



Focus On Families

Published by Family Services of Greater Houston

Dedicated to Strengthening Families Since 1904

Another Record-breaking Day at Minute Maid Park

The 10th Annual *Celebration of Families Luncheon* was an incredible success with approximately 400 guests, raising a record-breaking \$241,000 to support the mission and programs of Family Services. The luncheon honored **Mary and Tony Gracely** and their children, **A.J., Adam** and **Jill**, as "Family of the Year." Family Services recognized the Gracely family for their commitment to family values and their support of the community through the **Gracely "Footprints" Foundation**. The foundation provides financial contributions and community leadership for area non-profit organizations. The luncheon was chaired by **Greggory Fields Burk**. Honorary Luncheon Chairs were **Ericka Bagwell, Patty Biggio** and **Debbie Clemens**.

The Gracelys invited several of their close friends to participate in the luncheon, including **Roger Clemens** of the Houston Astros and **Rick Barnes**, the University of Texas Men's Basketball Coach. Clemens took time off from spring training to serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the luncheon. His remarks included a heartfelt profile of Family Services client **Samuel Phelps**. Mr. Phelps shared how Family Services helped him and his family improve their lives. (To learn more about this amazing client, please see the related article,



Adam, Tony, Mary, Jill and A.J. Gracely

"Second Chances: A Journey with the Phelps Family.")

Rick Barnes also took time out of his busy schedule to participate in the festivities. As part of Barnes' warm introduction, he shared, "I can tell you that I'm not sure I've ever been around a family who has truly understood the gift of giving as much as the Gracelys do."

In addition to their generous support of Family Services, the Gracelys are also involved with a variety of other health and human services organizations, such as the **Crohn's and Colitis Foundation** and **March of Dimes**.

Burk and Honorary Luncheon Chairs Ericka Bagwell, Patty Biggio and Debbie Clemens closed the event by awarding raffle prizes from **British Airways, Houston Astros, and Neiman Marcus**. Guest **Stephanie Levy** enjoyed a particularly sweet dessert. An 18K gold **Elsa Peretti®** Open Heart pendant with chain was hidden inside her dessert. The necklace was generously donated by **Tiffany & Co.**

The success of the luncheon would not be possible without our extremely generous sponsors. Master of Ceremonies Roger Clemens jokingly revised the categories from offensive successes to defensive achievements. Hence, "Grand Slam" sponsors **Patrick &**

Greggory Fields Burk with J D Fields & Company and the **Gracely "Footprints" Foundation** became "A Perfect Game" sponsors. "3 Run Homer" sponsors **British Airways** and **Dr. and Mrs. John P. McGovern** became "Shut Out Game" sponsors and "2 Run Homer" sponsors **Gene Graham, Bobby and Beth Reeves, Anna Lee and Andy Waite** and **Westside Lexus / Northside Lexus** became "15 Strike Outs" sponsors. Regardless of their titles, all of our sponsors are greatly appreciated.

To view photos from the luncheon, please visit www.familyservices.org and go to our "Latest News" page.

Second Chances: A Journey With The Phelps Family

As part of the *Celebration of Families Luncheon*, Family Services client **Samuel Phelps** shared his story with guests, describing how Family Services changed his life and reunited his family.

Samuel and **Sherry Phelps** were living in Wisconsin and had been happily married for 12 years when they adopted their first child through a ministry program at their church. Soon after 6-month old Samantha arrived, Sherry learned that she was expecting a baby boy.

Then, in 1994, the family was devastated to learn that Samuel's father had contracted AIDS. Samuel was conflicted between traveling to Texas to care for his dying father and staying to help Sherry with the children. After much consideration, Samuel made the difficult

See Second Chances page 3



Debbie Clemens, Patty Biggio and Ericka Bagwell



Roger Clemens, Connie Clancy and Samuel Phelps



Patrick and Greggory Fields Burk



Andy and Anna Lee Waite

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President's Corner

Finally – Spring is here! We are happy to welcome the new season with its improved weather (we hope), blooming wildflowers and new beginnings. The latter of these is particularly important to Family Services as we strive to provide individuals and families with the tools, skills and assistance they need to help them start anew, or just get back on their feet. You can see this at work in a number of articles in this edition, including our record-breaking 10th Annual Celebration of Families Luncheon, newest board members and a client profile that demonstrates the value of our services in the lives of Houston-area families.

The new season also brings new challenges. The 79th Texas Legislature is working to address issues imperative to the current and future health of our clients and our organization. Budget cuts made during the last legislative session reduced mental health benefits to those on the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, while limiting funding to mental health providers and organizations.

Those cuts have been widely related to an approximate 40% increase in the utilization of hospital emergency rooms and community health clinics for mental

health treatment. The results of these cuts can be seen in a recent study by The Mental Health Association in Texas showing that Texas loses \$17 billion a year in economic productivity due to mental illness. In addition, underfunding of mental health services results in more mentally ill people crowding prisons, jails, emergency rooms and the streets.

We are providing support to the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast on their Public Policy Agenda for the current legislative session, particularly in those areas that most affect our clients and our organization.

We welcome your support as we work with the Legislature to reinstate mental health benefits to those in need. There are a number of ways you can participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of Family Services. You can send an e-mail, write a letter, meet with your Legislator or provide us with your legislative contacts. Your support does help!

You are invited to "spring" into action with us by getting involved with our advocacy efforts, contributing to our annual giving campaign, or simply visiting our web site at www.familyservices.org for more information. We look forward to working with you to better the lives of everyone in the Houston community.



Nyla K. Woods
President & CEO

Welcome Aboard

Family Services proudly announces four new additions to our Board of Directors.

Greggory Fields Burk is extremely active with a variety of area non-profit organizations.

Greggory most recently served as Luncheon Chair for our 10th Annual Celebration of Families Luncheon, helping raise a record-breaking \$241,000. She serves on the Board of Directors of JD Fields & Company and the Advisory Board for the University of Houston Moores School of Music. Greggory also donates her time to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, American Cancer Society, Crohn's and Colitis Foundation and is an active member of the Junior League of Houston.



Greggory Fields Burk

Brian Q. Carmichael is a Partner with Locke Liddell & Sapp LLP, where he practices in the areas of personal injury, pharmaceutical litigation, professional liability defense and commercial litigation, among other areas. He is a member of the Houston Bar Association, State Bar of Texas, National Bar



Brian Q. Carmichael

Association and the American Bar Association. He is also very active in the community and participates in Leadership Houston and is a Board Member and Officer of the Southwest Youth Football League.

Dawn M. Fitzgerald is an accomplished manager of leading technology projects and serves as Manager of Service Level Planning and Reporting for BMC Software. She was recognized at BMC's annual event for the successful and accelerated implementation of Vignette, a global content management application. Dawn is a founding member of Women in Technology International – Houston, is an active board member of the Association of Women in Computing (AWC) – Houston and is a Houston Achievement Place advisory board member.



Dawn M. Fitzgerald

Stephen M. Fraga is President of Tejas Office Products, Inc., a family-owned operation and distributor of office products and furniture. Stephen has thrice been awarded the MBE Executive Business Scholarship Award by the Houston



Stephen M. Fraga

Giving Changes Lives

Your donation to Family Services helps change lives, as evidenced by the 54,000 people in the Greater Houston community we served during our 2003-2004 fiscal year. Our 2004-2005 Annual Giving Campaign is under way and there is still time to make a donation. For your convenience, a donation envelope has been included in the newsletter and contributions will be accepted until June 30th. We have already raised more than \$45,000 and offer a heartfelt thanks to all our donors and community supporters. Because of generous contributors like you, Family Services was able to make a difference in the following ways:

- **5,905** individuals and families received counseling to solve problems like marital conflicts and parenting difficulties.
- **12,857** students participated in our Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Program and learned about the negative effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
- **8,035** families and **4,352** senior adults received assistance with accessing food, housing, transportation, medical and legal services.
- **16,346** students in more than 60 schools received services to help them achieve personal, social and academic success.
- **5,241** parents learned positive discipline techniques and effective communication strategies to improve their parenting skills and family relationships.
- **1,315** people living with HIV/AIDS received counseling and were connected to needed services to help them maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Your support allows us to have a positive impact on so many of our neighbors in need. Please help Family Services continue its tradition of service by making a contribution to the 2004-2005 Annual Giving Campaign! For more information, call 713-802-7857.

Minority Business Council. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Greater Heights Area Chamber of Commerce, the Business Development Board for Sterling Bank (Heights office) and is a member of the Houston Minority Business Council. He is also actively involved with his alma mater, Texas A & M University.

Please help us welcome these four outstanding community volunteers to our Board of Directors. We are excited about their addition to the Family Services team and look forward to benefiting from their expertise, energy and leadership.

Leadership Houston Award

Family Services recently received **Leadership Houston's 2005 Leadership in Action Award for *Ensueños del Futuro / Dreams for the Future***, our substance abuse prevention and education program. We were recognized as a community organization that has "made extraordinary contributions toward the betterment of life in the greater Houston area."

Ensueños del Futuro has been teaching students and families about the dangers of alcohol,

tobacco and drug addictions since 1996. The program also provides supportive services, such as parent education, counseling, referrals, field trips and educational activities for the students. Family Services receives funding from **Burlington Resources, the Department of State Health Services, Houston Endowment Inc. and John P.**



Family Services staff and Board members attend Leadership Houston Awards Luncheon

McGovern Foundation to support *Ensueños del Futuro*.

Second Chances continued from page 1

decision to be with his father. It was during this family crisis that he experimented with drugs and became addicted. "I searched for a way out. I searched for answers and the answers weren't there. I took the low road and I chose drugs."

Upon his return to Wisconsin, Samuel and Sherry tried to work through their problems, but Samuel was gradually sinking deeper and deeper into his addiction. After two years of struggling and just five months after Sherry gave birth to twin girls, Samuel's addiction overtook him. He told Sherry he was going to work one morning and never returned home. His absence was so complete that she assumed he was dead.

In reality, Samuel was deeply involved with his addiction and he became incarcerated at Pam Lychner State Jail for drug-related offenses in 2003. It was during his nine-month sentence that Samuel sought help through Family Services' *Family Reintegration Program*. The program's primary objective is to prepare incarcerated fathers for reconnection with their families through counseling and relationship skills training. The program was established as part of a pilot program with the **State Attorney General's** office, and due to its success, has been continued by Family Services.

Samuel was eager to reestablish contact with his family. He worked diligently with Program Coordinator **Connie Clancy** to better understand the issues that resulted in his addiction and the concerns facing his family. Connie contacted Sherry and worked to alleviate her concerns by providing guidance on the therapeutic importance of allowing the children to know Samuel on their own terms. With Sherry's approval, Samuel wrote the first of many letters to his children. The children were thrilled and expressed their singular Christmas

wish: to have their dad back in their lives.

Upon his release last year, with assistance from Family Services, Samuel continued communicating with his family, which led to their reunion during the Christmas holidays. It was the first time he had seen his children in seven years. They had grown into a lively group of 12-year old Samantha, 10-year old Isiah and 8-year old twins, Tenisha and Elisha.

Samuel now speaks with his children almost every day. He and Sherry have begun dating again and they are slowly rebuilding their family.



Samuel Phelps and Family

"If it had not been for the efforts of Family Services and Ms. Clancy, my children's lives would still be fragmented," Sherry said. "I'm beginning to see the Sam I once knew and I have seen a positive change in my children."

These sentiments are echoed by Samuel. "My story is alive and well today because of the help I received from Family Services. This is the first program that really helped me move on with my life. This one gave me the tools to move on with my life by showing me how a drug addiction affects not just you, but so many people around you," he said.

"The most valuable part of this program," Samuel said, "is the continued support system. They go beyond the call of duty. Family Services gave me hope where there was none by giving me back my family."

During the luncheon, Master of Ceremonies Roger Clemens applauded Samuel for "being a strong man in mind and body" and reminded the audience, "This is what's it's all about folks. This is the reason you are here."

The *Family Reintegration Program* is just one of many provided by Family Services that supports the organization's mission of strengthening individuals and families through counseling, education and support services.

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Thanks to all our supporters!

Changing the Community: Spotlight on Baytown

Family Services recently received a generous grant of \$11,000 from

ExxonMobil for school-based services in the Baytown community. We are most appreciative of the efforts of ExxonMobil employee and Family Services Board member **Zeb Nash**. Zeb recently met some

of the students at the School Community Guidance Center along with Family Services' clinician, **Flo Sanchez**. These school-based services enable students



Zeb Nash, Family Services Board Member with students and Flo Sanchez, Family Services Clinician

who are at-risk for dropping out and their families to achieve personal, social and academic success.

Flo works with students at three Baytown area high schools. Many of the students face obstacles such as poverty, substance abuse and limited formal education. Family Services' counseling services are unique in the Baytown area as they are provided on campus and in Spanish. Flo helps his clients overcome the stresses that threaten their academic success. Since

education is the primary route out of poverty, the entire community benefits whenever students succeed.

During the 2003 – 2004 school year, 69% of the students receiving counseling services reported an improvement in managing their problems and 78% reported an improvement in dealing with stress. Research indicates that as problems and stress are reduced, students have more potential for academic and personal success.

With the support of the **United Way of the Baytown Area** and corporate sponsors such as ExxonMobil, Family Services has provided counseling services in the Baytown area for more than 20 years. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and our efforts in Baytown schools.

More Fun at Minute Maid Park



Lynn Guggolz and Karen Mayell



Harry and Cora Sue Mach



Joseph and Cathy Garcia-Prats



John and Barbara Patton

Counseling program receives high honor

For the sixth year, Family Services' *Individual and Family Counseling Program* received the "Best Practices Award" from **Mental Health Corporations of America, Inc.** for highest customer satisfaction among 60 outpatient programs across the country. This award is a true indication of the excellent quality of care that Family Services provides!

Focus on Families is published by Family Services of Greater Houston. Family Services is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Family Services is a member of The Alliance for Children and Families and an affiliate of the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast.

Nyla K. Woods
President and Chief Executive Officer

Shunney H.C. Nair
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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