

Boys and Girls Country News

Volume 38, Issue 5, Holiday 2009

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**Start Off the
New Year with
"A Vision for
Children"!**

**Informational Session
and Tour:
January 9th
10:00-11:00 am**

Bring a friend and
learn about our Home!



**BOYS & GIRLS
COUNTRY**
A Home for Children

18806 Roberts Road
Hockley, Texas 77447

(281) 351-4976

Fax: (281) 351-4978

info@boysandgirlscountry.org

Donate Online!

www.boysandgirlscountry.org

Waller County Fair Winners!

The Waller County Fair was a chance for our kids to show the animals they raised for months in the 4-H program...and they came away winners! We thank all of our friends who made their success possible by donating animals and supplies and equipment, volunteering to help our kids, or buying animals at the auction, including Mike Bishop; Double H Ranch, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Huddleston; Doug Tallent Quarter Horses; the Greater Houston Quarter Horse Association; Berry Harrison of Harrison Farms; Michele Martinez; the Owens Family; Chuck and Rita Scianna, our friends at Sim-Tex; Paul Shollar; Ava Urbanovsky; Thomas Waind; and Glen and Kimberly Wilson.



Clockwise from top: James, Jared, Xavier, Ashton, Nicolas, Diondre, Dora, Tiffany, Serriah, and Ashley with their rabbits; 4-H Manager Mr. David, with John and Black Beauty (Grand Reserve Champion!); Haymanot with colt Zeus; Christina with Rebel (Grand Champion!); and Taylor, Rhonda, and Sherry with their goats. For a full listing of winners, visit www.boysandgirlscountry.org > News & Events.



We would also like to thank our friends at Harris County Department of Education's Cooperative for After-School Enrichment (CASE) for supporting our 4-H program, along with our equestrian program and classes with Main Street Theater! CASE After School Initiative is funded in part by Houston Endowment, Inc.

 **Education Foundation**
of Harris County

 **HCDE**
HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Message from the Executive Director

“Miracles Happen Here, Every Day”



I started in the Child Welfare “business” in 1972. Over those many years I’ve come to not only believe in miracles, I now regularly rely on them!

Let me explain. Over the summer, I met a young man who was in college. I learned that he finished high school several years ago, took some college classes, spent some time working, and came back to Boys and Girls Country with the commitment to doing whatever he needed to do to earn his college degree. Apparently, math has always been a struggle for him, and last semester was no exception. In spite of long hours of work with tutors at his school and frequent phone calls, emails, and visits from our staff, he ended up failing it. When I met him, he was working hard over the summer to get extra tutoring so that he would be ready for this semester. He called us in the middle of the semester to say that he got a 100% on his college algebra exam! He is soaring through math this semester, and he will likely graduate next year! Is that not a miracle?

Last month, we had our annual, independent audit. As the auditors walked down our hallway, lined with pictures of our Boys and Girls Country graduates, they stopped and pointed at a picture on the wall of one of our alumni who had since graduated from college and had just become a partner in one of the auditing firms. Her family immigrated and settled in Houston. She was a first generation high school graduate and a first generation college graduate. Now, she’s a partner in a successful accounting firm, right here in Houston. Is that not a miracle?

Finally, just a few minutes ago, I left a meeting that we call a “Plan of Service” meeting. In those meetings, we meet with our kids and their guardians, and review their progress, their plans for the future, and how to get there. We met with one of our kids who had come a long way, and his guardian praised him and us for the improvements she saw in his abilities and his progress in school. I know she would agree with me that this is another miracle.

We don’t just “take care” of kids or “baby sit” them. Boys and Girls Country provides our kids with a Christian home environment, where they are nurtured, loved, and raised to become self sustaining and contributing adults. This is a place where miracles happen, every day. Don’t you agree?



Happy Thrilloween!

We dressed up head to toe...cautiously inched our way through the haunted house (*very* cautiously!)...and trick-or-treated our way through the office!

Thank you to board member Donna Boyer (a.k.a. Cruella de Vil, in this photo!) for bringing out batches of cupcakes -- gummy worms and all -- for a spooky, sweet treat!



A Tribute to Our Staff!

Meet some of the staff members who make our work possible, day in and day out!



After 5+ years of going strong as teaching parents, Michaelea and Chris Fuentes have deepened their commitment as program managers for our organizations. Chris is also an alumnus of our Home. He spent part of his life growing up here...and has returned home to give other children the opportunity to succeed.

We were full time teaching parents for 5 years. Some days seemed like they were 5 years long with all the stress and behaviors that come with a kid that is truly hurting emotionally. On the other side we can see the harvest from the many seeds we planted over the years and are truly grateful to Ms. Shirley and Chris Gray for believing in us enough to give us the chance 5 years ago, May 17, 2004 to be exact! One of the most rewarding moments of any day is to hear the voice of someone you

touched, to hear their trust in your opinions, their desire to seek your counsel...and sometimes it's just that need for reassurance that you are still there and still care. Our life is completely different; we have a new definition for the American dream and a better understanding for God's purpose in our lives.

We believe deeply in the mission and vision of Boys and Girls Country and know that God has entrusted us to carry the torch for our cause, to be the voice of those who have no voice, and to continue the education and be the support of those who have chosen to carry the torch with us. We believe every child deserves to be told they are loved every day and then shown that love through selfless acts. That's what a teaching parent does, that is what they choose to do 24/7. It's hard, it's exhausting, but it's also courageous and heroic. We are proud to count ourselves as alumni of that group and will strive daily to help make it as rewarding for the next person as it was for us. We are also thankful to have 3 beautiful children that have walked through this journey with us, who have been just as much of a blessing to the kids as we could have been, and whom we thank for opening their hearts and allowing us to share our love with others. Audrey, Brianna and Ethan, you are the greatest and we love you very much!



David Nixon, Ranch Operations and 4-H Manager, has served in his role and been a part of our family for eight years.

This has been a job that has brought me the greatest satisfaction of any job I've worked. It's also brought the most heartache, as the kids and staff you work with transition in and out. Sometimes it's hard to get used to the loss of people you're working with. The kids are a part of your life. On the other hand, the joy greatly outweighs the hard parts...because it's dealing with the kids.

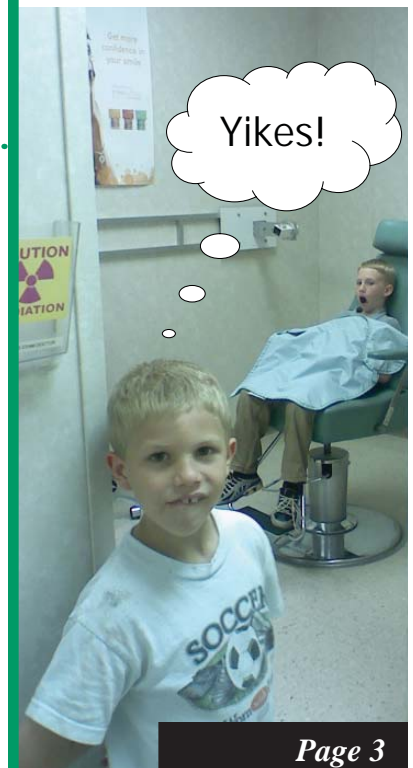
Some kids have been here as long as I have, and you develop a base of trust that grows and grows over the years. The kids feel they can trust you because you have staying power, and the newer kids know that they can trust you because the other kids trust you. I love the moments when I work with kids in 4-H and they come up to give me a hug or a pat on the back...or a child takes off my cap to play with my hair...It's really neat to be a part of a kid's life and to know you're making a difference.

Thank You for Helping Keep Our Kids Healthy!

Between the sniffles, toothaches, tummy aches, and more, it's hard to keep up with the health care needs of over 100 children and young adults! Thank you to everyone who makes it happen!

Special thanks go to area dentists who provide our children with services on a pro bono basis, including Dr. Terrence O'Keefe, Dr. Wayne Newell, Dr. Joe Pierce, and Dr. James Hanigan, our orthodontist; our friends at local Kelsey-Seybold clinics who provide health care services on a pro bono basis for our children; the Aetna Foundation, for providing for our children's uninsured medical and dental needs; and our friends at Gloyer's Pharmacy, for donations of over-the-counter medicines.

Below: Jared in dentist's chair... and Michael waits his turn!





**BOYS & GIRLS
COUNTRY**
A Home for Children

Boys and Girls Country of Houston, Inc.
18806 Roberts Road
Hockley, Texas 77447

Address Service Requested

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 11163
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Holiday WISH LIST

Our Clothing Closet Needs:

In all sizes, except where indicated:

Girls' and Boys' No-Show Socks
Boys' and Men's Boxers and Boxer Briefs
Boys' and Men's Undershirts
Girls' and Women's Bras & Training Bras
Girls' and Women's Hipsters Panties
Girls' and Boys' Tennis Shoes
Casual Shoes (not dress shoes)

Our Commissary Needs:

For Holiday Dinners:

Turkeys
Stuffing
Canned Soup
Mashed Potato Mix
Gravy Mix Packets
Beef and Chicken Broth
Canned Green Beans
French Fried Onions (*French's* type)
Cranberry Sauce
Napkins
Foil
Ranch Dressing

For Holiday Baking:

Pie Fillings
Condensed Milk
Brown Sugar
Graham Cracker Crusts
Marshmallows
Pecans and Nuts
Cool Whip
Cake Mixes
Frosting
Cupcake Papers

Our Activities Department Needs:

Air Pump, for pumping up sports balls
Video Cameras (digital with flash memory preferred, though we could use any!)
Wii Games
DVDs (G, PG, PG-13)
Flat Screen TVs (26", 42") for the Student Life Center

Full list at www.boysandgirlscountry.org
Click on "Donate" and "Fill a Wish List"



Holiday Wish List

- Gift Cards.** We always need gift cards for the holidays, and throughout the year.
 - College and Career Needs.** Our young adults come home for the holidays, and you can help make it special for them!
 - Holiday Meal Needs.**
- ← See our Wish List!

Be a Part of the Holidays at Boys and Girls Country!

Please keep our kids in mind this season! If you would like to help make the holidays special for our kids, please contact Darla Guerra at 281-351-4976 extension 243, or by email at darla.guerra@boysandgirlscountry.org.

And, as you make plans for the New Year, please remember Boys and Girls Country when planning your year-end gifts!



You Can Give Our Children a Great Start in 2010 with Your Year-End Gift!

Before you get ready to throw the confetti, please think about how your gift could impact the lives of our children in the coming year...and how your gift postmarked by December 31st could also impact your taxes in 2010!

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation of cash, stock, real estate, or life insurance to benefit our children and our Home. Check with your employer to see whether your gift can be matched!

At least 70%? Give from Your IRA!

Because Congress extended the IRA Charitable Rollover through December 31, 2009, you can transfer up to \$100,000 per year from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to our Home if you are at least 70½ by the date of the distribution!

For more information, please contact Elaine Petranek at 281-351-4976 extension 219 or at elaine.petranek@boysandgirlscountry.org.

\$100,000 Challenge Update: We Did It!



Thanks to friends like you, we met the challenge! \$50,000 in contributions from the community will be matched with \$50,000 from our challenge donor, for a total of \$100,000 toward the care of our children...and, we are still adding to the pile! Please visit www.boysandgirlscountry.org and click on the \$100,000 Challenge link at the bottom of the page to see our progress!