



Focus On Families

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Dedicated to Strengthening Families Since 1904

New Collaborative Meets Clients' Psychiatric Needs

Until recently, finding affordable psychiatric care in Houston was nearly impossible. According to a 2004 report by the **Mental Health Needs Council**, 84,000 Harris County residents who are severely ill with depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia depended on the public mental health system. Yet, three times the number of people who received public mental health services went without treatment.

Changes in state funding for mental health services forced organizations like the **Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County (MHMRA)** – a key provider of mental health and psychiatric services for low-income clients – to serve only those individuals with the most severe forms of mental illness like major depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disease. Often, these clients only receive medication to manage mental health problems rather than ongoing counseling and support despite research that shows that psychiatric treatment is most effective when combined with proper medical attention and counseling. Many others suffering from mental health problems have no where to go.

One of Family Services' clients, **Gary Hayes**, found himself in this situation. He was interested in finding affordable psychiatric services, and his clinician at Family Services referred him to **Montrose**



Client, Gary Hayes

Clinic (now known as **Legacy Community Health Services**). The affordable psychiatric treatment he received was made possible by a new collaborative program between **Baylor College of Medicine's Department of Psychology, Family Services, Legacy Community Health Services**, and **Montrose Counseling** to address the gap in mental health services. Through this collaboration, Family Services and Montrose Counseling's clients have

access to psychiatric care and medicines at reduced costs. Baylor provides two psychiatric residents who assess Family Services' clients, prescribe medications, and provide follow-up care. The psychiatric residents are supervised on-site at Montrose

Clinic by a psychiatrist provided by the clinic. One of the residents is bilingual (English/Spanish), which is of particular benefit to many of Family Services' counseling clients.

Gary has been extremely satisfied with the care he receives both at Family Services and the Montrose Clinic. The Baylor resident assessed his problems on the first visit and established a treatment plan. She did a good job explaining his course of treatment, and he is positive about the care he is receiving. He likes that the clinic takes patient

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Healthy Marriages Start with City-Wide Coalition

Until last year, there were few organizations in Houston providing marriage education programs to low-income families. To address this need, Family Services and 30 other community and faith-based organizations joined together. Family Services is the lead partnering organization of the newly formed **Greater Houston Healthy Marriage Coalition** and helped develop the Coalition's one-year strategic plan. One of the primary goals of the Coalition is to support the development of and access to marriage education programs by sponsoring conferences and supporting technical assistance to organizations interested in developing or expanding their marriage education services.

Family Services and the Coalition are part of a larger national effort to foster healthy marriages. In light of research that suggests that children who grow up in two-parent families are healthier physically and less likely to live in poverty than those who do not, the federal government is funding programs that teach the value of marriage. Family Services was one of four groups nationally that received a marriage education grant from the **Office of Community Services' Administration for Children and Families**.

According to the Census Bureau, poverty rates for married couples are half those for unmarried Americans. Single parents in particular are impacted by the additional financial burdens of supporting a family. Half of all marriages end in divorce, which illustrates that many married couples do not have the relationship skills they need to maintain healthy relationships. Family Services has been helping families beat the odds for more than 40 years by offering

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Called to Help at Home and Away

Some of us are called to help others. One staff member stands out for responding to this call, both at Family Services and in his personal life. **Kevin Johnson**, a Family Support Assistant, has been providing case management services to individuals and families at Family Services for six (6) years. In his free time, he also organizes and coordinates sports teams for at-risk youth.

Kevin had traveled with an emergency relief trip to help hurricane victims in 2004 after Hurricane Ivan, but his impressions of the destruction in Louisiana were very different. Traveling

through Metarie, he wondered what people there would return to—he did not have to ask himself those questions in Florida. Though it was difficult for him to hear the hurricane survivors' stories of hardship and to see children struggle with

their grief, he said that he enjoyed helping others. He helped residents in that New Orleans neighborhood

get to the FEMA shelter at the Baton Rouge River Center. Once at the shelter, he explained how to register with FEMA and he assisted the Red Cross workers and volunteers, who were delivering food and water to the people there.

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*"If it weren't for Family Services, I don't know where I'd be."
— Yolanda Manning*

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President's Corner

Looking at Family Services of Greater Houston's logo, I am reminded of the simple fact that caring is at the center of all we do. It is the heart that brings together the family in our logo, and it is what brings people together. Employees know our reputation for caring for the community, and that is what brings them to Family Services. Because our staff care about the people they serve and about building strong individuals, families, and communities, they work hard to help our clients. You, our volunteers and supporters, value our mission as well because the children and families in our community are important to you.

Whether they realize it or not, caring is what brings people to Family Services. Parents attend family life skills and



Nyla K. Woods
President & CEO

parenting classes because they care about their children and want to foster healthy relationships with them. Families attend family counseling and couples go to marriage education classes to resolve conflict and to learn to communicate better. Many adult children turn to our senior support programs for the help they need caring for their aging parents, something they do because they care.

Family Services' clients, staff, board, volunteers, and I are all pleased that we can come together to build healthy families that care about each other. Through programs like counseling and our new marriage education program, we have the opportunity to help our clients heal and grow and to watch how they in turn bring hope to their families and communities. ❤️

Healthy Marriages from page 1

counseling and family relationship, life skills, and parenting classes.

Through its **Marriage Education Program**, Family Services will serve economically disadvantaged and monolingual Spanish-speaking couples. The agency has selected culturally sensitive curricula to address its clients' specific needs. Family Services has completed the research and development phase and will implement the *Marriage Education Program* this spring. Family Services will make it possible for working parents to attend evening classes by providing dinner and childcare to participating families. In the classes, couples will learn about and develop healthy relationship skills, and topics will include understanding marriage, managing conflict, promoting positive connections between spouses, strengthening relationships beyond the couple, enhancing the couple's ability to manage external circumstances and

strengthening parenting.

The 30-hour course spans several months to give couples the opportunity to apply and reflect on what they have learned in class. The course includes a retreat where couples can continue to build upon the progress they have made in class. Additional marriage education activities and counseling will be available to participants even after the program has ended to keep couples actively engaged while they continue to learn, to strengthen their marital relationships and to address specific issues that may arise in their marriage over time.

Family Services will share the lessons learned from this project with the Greater Houston Healthy Marriage Coalition members and with other agencies in the community. As other community providers implement the ideas gained from this project, thousands of low income Houston families will have access to marriage education programming. ❤️

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When Kevin returned to Houston after living at a temporary military camp in Baton Rouge for two weeks, he was back to work at Family Services.

As a Family Support Assistant, he helps clients become independent. **Yolanda Manning**, a mother of three, sings his praises and appreciates how much Family Services has helped her: "If it weren't for Family Services, I don't know where I'd be." Kevin connected her



Kevin Johnson with presents
for client families

to resources, such as emergency food, transportation, and child care, and he helped her find better housing. Once her family's basic needs were met, Yolanda could focus on finding a job. Though she

admits that the job search was frustrating, she persevered and found a job she likes at a car dealership.

This holiday, Kevin Johnson nominated her family to be one of the client families to participate in *Stocking Stuffers*, Family Services' holiday giving program. The gift certificates to grocery stores and the treats her kids received brightened their holiday and helped Yolanda's paycheck go a little further. Yolanda cannot

speak about the strides she has made with Kevin and Family Services' support without tearing up and acknowledges, "Family Services is a blessing to me—it has brought a lot of happiness to me and my kids." ❤️

Style Show Photos



T. R. Reckling and Kate McConn



Becca Cason Thrash and Laura Casey



Diane Lockey Farb, Kelli Blanton and Karen Mayell

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confidentiality very seriously and says, of the clinic, "It is very private. That's what I like about it. They are very prompt, and everything runs smoothly."

Unfortunately, such high praise of an affordable mental health services facility is uncommon.

To date more than 30 of Family Services' clients have benefited from this psychiatric treatment. In the coming year, this project will be supported in part by a grant from the **Cullen Trust for Healthcare**. This innovative program highlights how collaborations can overcome barriers to serve the collective good of clients which in turn benefits the greater community. ❤️

Addition to our 2005 Donor Listing:

British Airways was inadvertently omitted from our Annual Report as a Family Underwriter. We sincerely appreciate British Airways' support and apologize for our oversight.

A Reason to Celebrate in Houston

More than 500 guests got a taste of Italy and all its fashion and flair without having to leave Houston, thanks to Family Services Board Members **Debbie Festari** and **Rosemary Schatzman**. The two chaired a beneficiary event for Family Services, *Una Notte in Italia – A Night in Italy*. The November 16th event featured an Italian Chic Fashion Presentation by **Festari for Men** and dinner, dancing, and big boards. Celebrity male models braved the catwalk in support of Family Services.



Chairmen,
Rosemary Schatzman and Debbie Festari

The most popular auction item was

dinner for 10 with **Debbie and Roger Clemens**. The enthusiastic couple led the live auction, and Roger added 10 World Series baseballs and a pair of cleats he wore in the World Series to sweeten the package.

After the auction, the crowd danced the night away, and everyone had much to celebrate thanks to the hard work and generous contributions of our supporters. The event raised over \$160,000 for Family Services' counseling, education and support programs. Plans are underway for next year's style show. ❤️

The Celebrity Male Models were: **Tony Banks, Jason Bell, Kris Brown, Greg Casey, Ceron, Tim Connolly, Jerry DeLoach, Paul Getty, Mark Grierson, Wayne Gross, Dr. Steve Hamilton, Jim Heins, Michael Holthouse, Alfred Jackson, Jim Kastleman, Bill Larkin, Jim Lee, Javier Loya, Michael Mayell, Mike McClure, Michael Mithoff, Jim Murname, T.R. Reckling, Shafik Rifaat, John Spalding and Michael Trevino.**



Roger Clemens



Mark Grierson



Jason Bell

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Kim Coffman & Associates, DJ: GINO "G", Fashionable Events, Houston Flowerly / Village Flowerly, Printing / Valet: Cynthia McKernan

Thanks to all our supporters!

Holiday Giving Brings Hope and Happiness for the New Year

For many of us, the holiday season brings joy. We enjoy baking cookies, spending time with friends and family, and planning meals. We see the city lit up with sparkling lights and decorations everywhere. And as much as we enjoy deciding on the perfect gifts for friends and family, the hustle and bustle at the mall does not always bring holiday cheer. Yet being able to shop is also a privilege. Thousands of Houstonians do not have the resources to buy gifts or food to share with the people they love.

This year, Family Services wanted its client families to have the opportunity to choose and buy gifts for their own family members and to choose which foods to prepare for their special holiday meal. Nine of Family Services' client families participated in **Stocking Stuffers**, our new holiday giving program. Generous individuals, families, and companies donated stockings with treats and gift cards to grocery and clothing stores, restaurants, and movie theaters. Some



FamilyServices' Client,
Luisa Medina

groups helped out with families' specific needs by paying their utility bills and rent.

All of the families were extremely appreciative. The son of one participating family told his mom that for Christmas he wanted to eat dinner out as a family, and his mom was delighted she could treat him to his Christmas wish with a gift certificate they received. A grandmother was able to

buy her granddaughter something special and buy groceries. One teenager who loves science received the telescope she had dreamed about owning. She told Family Services' staff, "I was saving up money for it, but I had only saved \$10. I was not expecting a telescope for Christmas. I love it. Last night I saw a crater on the moon. It was small, but very cool." Several families could enjoy their holidays without worrying

about bills because their generous sponsors had paid for their utilities and rent. These thoughtful gifts brought happiness and hope for the new year to the families who received them.

Many thanks to our generous supporters **Larry Briggs, Lynna Chung and Brad Densen, Gloria Barley** and her colleagues at **ExxonMobil, Jessica Grieves** and her friends at **StrollerFit Moms, Terry Knutson** at **Anadarko, Patrick Krause, Meggen Wilburn** and her colleagues at **St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital**, and **Lene Pedersen** and her friends, and **SCF Partners**. Thank you for making the holiday season brighter for our client families.

Throughout the year, we welcome this spirit of giving. Students complete our drug prevention and education classes and adults in conversational English classes reach personal milestones. If you are interested in helping us recognize their accomplishments, please call 713-802-7857. ❤️



ExxonMobil Supporter,
Gloria Barley

Confident in English

Maybe you have traveled to a foreign country and experienced the struggle and embarrassment of not speaking the language, but imagine *living* in a country where you never feel confident enough to ask for directions or talk to the cashier at the grocery store. Even mundane tasks are made challenging by the language barrier you face every time you leave the house. Perhaps your children feel more comfortable speaking a foreign language than they do speaking your first language.

For a group of almost thirty Spanish-speaking adults, this reality is changing.



Nell Auchter and Student

On December 16th, they graduated from Family Services' first **Conversational English Class**, a pilot program with support from **Boys & Girls Club –**

Spring Branch and the **Lyons Foundation**. The majority of participating students had studied ESL and spoke English at a beginner level, but they did not feel comfortable carrying on a conversation with a native English speaker. Family Services implemented

Conversational English classes in response to clients who reported that practical English speaking skills were a major need – students

wanted more practice speaking than traditional English as a Second Language (ESL) classes provide.

The students who participated in the ten-week course made great strides. One student revealed that she benefited immensely from listening to a native English speaker and the pronunciation practice. Although she had been exposed to the vocabulary, she was hesitant to use them for fear of mispronouncing them. Now she has more experience using the words she has learned, and she is more confident in her abilities. Another recent graduate is now reading *Harry Potter* books in English with her daughter, and yet another watches movies to practice her listening skills. They all want to continue to learn and were excited to have had this opportunity. ❤️

Celebrate Houston Families with the Family of the Year

Please join Family Services of Greater Houston at River Oaks Country Club on March 1, for our annual *Celebration of Families Luncheon*. This fundraiser supports all of Family Services' programs - programs that bring hope to Houston's families and communities.

This year Family Services recognizes the **Karen and Michael Mayell's** family as the *2006 Family of the Year*. Karen has been an active member of numerous boards and chairs fundraisers for many of Houston's nonprofit organizations. Michael is the President and Chief Operating Officer of **The Meridian Resource Corporation**.



Katy, Kirsten, Karen, Michael and Kelcy Mayell

Both Karen and Michael demonstrate their commitment to families and children

through their involvement in and support of numerous educational and philanthropic endeavors. **Kelli Blanton** is serving as the Luncheon Chair.

Spend a memorable afternoon with Houston's *Family of the Year* and support programs that touch

the lives of thousands of Houston families.

Sponsorships are still available. Call, 713-802-7857, or email luncheon@familyservices.org for more information. ❤️

Upcoming Event

2006 *Celebration of Families Luncheon*

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

River Oaks Country Club

Noon

honoring

Karen & Michael Mayell & Family

For more information about this event, call 713-802-7857.

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Nyla K. Woods
President and Chief Executive Officer

Shunney H.C. Nair
*Senior Vice President,
Communications & Development*



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Family Services of Greater Houston's mission is to strengthen individuals, families and communities through the provision of preventive, supportive and therapeutic services.

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