordinated by Grant and Lori Horton, the “Parents as Teachers” Coordinator. Horton works closely with Grant and the female caseload by providing com-

munity referrals and child development information.

The Dallas District Office shared information about the specialized female program during its open house on November 1 at their new location on Mockingbird Lane. Administrator of Parole Christi Mallette and Parole Supervisor Diana Goodwin welcomed guests to the new office.

Elmerine Jenkins and Denise Watson, parole service assistants, discussed the food and clothing pantry and explained how youth on parole participate in community service projects. Horton explained how her “Parents as Teachers” program provides services to youth that have young children.

Executive Director Steve Robinson praised the Dallas District Office for its professionalism and unique programs, including a specialized program for emotionally disturbed youth, sex offenders, and sentenced offenders. Also in attendance were TYC Board Member Patsy Reed Guest, Kelvin Bass, from the office of Senator Royce West, District 23, and TYC Director of Juvenile Corrections Paula Morelock.

~ Vickie White

Cottrell House hosts basketball tournament

Cottrell House held its 4th annual statewide “Youth 20 and Under” basketball tournament November 9-10 at the Pleasant Oaks Recreation Center in Dallas.

Local radio station K104 employees kicked off the tournament by competing against the Cottrell House staff. The staff played a hard game; however, K104 prevailed by four points.

Tournament participants came from

Ayres Halfway House, Hamilton State School, West Texas State School, Cottrell Halfway House, San Saba State School, Dallas County Youth Village, and McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility.

Several hundred parents and supporters attended the tournament to show their support for the youth. Many fans were related to students from the West Texas State School. The parents held up signs and sang cheers throughout the competition.

The teams exhibited hard work and great attitudes. Each player demonstrated sportsmanship, leadership, and dedication to the game.

Hamilton State School won first place. West Texas State School took second place and San Saba State School was awarded third place. Scottie Reece of Hamilton State School was voted Most Valuable Player. The Sportsmanship awards were awarded to West Texas State School and San Saba State School. The Character Award went to the team from Ayres House. Congratulations to all the teams that participated in the tournament.

The youth, staff, volunteers, and families of TYC made this tournament the best ever. This collaborative effort is a fun way to teach our youth how to engage in pro-social competition, using the skills taught through our Resocialization program.

Rhode Island educators visit Marlin

In November, Superintendent Jerome Parsee of the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit, along with the administrators and staff of the facility's Education Department, hosted visitors from the Rhode Island Training School, a correctional center housing more than 200 incarcerated youth.

Educators Dr. Arlene Chorney and Lisa Trainers journeyed to Texas to familiarize themselves with the TYC Resocialization Program, which was recently acquired by the Rhode Island facility. Several central office administrators including Dr. Deborah Nance, Superintendent of Education, Billie Flippen, Manager of Curriculum and Accountability, Tony Kneupper, Manager of Federal Program and Technology Education, and Patrick Clynch, Treatment Specialist in the Specialized Treatment and Case Management Department, joined them.

Marlin Principal Willie Williams and Assistant Principal Shirley Young provided the guests with a comprehensive tour of the Marlin facility, which was followed by a luncheon. Chorney and Trainers were complimentary about the efficient implementation of the Resocialization program throughout the Marlin unit. The Rhode Islanders also expressed their appreciation for the Texas hospitality shown to them during their visit.

Programs at Work

Lives are changed at McFadden Ranch

This article by writer Linda Taylor originally ran in the Keller Citizen. The article is reprinted here with permission in its entirety.

The remote 25 acres of McFadden Ranch, northeast of Roanoke, are a far cry from the large city where Raul grew up. The 18-year-old, however, who was sentenced to a TYC facility because of substance-abuse problems, speaks appreciatively of his current surroundings and their effect on his life.

"My way of thinking has changed," said Raul. "Now I understand that what I do affects a lot of people. I'm really thankful I had this chance."

Raul is one of 48 male youth between the ages of 10 and 18 who struggle daily to overcome their past mistakes while serving time at TYC's McFadden Ranch. Although the sprawling brick ranch-style structure and nearby buildings, located east of U.S. 377 and south of Farm Road 1171, don't look like a correctional facility, the young men and boys who live here don't have any of the freedoms other kids their age take for granted.

Rebuilding Lives

"Most of the boys at McFadden Ranch come from families that are in chaos," said Juvenile Correctional Officer Sandra Lee. All are chemically

dependent. McFadden Ranch is unique within the TYC system because youth come to the facility directly from the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit without any transition time in a secured facility. "We focus on resocialization and the 12-Step program."

The four cornerstones of resocialization are: correctional therapy, education, discipline training, and work. Another important part of each resident's rehabilitation is family involvement. "If the families don't get help, then we are sending them right back to the same environment," Lee said.

According to Lee, every activity at McFadden Ranch is a potential learning experience. "This is the most rehabilitative program in TYC," Lee said. "There are a lot of success stories here, partly because of our after-care program. Before a boy leaves, he is set up with a sponsor in his home town."

In addition to learning to follow rules, staying away from criminal activity, and developing positive attitudes toward themselves and others, residents are required to participate in community service projects. Some boys join a speaker team that presents programs on prevention at area schools, targeting fifth- and sixth-graders. Other community services include adopting a family at Christmas and cooking a meal for them, Adopt-a-Highway projects, and walking dogs at a Grapevine animal shelter. Youth also participate in a number of one-time projects, such as setting up for meetings or civic events.

Selective Facility

"The boys who spend time at McFadden Ranch are the lucky ones. There are a maximum of 48 boys at the facility, and they must meet strict crite-

ria to even be considered for placement there”, said Program Administrator Jimmie Prince.

“First we look at their risk level, then the type of crime they committed,” Prince said. “We only take boys who are a medium to low risk and have not committed a violent crime. We are very selective about who comes here.” Although space is at a premium at most state juvenile facilities, McFadden occasionally has empty beds because no additional boys fit the qualifications to be admitted, speaking to the scrutiny of the selection process.

Volunteer Impact

Verlyn “Doug” Douglas, a retired federal employee, has been a volunteer at McFadden Ranch for seven years. “I heard about McFadden and started out working a couple of hours, one night a week,” the Lewisville resident said. “It wasn’t long before I was hooked. Now I put in at least 40 hours a week and enjoy every minute of it. I strongly believe in this program.”

Douglas is one of about 30 volunteers at the facility. They provide one-on-one mentoring for the residents and also help arrange for activities not provided by TYC. Douglas has a laid-back manner and a non-judgmental attitude. It is not unusual for him to keep in touch with boys after they are released from McFadden.

“Several years ago, one of the boys I had gotten really close to was released and moved to Minnesota,” Douglas said. “For the first year, he called me every Sunday, then the calls tapered off to once a month, and then a couple of times a year. This past spring, he called to invite me to his wedding, so my wife and I drove to Minnesota.”

Douglas said that he has established

a spirit of camaraderie with many of the boys they have never had with an adult. “These boys have to have a chance to play because they didn’t have it when they were younger,” Douglas said. “The streets have raised many of them. Trust in others is usually absent when they get here.”

Anyone interested in volunteering at McFadden Ranch can contact volunteer coordinator Connie Redford at 817-378-2127.

Personal Stories

The boys who arrive at McFadden for treatment come from a wide variety of backgrounds, lifestyles, and economic groups. Substance abuse isn’t limited to any particular segment of society, and each resident is unique in his needs, abilities, hopes, and dreams.

Seventeen-year-old Robert comes from one of Texas’ larger cities. He has an older brother who is a freshman in college, and they both were reared by a single mother. “My mom was the first one in her family to finish high school,” Robert said. “My brother was the second, and now I am the third because I have my GED.” Soft-spoken but articulate, Robert has a firm handshake and is an example of how far McFadden Ranch can take its residents. Robert said he is aware of where his previous lifestyle could have taken him. More important, he has developed a sense of respect for others and for himself. He plans to attend a trade school, so he will be able to support himself and go to college.

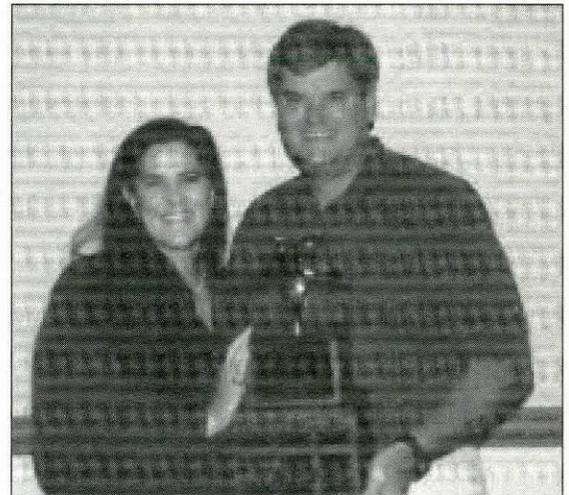
Raul is one of seven children, and although environment played a large role in his problems, he doesn’t blame others. He said McFadden Ranch has been a good, positive experience for him because he has learned to examine

how his actions affect others. Raul, who is outgoing and courteous, is also planning to go to a trade school where he can learn carpentry. His goal is to build his own house someday. "It won't happen soon," he said. "I will have to take a lot of little steps to get there."

Both men will be leaving McFadden Ranch soon to try once more to be successful on the outside. They will take with them a number of skills and tools they acquired during their time at McFadden. "I victimized myself before," Robert said. "Life is a struggle, but it's not what happens to me that counts most. The important thing is how I handle what happens."

San Saba honored for family involvement

During the August Administrator's Conference held in Austin, San Saba State School was awarded the second annual "Get FIT" award recognizing the extent to which "Families are Involved in Treatment" at Texas Youth Commission facilities. Superintendent Marian Deans proudly accepted the award on behalf of her facility from Executive Director Steve Robinson.



San Saba State School Superintendent Marian Deans accepts the "Get FIT" award from Executive Director Steve Robinson.



Project Rio-Y alumni help new students

Former graduates of the Project RIO-Y classes at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center in Edinburg are coming back as leaders to help new students in the job-training course. Project RIO-Y youth learn a variety of skills that will help them out in the working world. Classes cover a variety of topics, such as preparing for interviews, job searching, and other skills important in getting and keeping a job. As Project RIO-Y Coordinator David Sanchez observes, Jacob Keller, right, a former Project Rio student, instructs a class on how to properly fill out employment applications.

San Saba was one of six programs nominated for the award. The selection committee was composed of Central Office staff who choose the program that best captured the agency's vision for family involvement. The facilities were rated on innovative interventions, customer friendly service, and high rate of participation involving families in the treatment of their children.

San Saba State School was recognized for its wide range of innovative parent/youth programs such as quarterly facility-wide parenting seminars offered on topics of Resocialization, parole success, parenting strategies and educa-

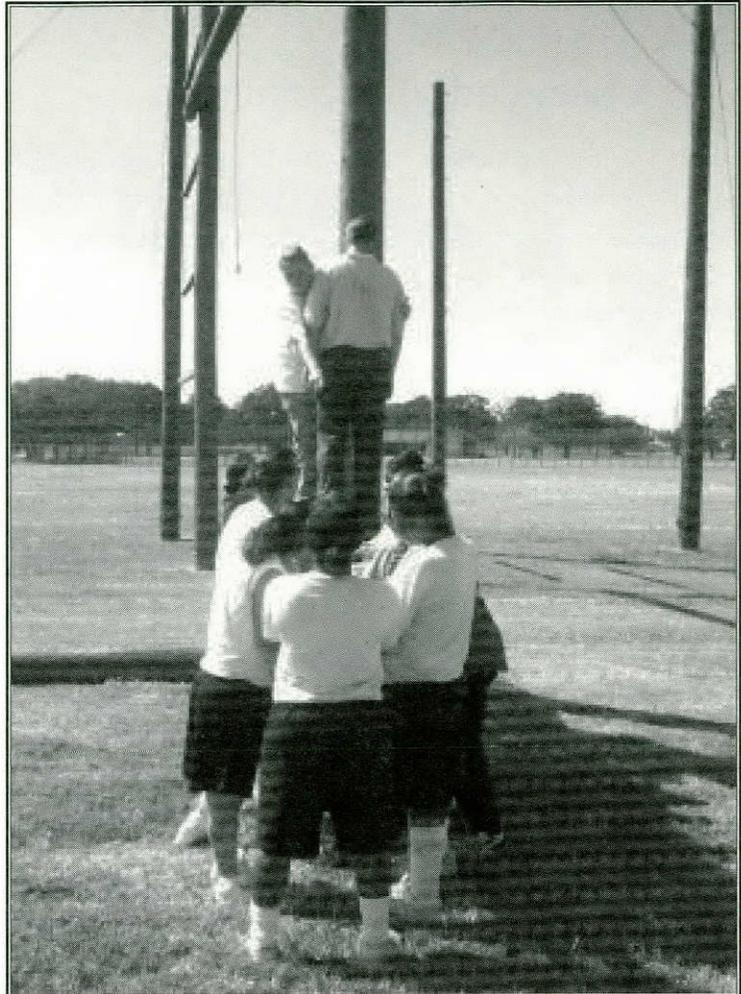
tional opportunities. Their Sex Offender Treatment Program hosts quarterly family seminars, while their Chemical Dependency Treatment Program hosts family seminars twice a year.

In addition to these activities, the facility has been involved in the Fatherhood Initiative Workgroup since its inception. Administration is optimistic that San Saba State School will be the first TYC institution to implement a specialized fatherhood curriculum.

San Saba caseworkers routinely conduct family conferences and/or therapy sessions as well as encourage families to attend special events hosted by the facility. The entire staff supports family involvement and recognizes the impacts it makes in the youth's treatment success. San Saba works closely with its Community Resource Council to provide financial assistance to families when financial limitations prevent them from visiting. They also work to maintain a "family friendly" attitude at all times to include extending visitation when appropriate and providing multiple opportunities for families to become involved in positive experiences with their children.

San Saba staff are open and routinely invite feedback from families. An organized system involving use of parent suggestion cards called "Catch Us At Our Best/Help Us Be Our Best" supports San Saba's efforts for excellence.

Robinson praised the San Saba State School and other nominees for their accomplishments in this area. He shared an example of the dedication and commitment of San Saba that made the facility stand out as the winner this year. A group of young fathers



Giddings State School Caseworkers Loretta Triesch and Thomas Talbott and Juvenile Corrections Officer Alonia Moore show students how to properly perform a "trust fall" exercise. The trust fall is the final challenge in a series of exercises designed to help students learn to trust one another and be trustworthy.

in the San Saba facility were taken to the local library to familiarize themselves with the library setup, to learn more about children's literature, and to practice reading aloud. Later that week, they each were selected to read a favorite children's Christmas story and tape-recorded themselves reading it. The tapes were then sent to their children as a surprise gift!

~ Dagmar Poteet

Teen Read Week observed at Corsicana

In October, the youth at Corsicana Residential Treatment Center enjoyed Teen Read 2002 as they interpreted newspaper articles and editorial cartoons, and listened to a presentation by the editor of the local newspaper, *The Corsicana Daily Sun*.

Teen Read Week activities impressed both students and teachers as the youth gained new skills in reading comprehension. Students also learned about fact versus opinion, main ideas, generalizations, conclusions, cause and effect, and predicting outcomes. At the conclusion of the activities, students received tangible rewards for their efforts.

Students read newspapers focusing on current events in the local, national and international arenas. They were asked to make a list of topics and events depicted in each arena, paying special attention to descriptive phrases such as, "We will smoke them out of their holes," or "Sadam Hussein is thought to be fishing for...." From this list, students generated ideas for their own editorial cartoons.

Students critiqued letters to the editor and identified those with conclusions that were based on facts and those based on opinion. The young men interpreted editorial cartoons.

Learning activities included writing an editorial, writing a letter to the editor using facts or opinions to make their point, and drawing an editorial cartoon that depicts the students' opinion on a current event topic.

Guest speaker Raymond Linex, editor of *The Corsicana Daily Sun*, provided two presentations using newspapers for improving reading skills focusing specifically on editorials, letters to the editor, and editorial car-

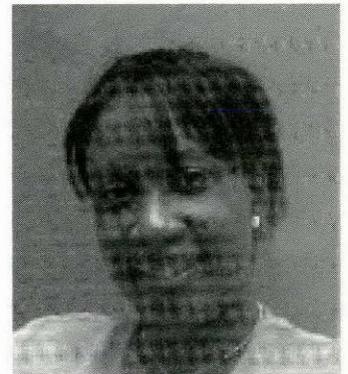
toons.

Appreciation is expressed to Linex and Corsicana's Education Department for their support and assistance with this year's Teen Read Week activities.

From the Front Line

An open letter to TYC and all of its supporters

I am sending this letter to all in the Texas Youth Commission system, because I want everyone to know how wonderful the staff and volunteers



are at the McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility.

On a recent Saturday, there were approximately 850 people gathered on our campus yard. Recreation moved from section to section with competitive games for students and parents. Volunteers, Council members and staff walked around all day taking pictures of families. The concessions stands had to be knocked down and put on traveling gators, and vans picked up parents from bus stations, hotels, and from as far away as Houston and Dallas.

Not once did I here anyone complain. I cannot count the times I had staff and volunteers say to me, "Whatever you need, just let me know." It makes me proud to say that I work with such a great group of people.

I never looked at registration; Patricia Price did an excellent job of handling that. Virginia Brown is and always will be the best assistant anyone can have. Mari Jones and Gary Rosenbaum ran back and forth to Waco to replenish items that we'd run out of. Our student workers, Brian Robinson, Benito Gonzales, Kenneth Hardeman, and Randy Duprey and Ayonnie Greer, made sure we did not have to lift anything heavier than a twenty dollar bill. They worked their hearts out, and never stopped smiling the entire time. Demetrius Waples picked up a group from Dallas at the last minute, to make sure a kid's parent got here, and ended up taking a much larger group back after the festival.

The Star Team members were true stars and kept everyone in order. There were 90 extra staff members on campus that day; many of them did not have to be here, but they came to help out. I saw everyone working together, and as hot as it was, all were smiling.

Sometimes, we don't realize when we're sitting on a gold mine. After the Saturday September 28, 2002 Festival Day, I know that the staff and volunteers here are a true gold mine. Thanks for everything; it could not have happened without each and every one of you.

~ Melisa Perkins, Community Relations Coordinator

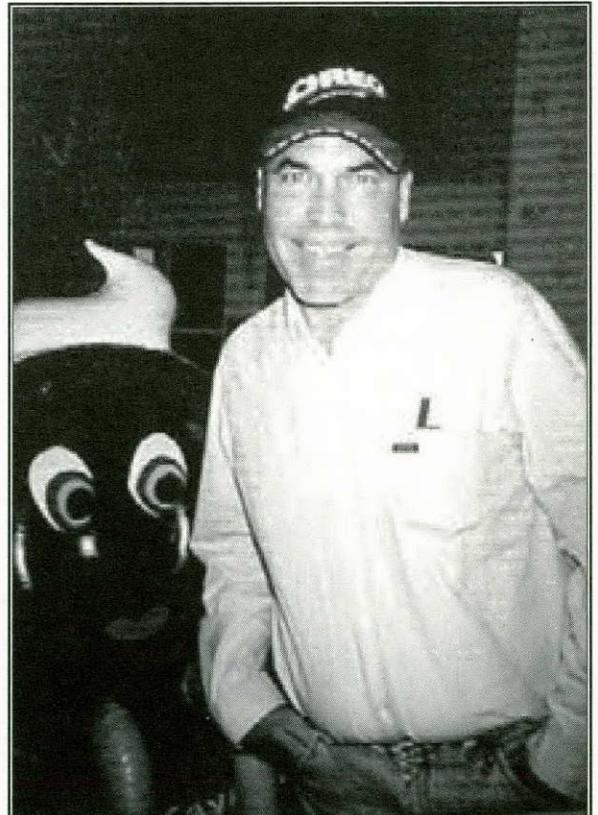
Our Staff

Crockett employees recognized

Many officials from TYC's Central Office in Austin were on hand recently to congratulate the staff of Crockett State School during the annual staff appreciation barbecue. Employees and their families were treated to a delicious meal of brisket, sausage, and chicken with all the trimmings in the gazebo park just behind the facility.

A total of 151 safety awards were given to staff that completed one year, five years, and ten years of service without having to expend any sick time.

Several staff received an award for being chosen as their department's outstanding employee. Dorm life staff that received the award included Sonja Hulett, Wesley Mullens, Zenitta McKnight, Curtis Murphy, Catha Sandles, and John Lockhart. Caseworkers that



Don Bratton, a correctional officer at Brownwood State School, enjoys his grand prize vacation to New York City after being selected as one of 23 winners of the Oreo Cookie Essay Contest. He poses here with the Oreo mascot. While in New York, Bratton and his family stayed at the historical Roosevelt Hotel, and traveled to Chelsea Market's Pier for an awards reception, where the first Oreo cookie was made 90 years ago.

received the award were John Shroyer, Martha Mosshart, Iantha Coleman, Cristal Scott, and Jometria Ware. Education staff that received the award were Karen McKnight, Johnny Hellums, and Helen Bear. Support services staff that received the award were Lola Lamb, James Frazer, Yvonne Kravchuk, Lisa Allbright, Michael Anderson, and Nelda Bobbitt.

Those receiving awards for Overall Outstanding Employee were Curtis Murphy, Joel Taylor, John Shroyer, Johnny Hellums, James Frazer, Gwen Tolliver, Gary Johns and Jan Lowery. Gary Johns, facility trainer, was chosen as Employee of the Year.

The appreciation barbecue is a yearly event to honor all staff of Crockett State School who give their time and talents in the rehabilitation process of our youth.

San Saba helps fellow staff

Two members of the San Saba State School family recently received special assistance from the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation. Donna Harbin, a teacher's aide at San Saba State School, and Sarah Lindsey, a former juvenile correctional officer, both received financial support from this nonprofit



Donna Harbin receives a check from the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation from Superintendent Marian Deans.

organization to assist them and their families during recent difficult times.

Superintendent Marian Deans was reminded of the potential support available through this foundation by a friendly email from Carole Mahr, an employee at the Hamilton State School. Mahr was saddened by the news of the accidental death of dedicated Correctional Officer, Robert Harbin, and was confident the CPOF could be of assistance to his wife, Donna Harbin, and their sons. Mahr referred Deans to Stephanie Barone, Catastrophic Assistance Coordinator for the State of Texas, who was extremely helpful and caring through the entire process. The application was quickly completed for Harbin, and assistance was later requested for Lindsey who is recovering from a serious illness.

The Correctional Peace Officers Foundation is an organization that offers monetary assistance to an officer or staff member of a correctional facility who has suffered a catastrophic illness, injury, or event that has drained family resources. As employees of a correctional facility, we are grateful that such an organization exists to assist our colleagues when additional support is so desperately needed.

We are also thankful for the helpful concern shown by Mahr, our fellow Texas Youth Commission employee. Her assistance and direction made it all possible. The folks at the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation are true points of light to our TYC family.

~ Dagmar Poteet

Evins employees honored

An awards ceremony and barbecue honoring outstanding Evins Regional Juvenile Center employees for fiscal year 2002 was held in November. Superintendent Rey Gomez was joined by Executive Director Steve Robinson to present the departmental employee awards. Honored as the Evins Outstanding Employee of the Year was Rosie Moreno, who was also selected the Outstanding Clerical Staff Member for 2002.

Moreno, a receptionist and secretary, was noted for her outstanding work in coordinating the local State Employee Charitable Campaign and volunteer work with the Employee Relations Committee. The Evins State Employee Charitable Campaign netted over \$17,000 last year, the highest amount among TYC institutions.

Other outstanding employees honored as Departmental Employees of the Year were Recreation Director Javier Medina, Trainer Nancy Salinas, Caseworker Edna Barrera, maintenance staff Jesse Esparza, Teacher David Cross, LVN Jesse Chavez, Teacher Aide Leonor Banda, Food Services staff Jorge Aleman, and juvenile correctional officers Esperanza Molina, Wilbur King, Israel Saenz, Danny Garcia, Orlando Zepeda.

All awards were based on votes cast by fellow employees. Employees were also honored for attendance, tenure, and Fire and Safety Committee participation. The most tenured Evins employee was Elita Ellison, administrative technician III, who has served TYC for 20 years.

~ Raul Arredondo

Gainesville caseworker takes up tough sport

If Ivette Young has it her way, she will be part of a group of women making tracks in our history books some day.



Young, an 11-year veteran caseworker with the Texas Youth Commission at the Gainesville State School, will be joining a group of about 60 other young women playing professional football with the Dallas Diamonds. She will start as an outside linebacker and defensive captain of the kick-off return team.

Young, a mother of two, said, "at first, my husband was apprehensive, but backs me up 100 percent, and without the backing of my family I would not be

able to do it this.”

Young believes that by participating in a traditionally male competitive contact sport, she will prove to herself and others that when you can achieve when you set goals and work towards them.

Young said, “In high school I participated in basketball, softball, track & field, volleyball, soccer, you-name-it, but never football. When I was growing up we were told that football was for a man, that ‘girls don’t do that.’ Well, I want to prove them wrong,” she said.

Young added that she hopes that “one day, my grandchildren can see that Grandma paved the way for women to play football.”

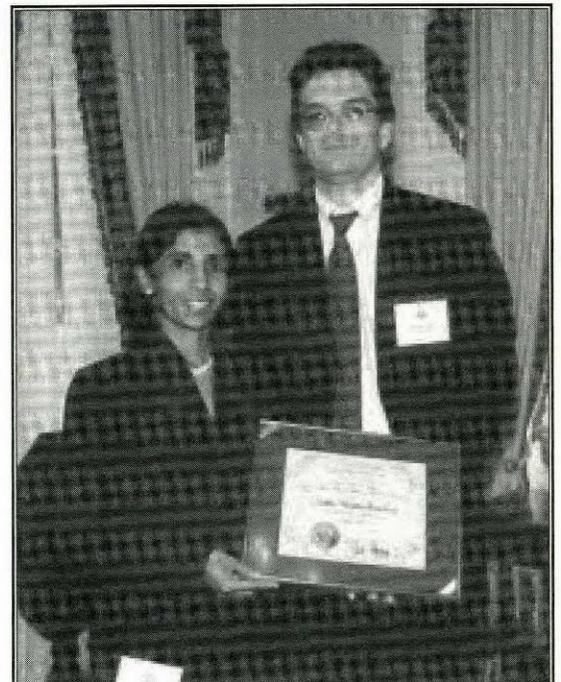
~ Fidel F. Garcia



Hidalgo County Sheriff Enrique Escalon presents Sylvia Martinez, TYC Parole Supervisor for the Harlingen/Corpus Christi Parole Office, with the Master Peace Officer award from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. Martinez, who holds a reserve peace officer license with the Hidalgo County Sheriffs Department, began her law enforcement career 22 years ago in the small town of Elsa, and is one of the elite female officers throughout the state. She continues to provide service to the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Department as a specialized deputy with the Civil and Warrant division.

TIPC coordinator receives award

The Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission (TIPC) honored Latha Ramachandran of Texas Youth Commission's Staff Development Department at a reception in the Governor's Mansion on November 14, 2002.



Brian K. Guthrie (right) is shown presenting Latha Ramachandran with an award for excellence.

Brian K. Guthrie, representing Governor Rick Perry, presented Ramachandran with an award for “excellence as a new State of Texas Incentive and Productivity Commission coordinator.”

Though busy with myriad tasks in her position as Staff Development's Operations Manager, Ramachandran has put much effort into building interest in the Incentive and Productivity Program and increasing the number of ideas and suggestions from employees.

Ramachandran is responsible for publicizing the program, receiving the

suggestions, processing them through designated evaluators and presenting them to the TIPC board for consideration. Employees' winning suggestions receive cash awards up to \$5,000, depending on the amount of savings realized after implementation. According to Susan Davis, Interim Executive Director of TIPC, suggestions from TYC employees netted savings of \$37,019.

Savings generated during fiscal year 2002 by employee suggestions from all state agencies totaled \$544,000, bringing total savings for the lifetime of the program to just under \$20 million.

~ Margaret Youngquist

Welcome back soldier

The Eastern Service Area happily welcomed back one of its own in November, when Parole Officer Gerald Aubrey returned to the Houston Parole Officer after 13 months of active duty in the U.S. military. Aubrey was called to active duty on October 2, 2001, shortly after the September 11th tragedy.

Aubrey is a member of the Texas Air National Guard, Security Forces and Specialized Training Unit. Back in Houston, Aubrey was treated to a continental breakfast and a special presentation in appreciation for his service to our country. He also received a letter of appreciation from Executive Director Steve Robinson and a special portrait of the Twin Towers signed by his TYC co-workers.

~ Delphine DeCuir

Volunteers in Action

Former NFL player visits youth

On October 30, former NFL football player Mike McCoy shared his personal testimony of faith while autographing collector cards for youth at Brownwood State School.

McCoy played football for eleven years with the Packers, Raiders and Giants. At the state school in Brownwood, McCoy delivered an inspiring message of hope and freedom during a religious service, which many youth chose to attend.

Prior to playing professional football, McCoy said he attended church every Sunday, but the reason he attended back then was out of fear, superstition and trying to please other people.



Angie Schum (far left), Chaplain Mike Miles (center), and Mike McCoy pause for a picture after McCoy spoke to youth at Brownwood State School.

McCoy shared how he has benefited from a personal faith in God.

Now retired from the NFL, McCoy spends much of his time traveling and speaking to teenagers about his belief in Christ and the changes this has made in his life.

Angelia Schum, Community Advisory Council member and Chaplaincy Team Leader at Brownwood, facilitated the program.

~ Melissa Burney

Brownwood Council stays busy

Community Advisory Council members and volunteers have been involved in numerous activities year-round at Brownwood State School to bring the community, the youth and their families together.

Two successful fundraisers for the non-profit organization have been taking and selling family photos during visitation, and hosting a Brownwood Reunion food booth. The money raised from these fundraisers has been used for special youth activities, and to provide

transportation and lodging so that seven families could visit their children at Brownwood.

The Council sponsored summer cookouts that began in April and ended the second week of August. Council members and volunteers work together for 13 consecutive Tuesday nights to host the cookouts, which are the highlight of each year's activities. Students are served two freshly grilled hamburgers, complete with all the trimmings. Many staff members bring additional treats, such as homemade desserts, for the youth to enjoy at these cookouts.

In May and November, Council members served refreshments to youth and their families at graduation receptions. Youth from the culinary arts class at Unit II prepared the cookies. The Council paid conference registration fees for two volunteer award winners.

The Council recently competed in the Brownwood Chamber of Commerce Cook-off, serving beans, brisket and rolls to local citizens. October's activities included judging the youth's dorm decorations at Halloween. The Christmas Committee met and planned holiday activities and fundraisers, such as the annual direct-appeal letter.

~ Melissa Burney

Mariachi band serenades students

"Mariachi Palenque" from Pecos performed in September for West Texas State School students and staff as part of their *Dies y Seis de Septiembre* celebration.

The West Texas State School food service department prepared a special meal of enchiladas, chile verde, and fajitas with tortillas in celebration of the holiday. The West Texas Community Resource Council sponsored the Mariachi band and the



Community Relations Coordinator Melissa Burney, at left, prepares to escort Halloween decorations judges Shirley Foxcroft, council member, Kim King, Unit II administrative technician, and Paul Coghlan, employee volunteer and assistant food service manager on their tour of the dorms.

Facility Improvement Committee helped organize the event.

The West Texas Community Resource Council is a non-profit, charitable organization that promotes volunteer involvement and special programs benefiting youth in the care of West Texas State School.

Memorial service held at Corsicana

In September, a volunteer-led memorial service was held in the Corsicana Residential Treatment Center gazebo to honor the mother of one of the facility's students. The service helped the young girl, who was unable to attend her mother's funeral, with the grieving process.

The Corsicana facility relies entirely on community volunteers for all religious services, and this was certainly an extraordinary manner in which volunteers have assisted youth.

Dr. Mark Luera, senior minister of First Christian Church in Corsicana, led the service with assistance from Rev. B.F. Risinger, senior minister of the local First Baptist Church. Employees Du'Ane Yancy, administrative technician, and Dotty Luera, community relations coordinator, provided special music for the service.

The student, herself, also sang a song of remembrance in honor of her mother. The Community Advisory Council provided beautiful flowers for the service and refreshments for a small reception afterwards. Staff and volunteers attended and expressed their condolences to the student.

Dr. Luera met with the student prior to the service and provided pastoral counseling. The student shared her

grief and also enjoyed telling of remembered conversations and favorite childhood memories.

~ Dotty Luera

San Saba holds a fall festival

It would have taken more than a downpour to deter the Fall Festival spirits of the youth at San Saba State School, especially since the soldiers from the 21st Cavalry Brigade at Fort Hood were coming. The only thing the rain did deter were the helicopters in which the Brigade was planning to arrive.

Instead, the soldiers arrived by van and Humvee. The youth were treated to candy during the Festival's games. The most popular activity, however, was sitting in the Humvee and listening to the soldiers explain how the vehicle is used in missions. Even in the pouring rain, no one missed his chance to check out the Army vehicle.

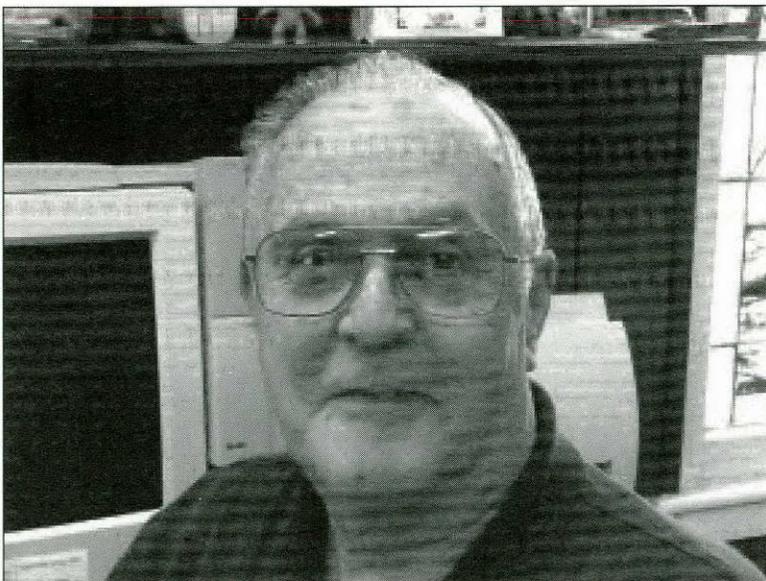
The San Saba Volunteer Council supplied hamburgers for lunch. By day's end, the weather had cleared, and the soldiers returned to their Post. Everyone is looking forward to the next Fall Festival and especially to the return of the soldiers from the 21st Cavalry Brigade.

Editor's Note: TYC volunteer John Shero wrote the following guest column. Shero is the Pastor of 2nd & Wallace Church of Christ in San Saba. He currently serves as the President of the San Saba Community Resource Council, and is Member-at-Large of the State Volunteer Resource Council for Texas Youth.

We can make a difference

My assignment was, "What does volunteering mean to me?" At the age of 73, my answer may be different. First of all, it is the opportunity to pay on a debt I can never liquidate. Looking back on life, I see a vast crowd who stepped forward at just the right moment and took the time to invest in my life. They encouraged me to step out and take a risk and to learn that by giving we personally receive far more. I know I was undeserving of such blessings!

These mentors, both young and old have become deep and personal friends. Second, one begins to see that through going beyond what was expected and volunteering, you become a happier person. Not only do you feel better about yourself, there is added to your joy the joy of the one being helped. This



could be multiplied just as far as you are willing to reach: two, ten, one hundred! There is no limit.

The third lesson came in Corsicana between 1982 and 1990. There were no volunteers to tech Bible Study at TYC. A group of men was organized and encouraged to commit themselves to this task. In addition to the service they rendered, it was thrilling to see the pride and self worth that developed in that body of men. The lesson was, the joy of recruiting other volunteers.

The last nine years have been the richest. Since moving to San Saba the door of service has opened to many more avenues of volunteer service. This includes: 1) being asked to serve on our local volunteer council, 2) as a religious volunteer the opportunity is given to conduct chapel services about once a month, 3) and a regular Bible Study the 3rd Tuesday of month, 4) the congregation where I preach has the happy opportunity of hosting the Christmas party for dorm 3.

Only after working ten years with Brownwood TYC, eight years with the Corsicana TYC did I finally begin to attend the state meeting of volunteers. We have a conference each spring and a meeting each fall. At both of these meetings we are informed of all the great things being done all across our great state.

This last year the invitation came to serve on the five person state volunteer executive committee. The greatest blessing this has afforded is to come to know the quality of people that serve in this department, both in Austin and on the local level. With over forty years of knowledge of TYC, there is no doubt in my mind that we have the finest program to salvage young people from a life

of crime, that we have ever had.

Couple with the program the opportunities TYC affords and encourages us as volunteers, and we must agree that one by one "We Can Make A Difference!" I look forward to the day when the number of volunteers is great enough for every single youngster in TYC to have their personal mentor and there are tutors available to help each struggling student with their math and reading. We are turning lives around! It's the ones that we are not touching that grieve me!

Sharing softball with a message

"Batter Up" was heard loud and clear as the Eules Messengers and the San Saba State School softball team squared off to play ball on October 5, 2002. The Messengers are a group of high school and college-aged young men from the First Baptist Church of Eules who came not only to play ball, but to share their personal testimonies.

In fact, sharing with the youth was their main objective. They just chose to do it in an unconventional way – playing softball. That doesn't mean, however, that they didn't try to win. In fact, the Messengers won the first game of the day. This put them in a confident frame of mind, but after lunch the second San Saba team was victorious.

After the game, the Messengers spent time with the youth sharing personal stories. This was the second time this year that the Messengers visited San Saba State School, and plans are already being made for a return visit and rematch on the field for the spring.

~ Dagmar Poteet

Focus on Youth

Evins youth are budding artists

In an effort to redirect creativity expressed through graffiti, caseworker Maria Elena Torres at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center, and juvenile correctional officer Albert Tijernia started an art class. The final result of their efforts was recently displayed for staff and visitors.

The 12 youth in the new class created various artistic paintings. Through the help of the education department, Assistant Principal Rosalina Ruiz bought some library books on art-related themes. Supplies were purchased through the student benefit fund and the Community Volunteer Council. The youth learned of different styles and artists such as Picasso, Dali, Diego



Some of the Evins youth involved in an art class display their first works. From left are Isau Rocha, Manuel Gomez, Javier Quiroz, Caseworker/Instructor Maria Elena Torres, Joe C. Hernanandez and Gustavo Castillo.

Rivera, and Jackson Pollock.

The class would only have been possible because of the determination of Torres and Tijerina. While Torres classifies herself as a novice artist, she is also taking classes to become a Licensed Art Therapist. Tijerina honed his art skills while stationed in the military in Hawaii. He is a sculptor who was named one of the top artists in Hawaii in 1998.

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist, the problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Hopefully, youth taking art classes at the Evins Regional Juvenile Center will use their new skills for many years to come.

~ Raul Arredondo

Al Price youth "serving to serve"

Recreation Manager Tyalian Gauthia at the Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility is always thinking about how students can become involved in helping someone less fortunate in the Beaumont community. As this past holiday season began to evolve, Gauthia initiated the "Serving to Serve" project.

The community service project involved a volleyball serving competition combined with a canned food drive. Each high-phase student wishing to participate in the contest had to acquire at least five canned items from staff. Along with the required number of canned goods, the young men had to obtain a primary sponsor who agreed to donate one canned good for each serve they completed.

Thirty-eight youth participated with the help of 200 employees, resulting in a total of 1,500 canned goods being

donated to families in the community, a local food bank and shelter for the homeless. Assistant Superintendent Kenneth Williams, Community Relations Coordinator Rose Chaisson, and Gauthia donated turkeys for six Thanksgiving baskets.

~ Rose Chaisson

Harlingen helps in Feast of Sharing

The Harlingen Parole Office staff and parolees participated in the annual Feast of Sharing sponsored by H.E.B. Food Stores on November 22 at the Harlingen Community Center and Casa del Sol.

Approximately 8,000 people gathered for a Thanksgiving feast of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and all the trimmings, not to mention pumpkin pie with whipped topping for dessert.

Several youth participated in the event, distributing meals, drinks, desserts, and assisting with the clean-up process. The youth were able to demonstrate their job skills to the H.E.B. supervisors, as well as their commitment to the community. A few of the youth were offered on-site interviews to work at local H.E.B. stores.

Several Harlingen staff assisted the Chamber of Commerce, H.E.B., local dignitaries, and other volunteers in the Feast of Sharing. Employees involved were parole officers Lupe Limas and Ricardo Leal, parole aide Alan Maria, parole service technician Cynthia Saldivar, and parole supervisor Sylvia Martinez.

~ Sylvia Martinez

Houston youth help the needy

Houston parole staff take community service involvement very seriously. Parole employees Christina Galindo, Felicia Amos, John Blackman, and Trennie Hill are responsible for placing youth at various non-profit agency sites. They work hard at keeping youth involved, visible, and helping in Houston and surrounding counties.

Besides working at agencies daily, TYC youth are known for helping out with special projects in the community. In October 2002, youth operated game booths for young children at the Annual Fall Festival for St. Johns United Methodist Church. In November, the youth put together over 2,500 invitations for the United Negro College Fund Annual Black Tie Gala benefiting students and scholarships at historically black colleges and universities.

Houston youth showed their creativity and willingness to help others in need by decorating Thanksgiving food boxes to be distributed to needy families. Fifteen families were selected to receive

the boxes along with a turkey, which were donated by Randall's Supermarket and Frenchy's Sausage Company.

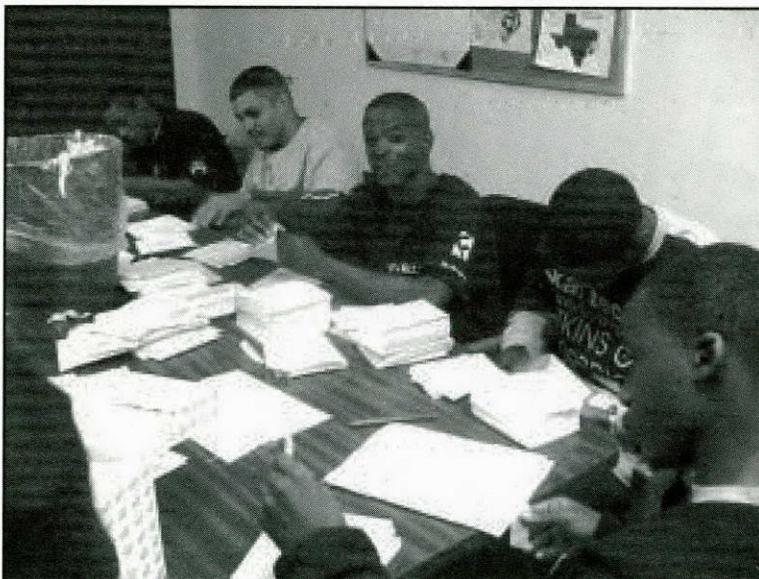
On December 1, 2002, 23 youth and the four parole office assistants kicked off the holiday season by helping the Houston Downtown branch of the Young Men's Christian Association with its annual Jungle Bell Run. The 20-year-old "fun run" event raises money to provide scholarships for youth programs such as day and summer camps sponsored by the YMCA. This event had more than 3,000 participants and hundreds of volunteers.

~ Denise Kennedy

No Ordinary Day

One year after the September 11th tragedy, the San Saba State School Color Guard was honored to be included in a joint conference of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and Texas Mental Health Mental Retardation. Four young men and their staff sponsors were privileged to be part of the Austin conference's program in recognition and remembrance of that auspicious day. The students representing the Youth Commission were Michael, Christopher, Daniel, and Danny. Staff sponsors were correctional officers Hector Navarro and Michael Pitts.

Many presenters spoke about the association and collaboration between the mental health and the criminal justice systems, but the highlight of the conference was the inspirational keynote address by Gaynell Colburn of the



Houston area youth help local United Negro College fund-raiser by assembling more than 2,500 invitations.

Telsie B. Howard Foundation, Inc. and 1998 Essence Award Winner.

Colburn shared with her audience the torture and abuse she experienced as a child and how she overcame these



San Saba correctional officers Hector Navarro and Michael Pitts, and Superintendent Marian Deans share a special moment with Michael, Christopher, Daniel and Danny and Conference Motivational Speaker, Gaynell Colburn (seated in center).

and other physical challenges to accomplish her dreams. Her story was truly inspirational.

Prior to Colburn's address, the San Saba Color Guard presented the colors in an opening ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the terroristic attacks on our country. Daniel wrote in an essay afterward that when he shook Ms. Colburn's hand, he thought she was just another person in the crowd, but when he learned she was the keynote speaker, he was quite impressed that someone such as she would take the time for him.

At the end of her presentation, Colburn asked all four Color Guard boys to return to the stage. As they approached the stage, the entire audience stood and cheered. She embraced them on stage as she sang her customary

closing song "I Can Fly" and ended by telling each of these young men they were heroes in her eyes.

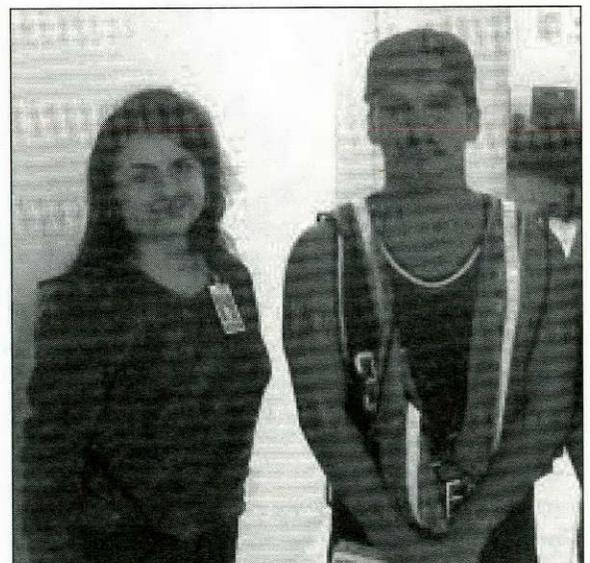
Even though September 11th will be a day held in deep regard by all of us, September 11th, 2002, will be one of great honor and remembrance for these four young men and their staff. All were most appreciative of the opportunity to have met and learned from Gaynell Colburn's wisdom and inspiration.

~ Dagmar Poteet

Youth certified to operate machinery

Francisco Mireles, a parolee in Houston, recently participated in a program offered to young fathers called "Working Works" in Cameron County. Mireles is a young father who has struggled to make ends meet.

This training program aims to help parents become self-efficient and provide for their child without continued government assistance. Mireles was accepted into a five-week heavy equip-



Parole Officer Maritza Martinez accompanies Houston parolee Francisco Mireles as he accepts his heavy machinery operation certificate.

ment operator-training course through Texas A&M's Engineering Extension Service, Utilities and Public Works Training Institute.

Mireles completed the training course ranked first in his class, passed the examination and received a certificate to be a heavy equipment operator. Due to his outstanding work and accomplishment with this course, he has been hired by Cameron County to work in its public works department.

~ Maritza S. Martinez

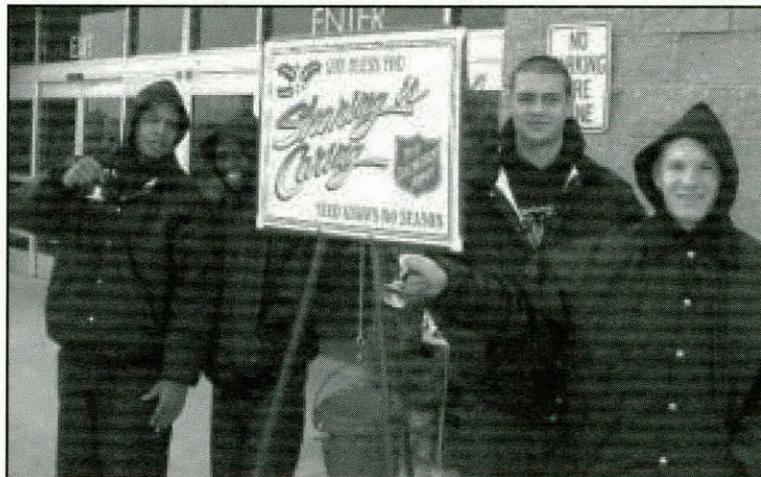
Youth ring the bell to help

When the Salvation Army in Beaumont sent out the call for volunteer help during one of their busiest times of the year, the call did not go unanswered. Several youth from the Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility raised \$1,328 while ringing the bell during the Christmas season as a community service project.

Captain David Robinson from the Salvation Army reported that, "The donations will help needy families and individuals with food and toys during the season, and other assistance throughout the year."

The community service enabled the Salvation Army to use one day of payroll cost to help a needy family. The young men appreciated the opportunity to give back to the community and to experience the true meaning of Christmas. Tyalian Gauthia and the Recreation Department co-sponsored the project.

~ Rose Chaisson



From left, Michael Slaughter, Patrick Bennett, Kyle Bowman, and Justin Vasta ring the bell to help the Salvation Army give to those in need.

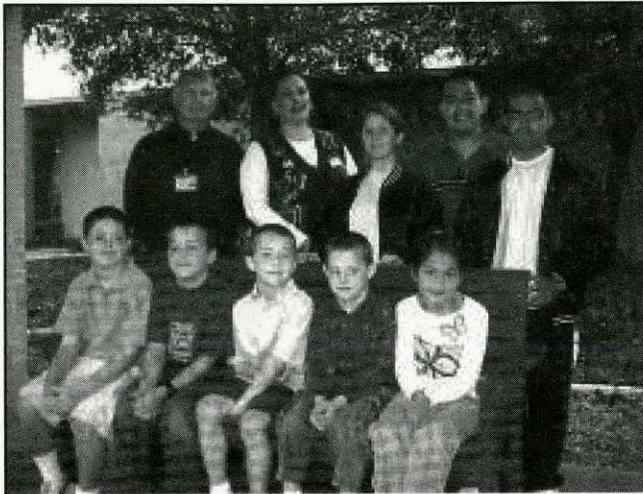
Woodworking classes help charities

Crockett State School youth recently donated a handmade porch swing to the Piney Woods Fine Arts Association Auction, which raised \$525 with the swing's sale. At Giddings State School, the woodworking class under the guidance of Building Trades Instructor Martin Rangel crafted four sturdy, wooden slated benches for the Giddings Elementary School Booster Club.

Items donated from the state schools are always popular with auction attendees. Participating in the auctions helps TYC youth to understand that their work is appreciated and valued. It gives them a feeling that the knowledge they are gaining while incarcerated will increase their employability upon release.

Piney Woods Fine Arts Association Auction Chairwoman Patty Meyer stated, "Our dinner auction is a major fundraiser for us, and the items the state school donates are usually the larger things up for auction. A bidding war ensues, as everyone wants your handmade things. You make a significant contribution in this annual event and we are thankful the youth are willing to share their talents with us."

Giddings Booster Club member and state school



First- and third-graders from Giddings Elementary School proudly try out a bench built by Giddings vocational students. Behind the children, from left, are Vocational Coordinator Jack Webb, Giddings Elementary School Assistant Principal Maria Green, Giddings Vocational Student Geneva Erickson, Building Trades Instructor Martin Rangel and student Rene Torres.

employee Tanya Iselt asked the state school to build benches for the elementary school. The entrance to the school had just been landscaped, and brightly painted benches would add to the project by providing seating for waiting parents and students.

The Booster Club had budgeted several hundred dollars for the project, but the Giddings students were eager to volunteer their time and skill. The Giddings Community Advisory Council donated the lumber and paint for the benches. Superintendent Butch Held saw the project as an opportunity for youth to learn a positive lesson in citizenship and in the value of helping others. He

quickly approved the schools' involvement.

Elementary School Booster Club President Nicole McCoy said, "Our organization is very excited that the students at TYC would volunteer to help us out. The benches will be an attractive addition to the school entrance, and will be very much appreciated by the parents and children that will use them. The money we saved will be put to use in other worthwhile projects."

~Patricia Wyman & Bill Bradbury



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