

### THE REST OF THE STORY:

## Transforming Striving to Thriving

**L**exer Rene Soto is a Deputy Constable in Harris County Precinct 1 in Houston. Looking at his photo, where he proudly wears his uniform and badge you would not have guessed that his journey would have included a transitional living program, designed to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth.

When Lexer Rene Soto left Honduras to seek a better life in the United States, he didn't realize many of the obstacles he would face. At the age of 18, he entered the Transitional Living Program at The Children's Center, Inc. He took that time to gather his resources. Like many of our youth he was intelligent, had good character, was a self-starter and truly wanted to rise above the adversity of his past life and to become a contributing member of society. Soon he was working full time and attending Galveston College.

After leaving transitional living and achieving independence he held a host of jobs to support his young family. He even came back to The Children's Center as an employee in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Lexer earned his U.S. Citizenship, completed training at the Law Enforcement Academy at the College of the Mainland. He then was hired at the Houston Independent School District as Police Officer and has since moved to his current position as a Deputy Constable in Harris County Precinct 1 in Houston.

This inspirational story is far from unusual at The Children's Center. TCCI doesn't just "shelter" people in need. The organization provides support services from case managers trained in trauma-informed care. That means that those they serve are treated "holistically", utilizing a positive youth development approach, with great sensitivity to the adversity from which youth come. Their needs are evaluated and solutions sought so that once they are independent they can sustain themselves.



Swearing in by Constable Rosen, along with daughters Bella and Mia.



Lexer Rene Soto  
Deputy Constable in Harris  
County Precinct 1 in Houston

Without Using their real names, TCCI would like to share some of our other positive outcomes with you:

Adam – Now owns a HVAC and Home Repair Company; Betty -Now owns a Home Cleaning Service; Conner – Works as a highly paid Crane Operator; Diane -Works in Home Cleaning Service; Elvis - Owns Construction Company; Fred – Kitchen Manager Hospitality Industry; Greg – Cook in Hospitality Industry; Harold – Works in Farmer's Market; Ivan – Plumber; Jack- Plumbers' Apprentice; Kerry – Direct Care Worker in Human Services; Leon, Manny, and Noel – Landscaping, Maintenance and Grounds; Omar, Paul, Quinn, Rob, Sam, Tom, Ulysses and Victor - Construction Workers that include large cities like Austin, TX; Atlanta, GA; Buffalo, NY, Nashville, TN and others. Additionally, there are: William – A Bus Driver; Xavier – a Security Guard in Minneapolis, MN; And Zena – A Retail Clerk in Chattanooga, TN, just to name a few.

The Children's Center, Inc. provides emergency shelter and transitional housing for those facing homelessness. Shelters are not a "hand-out" they are a "hand-up" that stabilize the lives of those in crisis. The outcomes listed above, and Lexer Soto's story are just a few examples of how The Children's Center, Inc. has provided positive interventions and a new direction for those in crisis.



# How We Serve The Community

## Supporting Families in Crisis

### *Letter from Our Chairwoman*

**A**s new officers and board members of The Children's Center, Inc., we wish to share the work of our organization in this fall newsletter. We are committed to the purpose and mission of the organization and to providing long-term direction in meeting the needs of those we serve. The Children's Center's original service area was Galveston County Texas. Our work has expanded along the Texas Gulf Coast to include Beaumont, Houston, Victoria, Corpus Christi, the Rio Grande Valley and now extends into the heart of Central America.

I am Hilda-Garza Torres, the newly elected Chairwoman of the Board of Directors. Our board, and those we serve, represent a diversity of resources and geography. I have served on the board for several terms, since the merger of Galveston Children's Home, the Lasker Home, the Albertine Yeager Children's Home and the Youth Shelter of Galveston, in the nineteen eighties. Until my recent retirement, I served as Senior Counselor for the Texas City Independent School District and reside in Texas City, Texas.

Anne Ayala, is a practicing attorney with Ayala - Acosta and a child advocate in La Esperanza, Honduras. Anne serves as The Children's Center, Inc. Board Secretary and serves on the Development Committee. She actively works on community outreach activities for our CAFÉ Project in Honduras. Anne resides in La Esperanza, Honduras.

David Holmen, our past Chair, is Public Relations and Sales Manager at Ron Carter in League City, Texas. He serves as Board Vice-Chair of The Children's Center, Inc. and serves on the Program Support Services Committee. David makes special things happen for our children during the holidays. David resides in La Marque, Texas.

Saad Javed, our Board Treasurer, is a health care executive and serves as Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer at Riceland Health. Saad is Chair of the Finance Committee of The Children's Center, Inc., serves on our Development Committee and resides in Beaumont, Texas.

Mark Barlow, M. D., is an active board member of The Children's Center. He is a plastic surgeon in private practice in Houston, Texas. Mark Serves on the Program and Services Committee. He is on staff at Methodist Houston and resides in the Clear Lake area of Houston, Texas.

Pam Kemp is an active board member of The Children's Center. Pam is Chair of the Development Committee. She is retired counsel for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and is actively working on a second career as a fiction writer. She resides in Austin, Texas.

Joseph Trahan is an active board member of The Children's Center. He serves on the Program Support Services Committee. Joseph works as Assistant Director of Operations for Next Generation Orthopedic and Spine Institute in the Woodlands, Texas area. He resides in Beaumont, Texas.

We look forward to collaboration with you in better meeting the needs of children and families. Thanks for your interest in The Children's Center, Inc.

*We wish you and yours a wonderful upcoming holiday season!*



Hilda Garza-Torres,  
Chairwoman of  
The Children's Center, Inc.





# Community Engagement Outreach Event

## Rosenberg Library Helps Families in Family Crisis Center With Digital Divide

Mike Miller, the new Executive Director of Rosenberg Library fully understands the value of reading. He also knows that technology today is critical as a learning tool that prepares students for the realities of workplaces increasing dependent on high tech tools.

Residents of the Family Crisis Center at The Children's Center, Inc. often arrive at the shelter, with just the clothing on their backs. In a post-COVID world, with government supports expiring even those with jobs in Galveston County can face eviction. As a result, children who were already struggling with remote learning during COVID, fall even further behind.

Miller recognized the needs of our residents including the reality of lack of transportation. On September 30, 2022, he and staff member Norma Dickman, came to the FCC site and signed up eligible residents for Library Cards. The library cards not only give residents the key to all of the wonderful learning tools at the library but qualifies residents to receive a one time grant per family of a Chromebook and a T-Mobile 5G Hotspot, with paid service for a year.

This valuable project was a goal pursued by the Infrastructure Task Force of the City of Galveston, Families, Children and Youth Board under the leadership of June Collins Pulliam. Marsha Wilson Rappaport, a TCCI employee serves on that board along with Chair Kathy Tiernan, Karen Stanley the Children's Librarian at Rosenberg, after being appointed by the Galveston City Council.

This grant is part of a larger effort by the Federal government to recognize that internet use is no longer a "luxury" for families. Today, use of the internet is a necessity for any student at any grade level. Moreover, many social service benefits including social security are web based.

**During the course of the afternoon, Rosenberg Library served 28 adults with 47 children.**



Norma Dickman,  
Rosenberg Library



*Mary Brown, Director of FCC and Mike Miller, ED of Rosenberg Library, explain all of the reading and fun resources at the library that includes use of a 3D printer.*

**HOT LINE FOR HELP**

**1.844.763.8861**

Go to Our Website at:

<https://www.thechildrenscenterinc.org>



# Community Engagement *Leadership News*

## Garcia Chosen As Designated Successor

**H**ilda Garcia, the current Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer has been named as the designated successor in 2023, to James Keel as President of the Children's Center, Inc. Garcia, has a Masters Degree in Social Work and holds Counseling (LPC), Licensed Child Care (LCCA) and Licensed Child Placing Agency Administrator (LCPAA) licenses.

During her tenure at The Children's Center, Inc., Garcia has successfully managed a host of federal and state programming. She has overseen staffing and general operations for federal grants like the Runaway and Homeless Youth grants known as BASIC Center Program grants. Basic Center Program (BCP) grants are approved by legislation from the United States Congress and are administered by the Office of the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), United States Department of Health and Human Services and Family (HHS) and Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB).

Moreover, Garcia has distinguished herself by becoming an integral part of the Texas Victims Assistance Program. Her expertise in human trafficking has resulted in her active participation on a statewide level, in assisting in rescues of trafficking victims.



*Hilda Garcia, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (EVP/COO)*



## **The Children's Center, Inc.** Promotes Two Staff Members



Holly Sanchez, Program Director  
TCCI Texas Runaway and Homeless  
Youth Programs



Ivonne Cadena, Supervisor/Lead Case  
Manager for BASIC Centers (Runaway  
and Homeless Youth) in Coastal Bend/  
Corpus Christi and Victoria,





The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

Grant Awards

## The Children's Center Awarded State of Texas Grant from the Community Youth Development Division

**T**CCI is the recipient of a \$500,000.00 State of Texas grant from Community Youth Development division under the umbrella of Prevention and Early Intervention, a division of DFPS. This is the second year of a 5-year grant cycle totaling 2.5 million dollars with a potential annual award of \$500,000.00. CYD has been providing grant funding for prevention focused programs in the Galveston Community for 20 years.

The purpose of the funding is to provide programs that focus on preventing negative outcomes for youth in the community. These programs are developed together with community partners. Members from the community, including youth and adults, provide feedback to CYD that guide the goals of each program and address the strength-based assets that are unique to each program. Programs are developed to include specific elements that strengthen youth skills to prepare them to navigate positively in the community and in life. These elements address several areas including , supportive adults and peers, empowerment, setting boundaries and high expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, positive identity, and building personal, social, family, school and community assets.

Programs are strategically located to provide many opportunities for youth throughout Galveston to access programming. Programs focus on academic supports, recreation and cultural arts, skill building, leadership development, community service, mentoring, post high school readiness while creating safe places for youth to engage in positive interactions with their peers and the kind caring teachers that lead these programs. Community partners include GISD, Odyssey Academy, Iconoclast Artists, Artist Boat, Galveston Parks and Recreation, The Bryan Museum, and the NIA Cultural Center.

Pamela Seroka is The Community Youth Development Program Director. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and a master's degree in special education with post masters course work in Educational Administration. She has worked as a childcare worker, assistant teacher, teacher, assistant principal and principal at private non profit, nationally recognized, residential facilities in Arizona, Florida and Texas. Her latter career years included positions as a behavior analyst for a neurobehavioral rehabilitation facility, advocate and program director for in school, afterschool and summer programs. She has worked in the Galveston Community with The Children's Center for the past 23 out of her 40 year career.



**Pamela Seroka , Director**

Community Youth Development Program

**Enjoy The Craft Coffee Difference!**



Galveston has a new vendor that understands the delicious difference internationally sourced, environmentally conscious coffee makes.

**You Don't Have to go to the Big City!**

*Cold Brew, Nitrogen Infused with a large choice of flavors.*

**AVAILABLE LOCALLY!**

\*Small batch roasted and packaged in Galveston.\*  
**Coffee Coffee Plus**  
 301 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (23<sup>rd</sup> and Mechanic)  
 Galveston, Texas 77550





### Partnership between TideChangers and RHY Team Help Children

The Runaway and Homeless Youth team in Corpus Christi has formed a partnership with “TideChangers” a local group dedicated to mentoring vulnerable children. According to Ivonne Cadena, Supervisor/Lead Case Manager for BASIC Centers (Runaway and Homeless Youth) in Coastal Bend/Corpus Christi and Victoria, the program is a great success: “All together in our chapter we have served about 100 kids in and outside of the classroom, said Cadena. ”We are expected to move to a new community center next year which will allow us to outreach and serve more of the community that need this program”.

TideChangers is designed to expose children to healthy outdoor activities combined with mentoring. TCCI staff members work along side the volunteers. Team members are highly trained and grounded in principles of Positive Youth Development and Trauma Informed Care.

“These are family style activities that model healthy family relationships, said Cadena. “We meet with them weekly, we work on building their life skills and then go outdoors with them to learn skills like fishing, camping and kayaking”.

The BASIC Center programs support runaway and homeless youth. Youth are served by engagement in emergency shelter, crisis intervention, crisis stabilization, crisis prevention and other services. All of these activities, including the TideChangers project, create positive outcomes that align with the Comprehensive Youth-Center Services that are a primary component of the BCP mission.



*Learning boat safety and kayaking*



*Ivonne Cadena,  
Supervisor/Lead  
Case Manager  
for BASIC  
Centers in  
Coastal Bend/  
Corpus Christi  
and Victoria  
with a lucky kid  
and a big fish.*



*Mentoring with the  
TideChangers*



*Teamwork lessons while learning the challenge of putting up a tent.*





# Community Engagement

**CAFÉ—Coffee That Supports Our Mission**

## COFFEEGRAM



The Children's Center, Inc. (TCCI) serves runaway and homeless youth along the Texas Gulf Coast and has long encountered and supported youth from many parts of the world. Terry Keel, President of TCCI, began seeking better understanding as to why youth were fleeing Central America in 2016. TCCI was aware of the grave peril faced by these youth, particularly in Honduras, having lost youth to violence in the cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. TCCI board and management earnestly collaborated to explore better options for these youth, and in the process, created a social entrepreneurial enterprise, Coffee Artisan Friendship Exchange (CAFÉ) to pilot opportunities for youth.

Keel traveled to Honduras and visited throughout the country. The visits provided understanding of the limited opportunities for youth and extensive problems with homelessness, poverty and violence. He began looking for opportunities for youth. On one visit with a former youth from Honduras, Cesar, previously served by TCCI, Keel was asked, why not consider coffee as an enterprise. Soon afterwards, another former youth from Honduras, also previously served by TCCI, invited Keel to visit the Department (state) of Intibuca and observe coffee farming. Keel visited that former youth, Jose, now a coffee producer himself, who also owns and operates a bus company. Keel observed local coffee farming and sampled coffee, grown in the high altitude, mountain region of Intibuca. It is known as Opalaca Coffee, found only in Western Honduras, and he found the quality of the coffee to be excellent. The journey for creating CAFÉ thus began.

The journey started with developing better understanding of needs in the communities of Intibuca. It has involved networking with community leaders, coffee farmers/producers, child welfare, health, education, the legal community, coffee processing mills, export officials and government agencies. Networking has driven particular focus on the Lenca, an indigenous people of Honduras and their communities, small coffee farmer/producers, families and children. The largest concentration of the Lenca people is in Intibuca. Anne Ayala, an attorney, child advocate and community leader residing in Intibuca's capital, La Esperanza has participated in many of these activities. She now serves as an officer on the TCCI board of Directors. These efforts have supported creation of CAFÉ, a unique, non-profit brand of coffee to support the work of the TCCI in Texas Gulf Coast Communities and Honduras.

In the U.S.A., importing the coffee and meeting local, state and federal requirements to roast and distribute coffee from TCCI's Albertine Yeager Youth Cultural Center in Galveston, Texas has also been an adventure, according to Keel. The Development Committee of the TCCI Board, chaired by Pam Kemp, an attorney, child advocate, writer and TCCI board member who resides in Austin, Texas, is now at work on the feasibility of creating a separate website



*The Children's Center's CAFÉ Project sponsors youth soccer team, pictured here, in La Sorto, Intibuca, Honduras. Most are Children of local coffee producers.*



**Technical assistance is provided to CAFÉ Project coffee producers by VOLCAFE - Molinos de Honduras at Las Moras Demonstration Farm, pictured here, in Siguatepeque, Comayagua, Honduras.**

and e-commerce opportunities for marketing CAFÉ coffee subscriptions. TCCI's coffee is prepared as green beans, medium roast beans and medium roast, ground roasted coffee. Keel hopes that the developing enterprise will create long-term sustainability for the organization and expresses that he is "very confident about the quality of our product." He is working with the Development Committee and TCCI board to create long-term, strategic direction.



The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

*Innovative Journaling Program in Corpus Christi*

## Building Futures One Journal At A Time

**W**hat did the renown Mexican Artist Frida Kahlo, the genius Albert Einstein and the African-American Icon Frederick Douglass all have in common? All of them kept a journal. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Team in Corpus Christi are working with vulnerable youth in an innovative program that teaches journaling. This program that promotes social-emotional well-being in an educational activity, has already served 50 children in the Richard Milburn Academy in Corpus Christi.

The TCCI team working with youth includes Holly Sanchez, Program Director TCCI Texas Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs; Ivonne Cadena, Supervisor/Lead Case Manager for BASIC Centers (Runaway and Homeless Youth) in Coastal Bend/Corpus Christi and Victoria, and Annette Gonzalez, Supervisor/Senior Case Manager, TCCI/Rio Grande Valley.

Ivonne Carena, explains the value of this form of mentoring activity for vulnerable youth:

“Journaling was created to allow youth to dream and set goals, said Cadena. “It’s said if you write things down, it visually sets things into motion. So we come in and have the kids talk about their interests, talents, and passions. Then, we have them write it down. I firmly believe their interests and passions are directly related to who they were created to be and what they can accomplish in life”.

Additionally, according to nationally recognized and respected health care consortium, Kaiser Permanente, journaling helps with: achieving goals, tracking progress and growth, gaining self-confidence, improving writing and communication skills, reducing stress and anxiety, finding inspiration and strengthening memory.



Ms. Cadena adds:

“We set goals with the journaling and come up with steps to accomplish these goals so there’s a plan in motion,” she stated. “Short term goals lead to long term goals. We also discuss dream killers and how these things can keep them or delay them from reaching their dreams. We end on a positive note and encourage them to stay focused and keep reaching for these dreams, that with a plan and hard work, can become a reality!

Journaling is a fantastic opportunity for youth to visualize their dreams and reach for their goals while polishing their literacy skills. This type of enrichment program, in partnership with the team at TCCI is encouraging youth to take those next steps toward bright futures.



*Frida Kahlo, famous Mexican Painter, kept a Journal*





# Community Engagement

## Holiday Giving



### WE NEED:

*Monetary and Items of Value*

- CASH DONATIONS
- Vehicles including Boats
- Health Appliances
- Contact Us: 409-765-5212
- Convenient Online Donation at:
- <https://thechildrenscenterinc.fundiful.com/TCCIDonationsMissionSupport/>
- Mail to:
- The Children's Center, Inc.
- P.O. Box 2600
- Galveston, Texas, 77553-2600

- IN-KIND DONATIONS
- Bedsheets and Pillow Cases (Twin)
- Bunk Beds - Twin
- Cleaning and Sanitation Products
- Clothing
- Comforters, Quilts or Other Coverings
- Food
- Furniture
- Grooming Supplies
- Health and Safety Items
- Household Items
- Mattress and Box Spring Sets (Twin)
- Pillows
- Shoes - Youth to Size 4
- Shoes- Adults
- Shoes- Infant to Size 11
- Socks - All Sizes - Children
- Underwear - Baby to Teen Sizes
- Winter Coats -All Adults
- Winter Coats-All Children - Infant to Teen

*The Children's Center, Inc. is a 501(c)3, nonprofit charitable organization. All or part of your gift may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution. Please check with your tax advisor.*

*There are No Boundaries!*



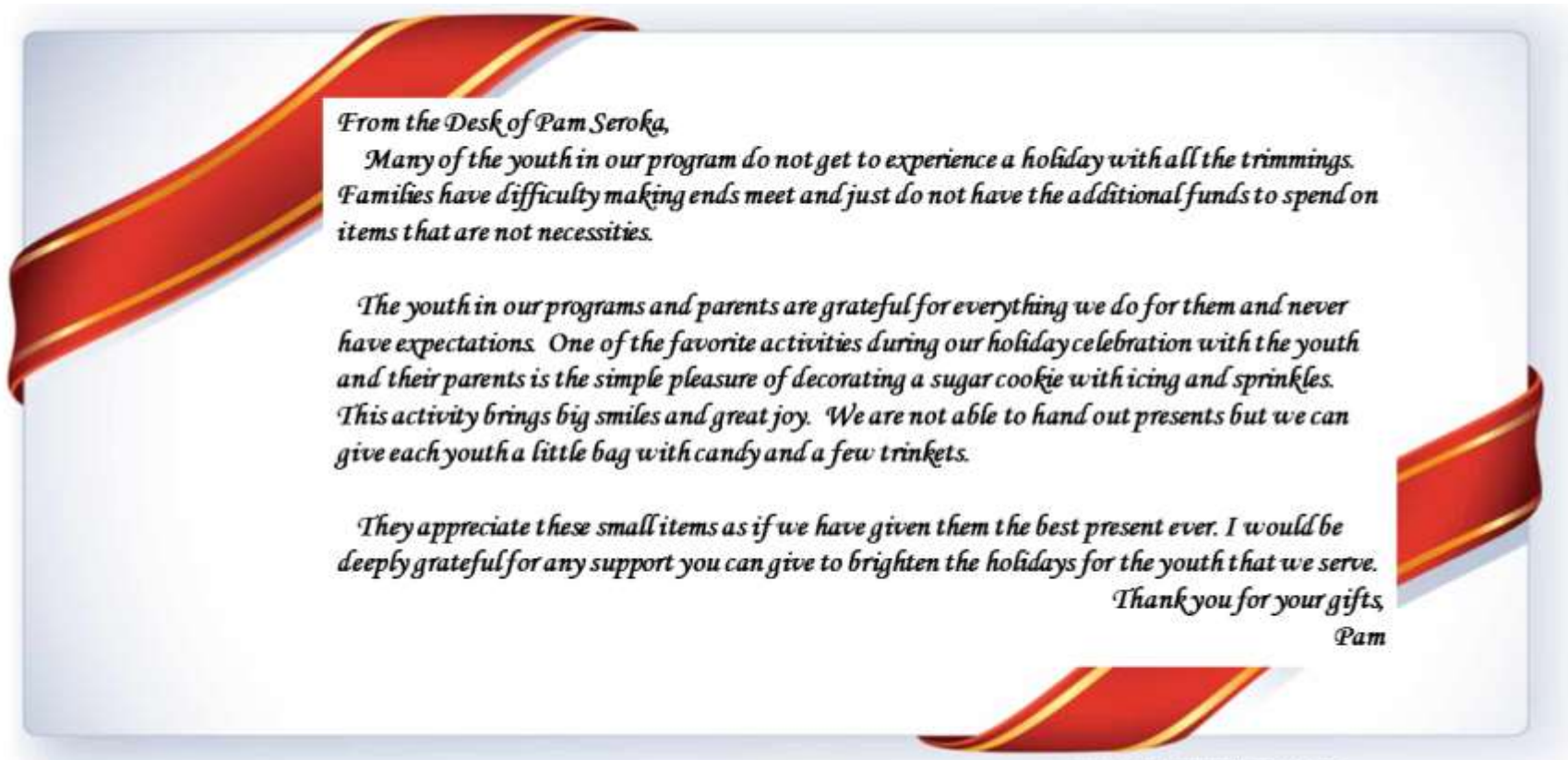
I thought I was safe because I was well educated and working in a high tech company until the layoffs and rent hikes made my son and I homeless.



I was a victim of discrimination during COVID because of my heritage. My wife and I both lost our jobs. Myself, wife and two daughters needed shelter.

# How We Serve The Community

## Holiday Giving



**Learn More About the Community Youth Development Program: Please See Page 5**

We Need:									
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cash Donations - To buy Pizza or Sandwiches								
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gift Cards-100 at \$20 each (Wal-Mart is Preferred)								
	<u>In-Kind</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiday Decorations- tree, wreaths, etc;						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balloon- Small Balloon Pump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiday Food Boxes - 100						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balloons	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hot Chocolate or Hot Chocolate Sets - For Winter Gatherings						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blankets -100	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juice Packets - Individually Packaged						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cookies - For Snacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Choir - Volunteers to sing holiday carols for our CYD children						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cookies-Sugar Cookies for Holiday Decorating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Party Games						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Door Prizes - 100 -Family Games, Arts and Craft Sets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pop Corn Machine						
	<a href="https://thechildrenscenterinc.fundiful.com/TCCIDonationsMissionSupport/">https://thechildrenscenterinc.fundiful.com/TCCIDonationsMissionSupport/</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Snow Cone Machine						
	<i>The Children's Center, Inc. is a 501(c)3, nonprofit charitable organization. All or part of your gift may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toothbrushes - 100						
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Tubes of Toothpaste - 100						





The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

## Grant Awards

### Three Federal Grants Awarded to The Children's Center, Inc.

Runway and Homeless Youth in the Galveston Bay Area, Beaumont and Corpus Christi Texas, continue to be helped by The Children's Center's trained support teams. The Children's Center, Inc, was awarded three federal grants that start in October 2022. The grants that help runaway and homeless youth are from the Basic Center Program (BCP). The grants are approved by legislation from the United States Congress and are administered by the Office of the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), United States Department of Health and Human Services and Family (HHS) and Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB).

These grants were awarded in order to implement, enhance, and/or strengthen strategies that provide runaway and/or homeless youth, under the

age of 18, access to emergency shelter, reunite with their families, offer connections to school and employment, enhance social and emotional well-being, self-sufficiency, and help them build permanent connections with families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks.

The Children's Center, Inc. has utilized these awards to intervene in many situations involving runaway and homeless youth. Chief among those interventions is the work being performed by Presumptive President, Executive Vice President and Chief Coordinating Officer Hilda Garcia. Garcia has developed a robust relationship with the statewide Texas Victims Assistance Program and has saved countless underaged human trafficking victims during the past year.

## THE CHILDREN'S CENTER SAFE PLACE SITES: STATE COVERAGE

**Golden Triangle Region:** Beaumont Area includes: Orange, Jefferson and Hardin Counties. [60 sites]

**Houston Metro Region consisting of HGAC Counties including:** Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Harris, Matagorda, Walker, and Wharton Counties. [150 Sites]

**Galveston Bay Region:** Galveston and Galveston County and Pasadena in Lower Harris County. [50 Sites]

**Golden Crescent Region:** Victoria in Victoria County. [70 Sites]

**Coastal Bend Region-Corpus Christi area includes:** Nueces, Kleberg, San Patricio and Aransas counties. [115 Sites]

**Rio Grande Valley Region includes:** Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr & Willacy counties. [110 sites]







The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

*Volunteer Spotlight*

## Chicktime Brings Halloween to the Family Crisis Center



Local nonprofit group “Chicktime” continues to support our vulnerable families at the Family Crisis Center. Under the continued leadership of Elvia Gomez-Whitlock, the group continues to bring food and necessities to FCC on a monthly basis.

This October, Chicktime came one sunny Saturday afternoon and brought pumpkins and Halloween candy. The residents utilized stickers and markers to decorate the pumpkins.





# How We Serve The Community

## Grant Awards



**Undertold Historical Subject  
Marker Plaque from the  
Texas Historical Commission  
For  
The Albertine Hall Yeager Youth  
Cultural Center**

## The Yeager Tree

48 Years Old – 35 feet tall

Southern Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*)

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- ✓ This tree can provide a day's supply of oxygen for up to four people.
- ✓ This tree provides 220.46 lbs. of oxygen per year.
- ✓ This tree absorbs 48 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in a Year.



**“Breathing life into generations of Galveston’s children”.**

The Albertine Hall Yeager Youth Cultural Center  
The Children's Center, Inc.  
1111 32<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Galveston, Texas 77550

<https://www.thechildrenscenterinc.org>

**Donate – Buy Coffee Today!**

Sources: USDA.gov, BBC Science Focus Magazine, Arbor Day Foundation



The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

*Reaching out in the Rio Grande Valley*

## TCCI Reaches out to Vulnerable Communities in the RGV

**T**his fall, the runaway and homeless program team in the Rio Grande Valley, helped local children with school supplies, clothing, canned goods and 52 backpacks in a back-to-school event. The event was held in the El Dora Colonia in Donna, Texas.



The TCCI Team in the Rio Grande Valley hosted a back to school event in El Dora Colonia in Donna, Texas this fall.

Part of the mission of the runaway and homeless youth team in the Rio Grande Valley is to reach out to families who are most at risk. Children in poverty are at considerable risk of running away for a host of reasons including food insecurity, domestic abuse and child abuse. The danger for these children is maximized by the high level of human trafficking concentrated on the nearby U.S./Mexico border.

Poverty in the Rio Grande Valley is most concentrated in the “Colonias”. In an article published by the Catholic Church in *The Tablet*, author John Lavenburg explains:

*DONNA, Texas — In the northern part of Donna, Maria Hernandez lives with her five children in a yellow mobile home. One of its shattered windows is boarded up; an air conditioner, propped up by a wooden pole, hangs from another. Among the items sitting on the ground outside are a broken toilet, a toddler's car seat, and a mop.*

*The home's condition is par for the course in the area. Hernandez lives in a Colonia, one of the dozens of rundown neighborhoods typically found along the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas, where migrants often settle after they enter the U.S. There are more than 100 colonias in Donna alone.*

The vulnerable communities in Donna are only 14 miles away from the large prosperous city of McAllen, Texas, the largest city in Hidalgo County.

“This fall TCCI held a back-to-school event at the El Dora Colonia in Donna, Texas”, said Annette Gonzalez, MSSW, and Supervisor/Senior Case Manager, TCCI/RGV. “RGV partnered with Amber Arriaga Executive Asst. Director and Ann Cass Executive Director from Proyecto Azteca.”



Haydee Lopez (right), a volunteer from St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Donna, talks to a mother about signing her kids up for the flu shot as they play in the background. (Source: *The Tablet*).

This fall event is a component of the regular outreach conducted by the TCCI in the Rio Grande Valley. Team members have raised their visibility and have set up “Safe Place” sites in order to let families know that help is available.





The Children's Center, Inc

# How We Serve The Community

*Safe Place*

## Fire Station 1 in Galveston is a new Safe Place Site

The Runaway and Homeless Team from TCCI worked with the Galveston Fire Department to become a Safe Place. Fire Station 1 is the primary Fire Station on Galveston Island. It is a new state of the art facility that opened in 2019.



## What is the Safe Place Program?

Safe Place is a national youth outreach and prevention program for young people under the age of 18 (up to 21 years of age in some communities) in need of immediate help and safety. As a collaborative community prevention initiative, Safe Place designates businesses and organizations as Safe Place locations, making help readily available to youth in communities across the country. Safe Place locations include libraries, YMCAs, fire stations, public buses, various businesses, and social service facilities.

Designated Safe Place locations display the Safe Place sign, the universal symbol of youth safety.

### How does The Children's Center, Inc. fit into the national Safe Place network?

The Children's Center, Inc. is part of the national network of organizations that have established 20,000 Safe Place sites in the United States. It is the only agency in Texas that has established 251 sites that run contiguously along the Texas Gulf Coast from the Beaumont – Golden Triangle to the Rio Grande Valley. Safe Place is an integral part of the agency's Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs.

### Why Do Communities Need Safe Place?

Communities are made of individuals and families, and the stability of communities is dependent upon strong and stable families. Community problems, including crime, addiction, and discord arise from issues that go deeper than what appears on the surface. Some of the issues communities face begin with youth and family discord and strife.

Youth may experience difficult problems during their young lives. These may lead young people to make difficult, and sometimes dangerous decisions in an effort to escape what it is they are going through. Sometimes, youth feel they don't belong, and leaving home is often not a choice they want to make. Providing Safe Place as a resource for youth provides a safety net for them, thereby strengthening families and communities.

Sometimes youth need help and safety from an immediate threat from strangers and even friends. Riding with an unsafe or under-the-influence driver can be a very real danger. Being separated or stranded from friends in unfamiliar and possibly dangerous surroundings can lead to tragic outcomes. Safe Place can provide a safe way to get reconnected with loved ones, possibly preventing victimization and further injury.

(Source: NationalSafePlace.org and The Children's Center, Inc.)



# How We Serve The Community

## Grant Awards

## TCCI Awarded ESG Grant from TDHCA/HUD

The Children's Center, Inc. was awarded a \$360,000 Emergency Solutions Program Grant that starts in November 1, 2022. The grant was awarded by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs In October, 2022. The Emergency Solutions Grants are a component of grant programs designed by The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that address homelessness in the United States.

The funds are designated for repairs on TCCI facilities that house homeless clients in multiple programs. Unlike many other shelters in the country during COVID, TCCI was able to follow the proper protocols and keep clients safe. As a result, all facilities have been continuously occupied during the past two years. That wear and tear, was added to shelter spaces that have been used for years to help homeless families due to high demand.

## TCCI CYD Program Featured on State Website

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) featured the TCCI CYD program as a success story on the agency website. Story and link below:

### CYD Success Stories

#### *The Children's Center (Galveston County)*

The Odyssey LIFT Coffee Program provides an opportunity for youth in Galveston to develop numerous skills as they prepare for adulthood. Youth from the LIFT program were invited to serve coffee at local events, including at their local library. The program recently partnered with the owner of a successful restaurant in the area to mentor participants regarding entrepreneurship.

This year, program participants presented a summary of the LIFT Coffee Cart business at a local Rotary Club meeting. These youth were able to use the public speaking and leadership skills developed during the CYD Summer Work Experience program to clearly communicate the business design and recent successes to local community leaders. Facilitators of the program reported that through participation in this innovative program, youth were able to secure jobs in local restaurants after listing their coffee cart work experience on their resume.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/About\\_Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/cyd.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/About_Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/cyd.asp)





# How We Serve The Community

## Leadership Update

### TCCI Welcomes New Finance Team

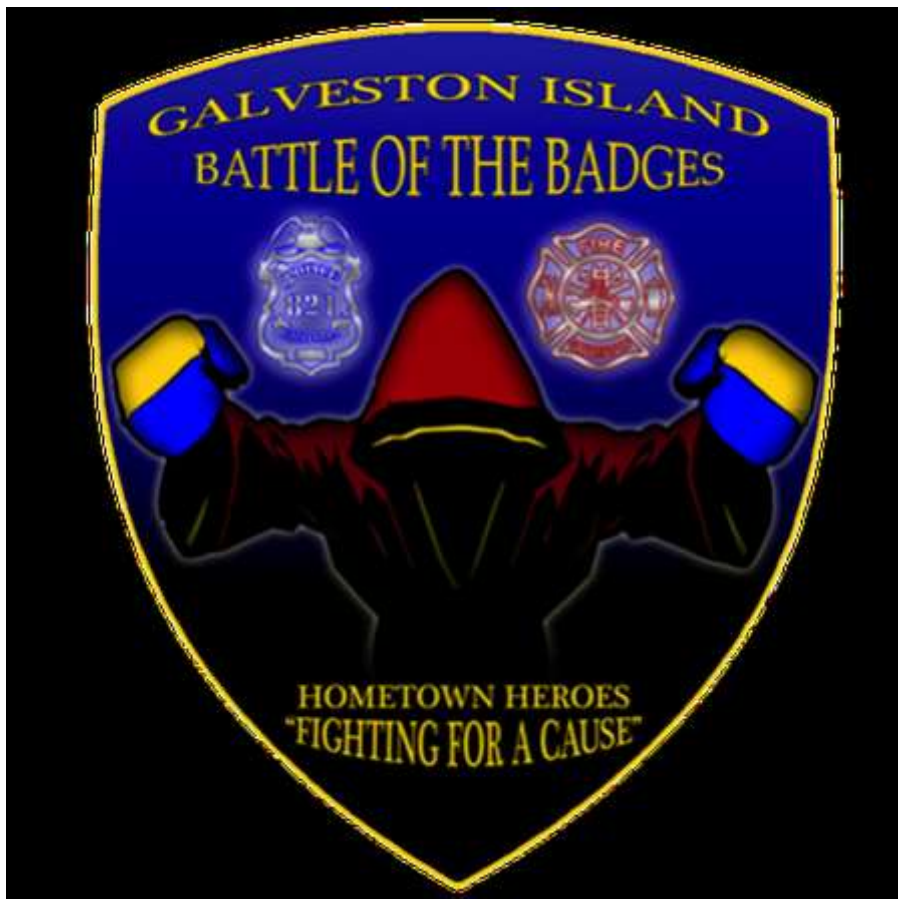
The Children's Center, Inc. is pleased to announce the appointment of Melba Mitchell, C.P.A., J. Otis Mitchell, C. P. A., and Undria Polley as financial consultants for the organization. To better manage the diverse financial needs of our growing organization, outsourcing finance functions was determined to be the best method to attract the most qualified financial expertise.

Melba Mitchell, C. P. A., brings extensive state and federal, non-profit experience in finance and accounting. J. Otis Mitchell, C.P.A., will contribute extensive experience in providing financial oversight to private non-profit and for-profit companies in the areas of finance and accounting. Undria Polley brings



banking experience and non-profit grants expertise to provide the organization with grants management leadership.

**Welcome our new finance team!**



## SAVE THE DATE!

**Saturday, November 19, 2022**

**13TH ANNUAL**

**BATTLE OF THE BADGES**

**Benefitting The Children's Center, Inc.**

**And Other Local Charities**

**Galveston Island Convention Center**

**5600 Seawall Blvd**

**Galveston, Texas 77551**

# How We Serve The Community

## *Social Enterprise That Supports our Work*



### **GIVE THE GIFT OF LUXURIOUS FLAVOR!**

Freshly Ground Coffee from Honduras CAFÉ is grown in the Opalaca Region of Western Honduras. It is shade grown at very high altitudes. Arabica Beans of the Lempira Variety, a cross between Timor and Caturra are single-sourced for cultivation on the Adonay and associated family farms in partnership with C.A.F.E. in the mountains of Intibucá not far from La Esperanza, Honduras.

This craft coffee, roasted fresh on the Texas Gulf Coast, is prepared as a medium to dark roast and has a distinctive, robust flavor that includes notes of chocolate, caramel and citrus unique to this region of Honduras.

### **CAFÉ - COFFEE ARTISAN FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE**



**Volcafe Way Demonstration Farm, Finca Las Moras, Siguatepeque, Comayagua, Honduras**

Pictured (L-R) Erick Calix – Coffee Processing Plant Administrator – Volcafe-Molinos de Honduras; Oscar Portillo-Farm Manager Finca de Moras – Volcafe-Molinos de Honduras; Gilberto Gutierrez-CAFÉ Farmer; Luiz Rodriguez-Coffee Farming Technical Advisor – Volcafe- Molinos de Honduras; Jose Adonay-CAFÉ Farmer and Terry Keel – CAFÉ General Manager.



CAFÉ- COFFEE ARTISANS FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE

*CRAFT COFFEE*

*That*

*Supports Services to Runaway and Homeless Youth*

**BUY TODAY!**

Coffee will be available by subscription and single bags on the TCCI website:

<https://www.thechildrenscenterinc.org/shop/>

**Donate Now!**

Mailing Address:  
The Children's Center, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2600  
Galveston, TX 77553-2600

Call: (409) 765-5212

Donate on our website:

<https://www.thechildrenscenterinc.org>

Crisis Line: 1-844-763-8861

