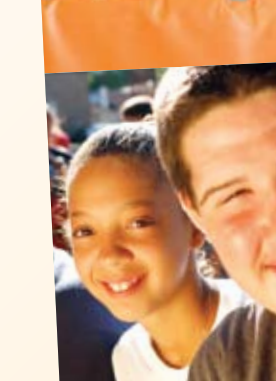


YMCA HAPPENINGS

a newsletter for friends of the YMCA of Greater Houston



Overcoming Obstacles the YMCA Way

Americans will forever remember the tragedy of September 11, 2001, but Texans will also remember September 12, 2008. It's the day Hurricane Ike tore through the Gulf Coast on to Galveston Island and headed inland. More than one million people evacuated the Texas coast.

When it was all over, thousands of homes were destroyed, families were displaced, dozens of lives were lost and more than five million households were left without power. The Category 2 hurricane didn't just impact lives in Texas, but caused flooding and deaths as far away as Pennsylvania and Illinois.

The Galveston Family YMCA, located on the island, sustained severe damage and was closed indefinitely.

"Looking at all the devastation was so overwhelming, especially to see where you used to live no longer there," says Jami Huygens, executive director of the Galveston Family YMCA. "There are no other words to describe it except to say that it looked like a war zone where many, many bombs went off."

Hours turned into days and days into weeks, as individuals and families across Texas waited for power to be restored in neighborhoods and communities, ravaged by the storm. Water, ice and food were running low and frustrations high. Families were in need.

Without hesitation, the YMCA of Greater Houston opened the doors of ten of its 41 centers that were operational to the public. It was a place where individuals and families could cool off, take a shower and charge their cell phones or laptop batteries. As power was restored, more Y centers were opened to the public. By the third week, only two centers were closed indefinitely due to severe damage - the Galveston Family YMCA and YMCA Camp Pine Tree.

Light at the end of the tunnel began to shine brighter as

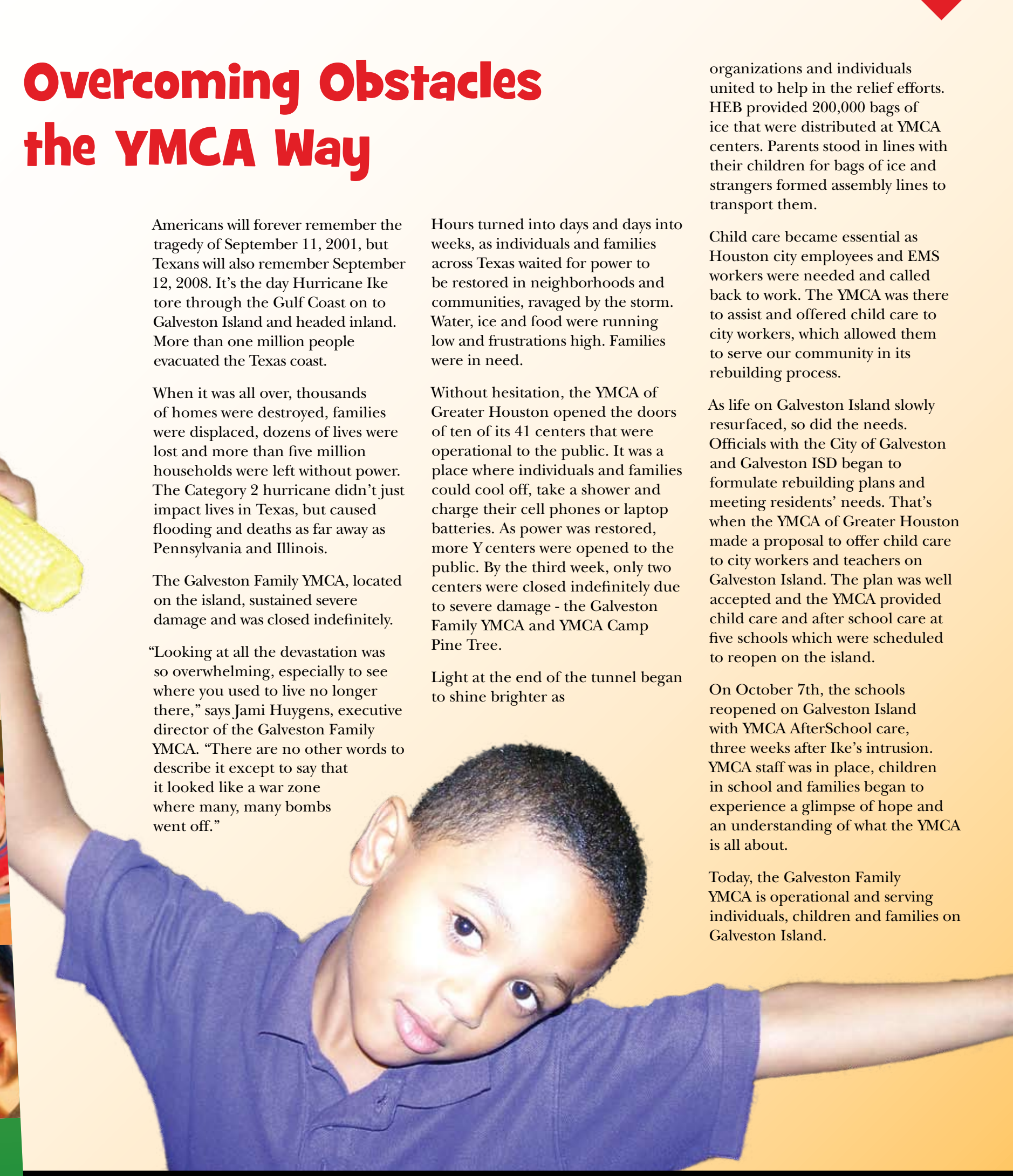
organizations and individuals united to help in the relief efforts. HEB provided 200,000 bags of ice that were distributed at YMCA centers. Parents stood in lines with their children for bags of ice and strangers formed assembly lines to transport them.

Child care became essential as Houston city employees and EMS workers were needed and called back to work. The YMCA was there to assist and offered child care to city workers, which allowed them to serve our community in its rebuilding process.

As life on Galveston Island slowly resurfaced, so did the needs. Officials with the City of Galveston and Galveston ISD began to formulate rebuilding plans and meeting residents' needs. That's when the YMCA of Greater Houston made a proposal to offer child care to city workers and teachers on Galveston Island. The plan was well accepted and the YMCA provided child care and after school care at five schools which were scheduled to reopen on the island.

On October 7th, the schools reopened on Galveston Island with YMCA AfterSchool care, three weeks after Ike's intrusion. YMCA staff was in place, children in school and families began to experience a glimpse of hope and an understanding of what the YMCA is all about.

Today, the Galveston Family YMCA is operational and serving individuals, children and families on Galveston Island.



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Galveston student enjoys YMCA AfterSchool care and a healthy snack at one of five schools that reopened on Galveston Island.



Dear Friends,



What an incredible year of programs and service it has been at the YMCA! With record breaking

numbers of children and families impacted by YMCA Operation Backpack, Water Wise and Hurricane Ike relief efforts, it has truly been a year to remember.

Thousands of children were able to start the school year off right with all of the necessary supplies because of generous Houstonians who contributed to YMCA Operation Backpack. We had more sponsors than ever before including the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, ABC13, KSBJ Radio, Toyota, Devon Energy, IBC Bank, RediClinic and Memorial City Mall. YMCA Operation Backpack continues to be a tremendous win for all in our community.

Nearly 5,000 kids and adults learned about water safety and drowning prevention through YMCA Water Wise. This awareness campaign is so vital to Houston because this year's total number of drownings surpassed last year's number of drowning deaths in our city. How blessed we are to have a YMCA program that teaches basic swim lessons to underserved children. Our aquatics team, instructors and lifeguards literally save lives through YMCA Water Wise and we thank them for their hard work and dedication.

I am amazed at the YMCA's immediate response to the call to action following Hurricane Ike last September. No one knew the devastation it was going to have on our great state and others states as far away as Ohio. It was a natural disaster so great that it crippled us for months. Many people are still living in tents on Galveston Island.

Within days of the storm the YMCA was there for the community offering practical needs like showers, shelter, water and ice. Within a week, child care was offered to city workers and emergency personnel. Just weeks following Ike, a plan to help Galveston get back on its feet surfaced. Child care and YMCA AfterSchool programs were made available to Galveston students and their families.

Like a lighthouse, the YMCA has been a beacon of hope to countless lives. Thank you for allowing me to serve with you on this journey throughout the past year. The highlight of my tenure is having the opportunity to observe the mission of the YMCA being carried out by staff and volunteers in all our centers. I have felt so privileged to serve in this position and know without a doubt that my successor, Tommy Parker, will do a phenomenal job as the next Board Chair. Together, our light shines on...and on.

Sincerely,

Beth Shea, Board Chair



Bob and Sally Thomas, serving YMCA kids and families for more than 20 years.

Donor Profile:

Bob & Sally Thomas

Giving is a way of life for Bob and Sally Thomas. Raised during the Great Depression, Bob knows what it's like to be without. He also knows what it's like to give. It's a lesson he learned from his parents.

"My father had a store and I watched him give folks what they needed in good faith. No money exchanged hands. He trusted that they would reimburse him. Some did and some didn't", Bob recalls.

For the last 20 years, Bob and Sally have given faithfully and tirelessly to the advancement of children at the YMCA. Bob has served on the YMCA board since 1988.

"What the Y does for kids is extraordinary. Kids come from different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles and the YMCA can

have these kids together, learning and developing and having fun doing it!" said Bob

The Thomas' have four daughters who have followed in their parents footsteps of philanthropy.

"We've taught our children that we're all put here for a reason with the expectation that when we leave this world, it will be a little better. The Y does this from almost the cradle to the grave," Bob said.

The Thomas' understand the importance of investing in today's young people.

"Kids are looking for role models and searching for values so they can look to the future with hope and confidence," said Sally, whose first Y experience was teaching swimming lessons in Western Canada. "The YMCA does that. They are building a foundation for citizens of the future."

What the Thomas' may not know is they are too.



YMCA Water Wise

More than 4,800 kids and adults were impacted through this year's YMCA Water Wise, a multifaceted awareness campaign designed to educate the community about drowning prevention and water safety, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. With drowning the second leading cause of accidental death among children, the YMCA is committed to making a difference through water safety education. YMCA Water Wise includes swim lessons at area apartment complexes, a traveling speakers' bureau, a television and billboard PSA campaign, educational materials and a website with water safety tips, CPR information and swim lesson schedules.

Building and Rebuilding Strong Communities

Hurricane Ike Relief



The YMCA offered free preschool care for Galveston I.S.D. teachers so that they could get back to work and help children get back to school.



Preschool children in Galveston sing and dance at a YMCA child care on facility on the island.



Families carry cases of water distributed at Willow Creek Apartments, one of the YMCA's community outreach sites.



Free YMCA AfterSchool is offered to Galveston I.S.D. students as the community works together to rebuild.



Houston Police officers form an assembly line to help distribute ice at one of the YMCA's community outreach sites.



Dozens of strangers volunteer along side each other distributing ice to families at YMCA sites.



Men, women and children stand in line for bags of ice donated by H.E.B. at Willow Creek Apartments, one of the YMCA's community outreach sites.



Families carry bags of ice distributed at YMCA community outreach sites following Hurricane Ike.



Families use strollers, grocery carts and golf carts to transport ice home.



A young boy helps stack ice at one of the YMCA's community outreach sites.



Impacting Kids and Families:

YMCA Operation Backpack

More than 33,600 children and their families were impacted by the 4th Annual YMCA Operation Backpack campaign, Houston's largest school supply drive. As many as 16,500 backpacks and 199,462 school supplies were collected, enabling thousands of students to start the school year off right. The generosity of Houstonians, our media partners, parishes and sponsors, made this year's campaign the largest ever. Thank you!

2008 REPORT CARD

NAME: YMCA Operation Backpack

DATE: July 12th - August 17th

Backpacks 16,500

School Supplies 199,462

Number of children and families impacted 33,600+



Sponsored by:



Top:
Kids at YMCA
Texas Medical
Center Child Care
Center strike a pose.

Middle:
Teens at South
Montgomery County
Family YMCA load
up a truck with
backpacks.

Right:
Kids in Child Watch
at the Katy Family
YMCA spell success
with their collection
of donations.

Partners Campaign Impact

Dear Friends,

With your help, since 2004, the YMCA has increased our Association Partners goal by over 50 percent. In 2004, we set our sights on raising \$550,000 and in 2008, we will raise \$950,000. This is a dramatic increase in a short amount of time.

What is driving this growth? The need in the Greater Houston area for the kind of impact the YMCA makes on the lives of children, families and the community as a whole. I am pleased to report on what your gift did in these lives in 2008 . . . Thank You.



Robert McFadden
2008 Association
Partners Chair



Youth Development:

Empowering and developing children is one of the most important goals of the YMCA of Greater Houston. To this end, we have devoted more than 71% of all funds raised in our Partners campaign towards youth development. Our work with kids encompasses programs such as Aldine's youth mentoring project, partnering at-risk youth with caring adults who shepherd youth through some of life's most challenging times to MD Anderson's Eco Art/Earth Service Corps program that teaches children to appreciate and steward earth's beauty and how to incorporate this appreciation into art.

Your gift helps developmentally challenged children take new steps with confidence at Conroe's Therapeutic Riding program. Teens in the Huntsville area now have a much-needed "safe place" to hang out in their community. At the Post Oak YMCA, a new teen radio station is being launched, enabling teens to take their love of music and take ownership of a positive community resource. At the Texas Medical Center child care center, your generous donations enable children in the all-day and after-school program to participate in karate and tumbling programs.

All of these YMCA programs combine to make the greater Houston area a safer, stronger community for the more than 70,000 children and teens that come to the YMCA each day.

International Programs:

Our local staff are given the opportunity to build relationships and gain a new sense of global connection to children and families all over the world. Each year, 13 staff from the YMCA of Greater Houston travel across the world to help build schools at one of our sister YMCAs in Vietnam.

Family Programs:

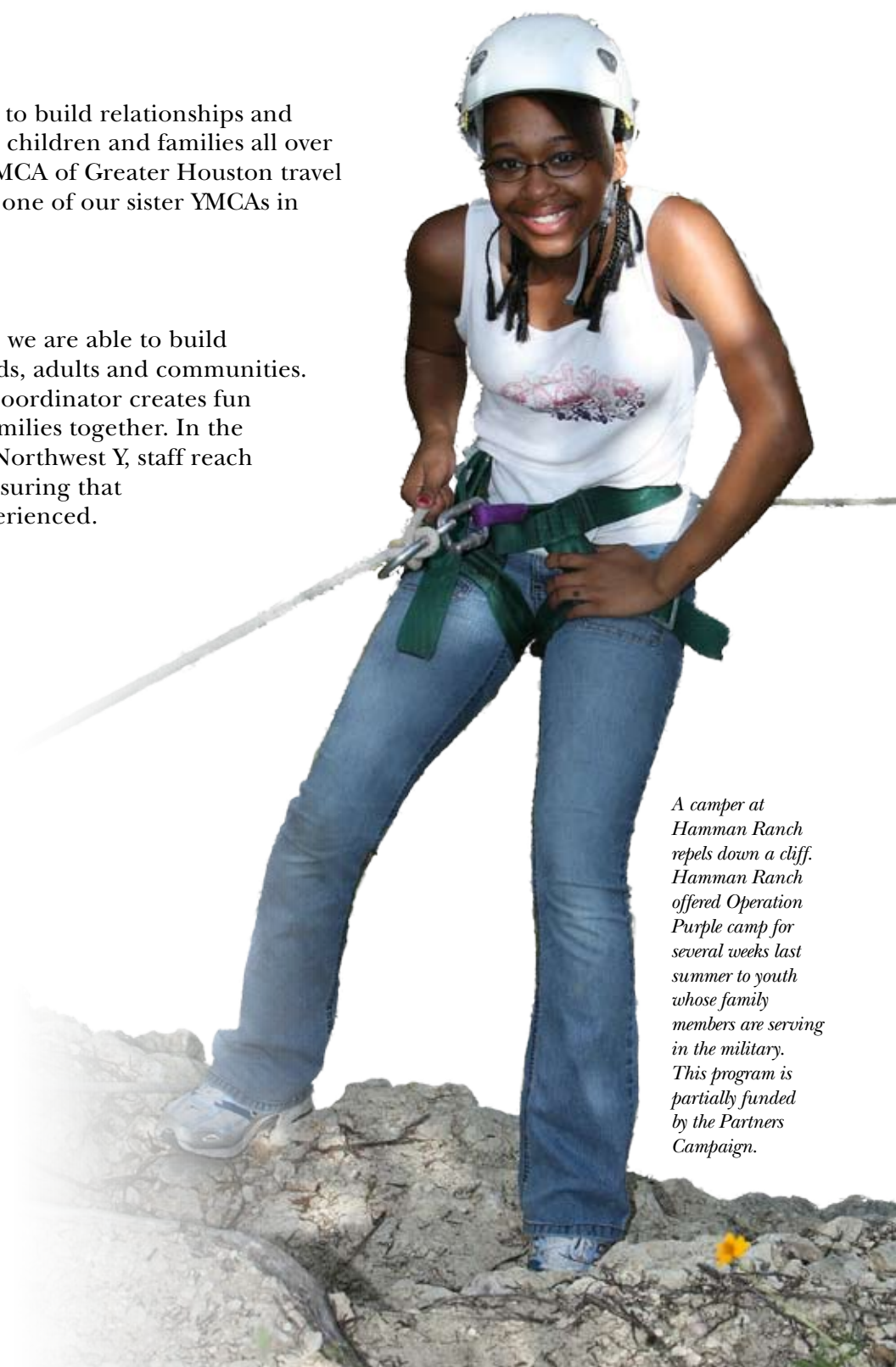
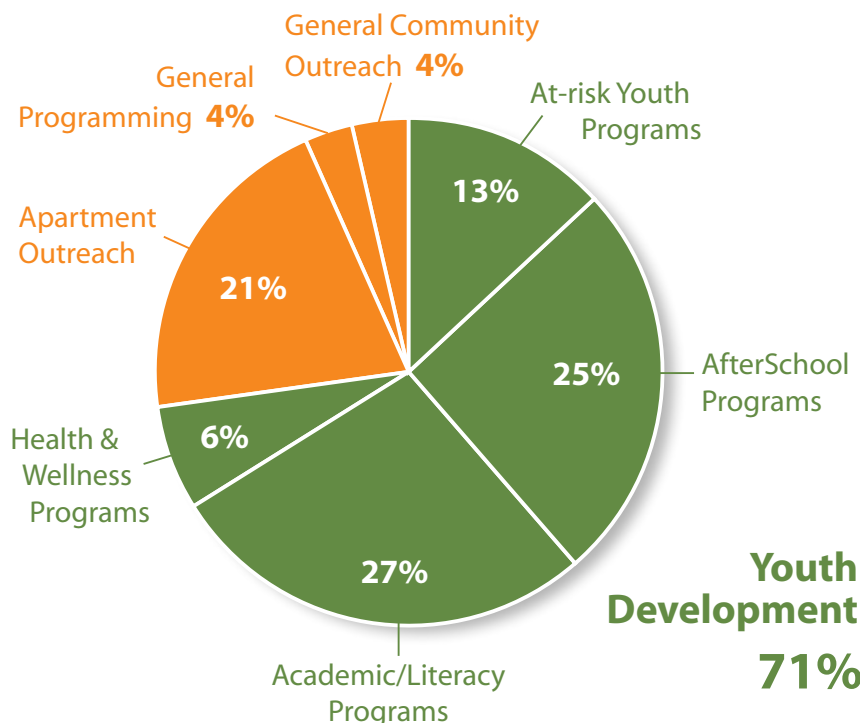
Families are under great pressure. When we are able to build stronger families, we ensure healthier kids, adults and communities. In the Alief community, a family events coordinator creates fun programs which strengthen and bond families together. In the Las Casita apartment complex near the Northwest Y, staff reach out to families struggling in isolation, ensuring that community in its best sense is being experienced.



YMCA AfterSchool care (top) and the YMCA Leap of Faith, an equine assisted therapy program, are both supported by the Partners Campaign.

Family Programs

29%



A camper at Hamman Ranch repels down a cliff. Hamman Ranch offered Operation Purple camp for several weeks last summer to youth whose family members are serving in the military. This program is partially funded by the Partners Campaign.



YMCA AfterSchool- A Place for Everyone

Needs knows no limit. No boundaries. So, when Thuy Nguyen came to the United States with his family from Vietnam 11 years ago he relied on friends to point him in the right direction. One friend did and told him about YMCA AfterSchool.

Today, Nguyen's son Tommy, a second grader at Alexander Elementary School, has participated in the YMCA AfterSchool program for the past two years. The 8-year-old, who suffers from autism, attends the Alief YMCA AfterSchool program at Liestman Elementary School. It's the place where Tommy, a once timid and shy little boy, now excels.

"When we first came to the Alief YMCA, I was worried. My son didn't talk to anyone. He had no friends. He was always upset," said Thuy Nguyen, Tommy's father. "It wasn't too long before he began to smile again.



Tommy (right) colors a picture at the Alief Family YMCA's AfterSchool.

Now, he has friends and is so much happier here and at home."

Nguyen, who speaks very little English, encountered several challenges while living in a foreign land including, a language barrier. Since he was unable to read or speak English, Nguyen also found it difficult to help his son with his homework. That's where the YMCA stepped in.



Tommy plays cars on the road mat at the Alief Family YMCA's AfterSchool.

"They (YMCA staff) began to help Tommy with his homework and help him speak better English. Then, he began to make friends," Nguyen said.

But the transition wasn't as easy as it sounds. When Tommy started at the Alief YMCA in 2006, he didn't talk to anyone. He wanted to be left alone. The staff waited patiently, encouraging him along the way. None of the multi-cultural books, toys or books interested Tommy. He didn't even want to play any games. It wasn't until Tommy was paired up with another child in the after school program, that he began to come out of his shell.

"We have a buddy system. Each week, a child is paired with another child in order to make new friends. It helps the children care for one another-an important developmental asset," said Linda Roberson, YMCA AfterSchool site director at Liestman Elementary.

"I've seen a tremendous change in Tommy over the last two years. He listens, follows rules and cooperates more. He also understands right from wrong. I think he finally knows that we care about him," added Jackie Dillman, Alief YMCA Child Care Director

Nurturing their relationship with Tommy over the years, YMCA teachers and staff have learned that he's a sensitive boy who likes to play with toy trucks and computer games. His father has learned that his son is capable of succeeding in this big world. Tommy, too, has learned a bit about himself — he has plenty of friends.

Thank You to Our 2008 Heritage Club Members

Because of your gift of a lifetime, hope is a place called the YMCA today and in the future.



Heritage Club Members attend a special reception in their honor at the YMCA Annual Celebration on November 12th.



William Ginder
Mike Ledbetter
Heidi Brasher
David Chess
Mr. & Mrs. John Willett
Scott & Jennifer Harper
Gina Mitchell
George & Ruby Sandars
Lionel & Christina Bacon
William Cossaboom
John & Sharon Reyes
Geri Rochford
Richard & Maria Rodriguez
Jeff & Gina Peterson
Michael Pfisterer
Dr. & Mrs. Ted Piliszek

Mandy & John Stelzer
Sandra Clifton
Kirby & Patricia Schnabel
Kevin & Mary Jean Murphy
Nathan A. Green
Ryan & Kari Penrose
Sheila Dansby-Harvey
Steven Simmons
Scott Wiseman
Leonardo & Rachel Orduno
Richard Pearson III
Brandy & Amanda Perryman
Dr. B.J. Westbrook
Bert Ruiz
Ruth O'Brien
Mr. & Mrs. Carl B. King



Students Touching Lives Across the State

Some 65 high school students and more than a dozen chaperones, traveled to El Paso for this year's Teen Escape this summer. Students rolled up their sleeves to initiate a neighborhood clean-up, which included painting homes and picking up trash and debris in the colonia of Agua Dulce, near the desert. The people of El Paso were grateful and forever changed, but so were our teens:

"The purpose of Teen Escape is to do service while learning about life in another part of the state. It's a whole new world in your own backyard."

Phung (Linda) Pham, 12 grade, Cesar Chavez High School

"Knowing the things that we take for granted are things that some people need the most."

Nancy Vo, 12th grade, Kerr High School

"The YMCA teaches leadership skills and that small things make a big difference."

Caleb Dunn, 9th grade, Bellaire High School

"The YMCA is trying to help us learn to help others, to care more and to have an experience that will last a lifetime."

Channel Smith, 9th grade

"No matter what economic status you have, we are still all human beings and we should help one another."

Emmanuel Suaste, 12th grade, Alief Taylor High School

"I've learned the importance of working hard, that little things mean a lot and that hard work pays off."

CeCe White, 9th grade, HSPVA



2008 Chevron Jingle Bell Run & Walk

Bells will be ringing as more than 5,000 runners hit the streets of downtown Houston for the 25th Annual Chevron Jingle Bell Run and Walk on Saturday, December 14, 2008. The kids fun run will be followed by the 5-mile adult run and 3-mile family walk. Proceeds will benefit the youth and seniors at the Downtown Family YMCA.

For details, visit www.jinglebellrun.com



Tellepsen Unveiling

On September 9th, YMCA President and CEO Clark Baker revealed plans to rebuild and rename the Downtown YMCA in honor of the Tellepsen family. For four generations, the Tellepsens have been known for service and dedication to the YMCA and to the City of Houston. The new Tellepsen Family YMCA will be located at 808 Pease in downtown Houston. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2009.

IKE Ice Relief

After several days without power caused by Hurricane Ike on September 12th, hundreds of Houstonians volunteered their time and energy to help one another transport ice at YMCA sites. Men, women and children waited in lines for the cool commodity. More than 200,000 bags of ice, donated by HEB, were distributed.



YMCA of the Greater Houston Area
1600 Louisiana
Houston, TX 77002

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Our Mission: To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. We strive to turn no one away due to inability to pay.

Events



Hispanic Heritage Month

YMCA staff, volunteers and friends at the Aldine-Greenspoint Family Y celebrated Hispanic Heritage month in September with a zumba-thon. Dozens of individuals, children and their families turned out for the fun celebration.



Annual Celebration 2008

FOR ALL

YMCA/Theatre Under The Stars participants perform, "We're All in This Together"



The YMCA's 2008 Annual Celebration was held at the Hilton America's in downtown Houston on November 12th. This year's theme centered on the YMCA's mission, to build healthy spirit, mind and body *for all*. More than 41 volunteers representing each YMCA center, camp and special program were honored and recognized for their service at the YMCA.

The drum line for the Ocean of Soul Texas Southern University Marching Band make their way to the stage through the ballroom.



YMCA President and CEO Clark Baker reflects on the successes and the future of the YMCA as it embraces an environment that is inclusive of all.



Businessman Walter Shepherd was honored with the David Allen Award for his community support.



Gene Reed accepted the Galloway Award on behalf of The George Foundation