



**Texas Homeless Network Awards
2011**

Award Categories:

Outstanding Homeless Coalition

Outstanding Service Award

Outstanding Community Organization

Outstanding Case Manager

Outstanding Homeless Liaison (Chosen by THEO)

The Outstanding McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison award was created to recognize the significant role of homeless liaisons in breaking the cycle of homelessness through education. In their complex position, liaisons advocate on behalf of homeless students, their families, and their caregivers. They work tirelessly not only to assure enrollment, attendance, and academic success for their students, but also serve as critical links to support services in their communities.

The Texas Homeless Education Office selects the Outstanding McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison award and presents it to the recipient at the annual Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness.

Kathy Reid Award (To be announced)

The Kathy Reid Award was created to honor the work of Texas Homeless Network's outgoing Executive Director. As Executive Director of Texas Homeless Network, Ms. Reid worked diligently and passionately to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Texas. The Kathy Reid Award is presented every year at the annual Texas Conference on Ending Homelessness to those persons whose work has a statewide and/or national positive impact on the lives of homeless people and those who show great dedication to the notion that no person should be excluded from having safe, decent, and affordable housing.

And the outstanding winners are:

Homeless Coalition

*Homeless Issues Partnership, Corpus Christi
Nominated by members of HIP*

The Homeless Issues Partnership, Inc. (HIP) a 501(c)(3) organization, was chartered in 1998-1999 as a non-profit organization. Initially, its purpose was to oversee and provide services to agencies serving the homeless and to pursue collaborative grant opportunities. The geographic service area targeted all citizens within Corpus Christi and Nueces County. Known also as the region's Continuum of Care for the Homeless, HIP's mission is to serve as a "regional coalition of agencies, individuals and businesses addressing and resolving issues related to homelessness in the Coastal Bend through actions, resources and education."

HIP's charge was to bring agencies and individuals together with the common purpose of helping the homeless rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society. Even before it was incorporated, HIP has successfully prepared a Continuum-wide collaborative grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Since 1996, annual funding has exceeded \$1 million to the region's programs and services helping the homeless.

In collaboration with the City, HIP has worked to implement objectives set forth in the City's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and in the annual plan developed for the Continuum's HUD grant application. Monthly meetings are open to any agency or individual interested in serving the homeless. Since 2000, HIP also has held an annual sunrise service to raise awareness of those individuals who have died on the streets. Biannually, HIP conducts a Point-In-Time survey to ascertain the homeless community's needs and project the number of homeless within the Continuum's geographic area. Last year HIP began conducting a homeless count in years the full survey isn't conducted. Two years ago HIP began sponsoring a Homeless Awareness Walk held during National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week in November. 2011 saw the first annual agency fair to provide information directly to homeless individuals. HIP plans to sponsor this event again in 2012.

Most recently, HIP was asked to participate as a team member on a Homeless Initiative sponsored by the Corpus Christi Police Department, in addition to local government, civic and business leaders. CCPD and the Mayor of Corpus Christi are looking at a project similar to the Prospect Courtyard at Haven for Hope in San Antonio, and HIP hopes to work closely with all entities to ensure the needs of the homeless are well represented.

HIP has worked hard over the years to bring together the disparate entities in this community working with the homeless and near homeless population – the local school district, local government, faith-based groups, local foundations, social service providers and other citizens interested in this issue. Dozens – even hundreds - of individuals and volunteers have taken a lead role in both establishing and maintaining the Homeless Issues Partnership, each person charged with the passion to ensure that homeless individuals are treated with the dignity inherent in all human beings and that service providers are working together to be as effective and efficient as possible.

Community Service

Paula Paust, The Women's Home, Houston

Nominated by: Marcia Tapp

Since its creation in 1957, The Women's Home has worked diligently to help women in crisis regain their self-esteem and dignity, empowering them to return to society as productive, self-sufficient individuals. Utilizing our dedicated professional staff along with community partnerships and volunteers in our WholeLife Program, The Women's Home provides homeless women in Houston with the housing and support services they need to end life-long cycles of homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse. Through their diligent work, The Women's Home has success rates that exceed local and national averages - over the last three years, nearly 86% of the women who have participated in our programs for six months or longer have left successfully with income and housing. Our WholeLife Program offers two types of supportive housing - transitional and permanent - that take a holistic approach to providing services.

Our transitional housing program consists of a three-phase process which begins with each woman entering into intensive treatment at our main dormitory and completing the program having had "A Room of Her Own", an arrangement which mirrors independent living. While in the program, each woman receives integrated, long-term (up to 18 months) residential care, psychiatric and nurse practitioner services, psychotherapy, chemical dependency services and vocational and spiritual development programs, all based on the our unique WholeLife Model. The ultimate goal of our program is to help our residents break life long cycles of homelessness and chemical dependency by obtaining a sustainable income source and a safe, permanent residence.

Through the diligent work of our Executive Director Paula Paust, The Women's Home has developed an 88-unit, permanent supportive housing complex for single women, called Jane Cizik Garden Place. Opened at the end of 2010, the complex provides women who have successfully completed our residential program and others like them with the opportunity to live independently in a drug, smoke, and alcohol free environment with the support of an on-site case manager.

As part of Jane Cizik Garden Place, The Women's Home has set aside 10 units for women who have chronic histories of homelessness. In all likelihood, they may not have income. Through our own case management services and collaborations, we will help these residents secure income and develop life skills to ensure that they will remain housed and independent.

At The Women's Home, we envision a world in which every woman embraces her unique value and potential for a life filled with love, dignity and purpose. Chemical dependency, mental illness, lack of education, and homelessness form a tragic cycle that strip a woman of her dignity and ability to realize her full potential. To that end, The Women's Home provides women with a "home" where they can restore and enrich their lives.

When Paula Paust became Executive Director of The Women's Home in 1992, all of the administrative, and most of the counseling facilities, shared one crowded space. The staff was overworked and had difficulty functioning due to a lack of adequate treatment space. The agency itself struggled financially to pay monthly bills and had no cash reserves.

Under Paula's direction, The Home's facilities were reorganized to make best use of the available space. With her guidance, the staff became confident and motivated. She helped develop a mission statement and instituted programs to achieve the agency's goal of returning women in crisis to society as productive, self-sufficient individuals. Paula also initiated training opportunities for graduate students from local universities and began building cash reserves for the agency. On an annual basis, Paula welcomes a psychiatric resident from Baylor College of Medicine and 14 master level interns from local universities to train at The Women's Home.

Through her diligent work, Paula has established the agency as a distinguished model for treatment and the first site for sober housing in Texas. On an annual basis, Paula conducts focus groups with the residents of The Women's Home. During these meetings, she requests their input regarding the services that the agency provides. In the course of conducting these meetings over a number of years, residents consistently voiced a common need in programming. Once residents completed The Home's program, they often found it difficult to find a safe, affordable permanent home that did not expose them to the possibility of relapse.

In response, Paula shared this need with The Home's Board of Directors and garnered their support to begin a project that would address the shortage of affordable housing for single women in the Houston area. Paula organized a Housing Task Force to develop a long-range plan for assessing and addressing this issue. Under Paula's guidance, the Task Force proceeded to conduct a housing feasibility study in order to gain a clearer picture of the issue. Members of the committee conducted 30 interviews with social service agency professionals, compiled statistics revealing trends in The Home's performance, and consulted published sources to find relevant data.

As a result of their findings, The Women's Home began a \$12 million capital campaign, under Paula's guidance, to build 88-units of permanent supportive sober housing specifically for single women called Jane Cizik Garden Place. In the midst of an economic recession, Paula led the project through tumultuous funding and construction phases all the while keeping community stakeholders connected and committed to the project. This exciting new project received two nationally prestigious challenge grants from the Kresge Foundation and the Mabee Foundation. The project also received endorsements from Spring Branch neighborhood associations which enabled The Home to access \$2 million dollars in funding from the City of Houston and \$1 million from the Harris County Community Services Department. With community support and Paula's guidance, the agency proudly opened a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certified complex at the end of 2010.

As a result of Paula's efforts with Jane Cizik Garden Place, The Women's Home was one of fifteen agencies invited by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to join a national collaborative of agencies providing sober housing for homeless women at the end of 2010. SAMHSA intends to utilize this collaboration to publish a white paper that addresses best practices related to treatment and sober housing for this population. The Home's participation in the group will position it to aide in the development of best practices for sober housing and inspire other agencies to follow its lead.

Through her vision, articulation and commitment, Paula played an integral part in making permanent affordable sober housing specifically designed for women a reality in Houston.

Community Organization

First United Methodist Church of Sanger

Blue Mound Methodist Church, Sanger

Nominated by: Valerie Foster

Have you ever been in a small town and felt the breath of a community? The First United Methodist Church is just 80 members that, for our homeless population, bring a breath of support, a breath of love, and breath of a community pulling together to ease some of the burden of being without a consistent home.

The goal of the First United Methodist Church is to provide a minimum of ten Angel Food boxes every month to the Sanger ISD Homeless Program. In addition, the program goal is to add, twice a year, a Basic Supply box they create from donations of personal hygiene items, household cleaning supplies, toilet paper and paper towels. They have recently added two new goals of first providing 100 pairs of tennis shoes to meet the needs of our homeless students returning to school, and second, in partnership with sister church Blue Mound Methodist Church, to start a weekly community meal in the park for not only homeless families, but any family that comes by, with the goal of providing a hot nutritious meal at least once a week to those in need.

Their three identified objectives are:

- to meet some of the nutritional deficits of those in need by providing the Angel Food program free to ten homeless families
- to provide a level of community support separate from family support systems
- to further identify and partner with additional local groups to continue to evolve Sanger ISD's efforts in addressing the needs of homeless families and our unaccompanied youth.

Blue Mound Methodist Church, in furthering their partnership and wanting to supplement the families needing additional food, added four Angel Food Just for Me boxes every month as a means of supplying our Friday Back Pack Program. All of this is from two very small rural churches who realize the importance of giving to those who are in need.

As a school district homeless liaison, we know without community support, understanding, and collaboration of programs, many of our family needs would not be adequately met. The First United Methodist Church of Sanger, has responded in ways that are meaningful, dignified, and supportive of our families. What started as a helping hand has turned into a full partnership with these families. The church has 80 members who opened their hearts, pocketbooks and door by bringing the Angel Food program to Sanger and from their own funds provides ten complete Angel Food boxes every month to ten identified unaccompanied homeless students or homeless families.

Often times the church takes food from their own pantry to provide additional food for our families. After nine months of greeting, welcoming, and getting to know the needs of the families and youth, the church members identified that our homeless students and their extended support systems also needed what came to be known as Basic Supplies. They identified personal hygiene items, and household supplies; including disinfectant, paper towels, toilet paper, and laundry soap. Once again, they provided them out of their personal funds.

The Church Pastor asked me to speak to the entire congregation on a Sunday morning pertaining to what else they could possibly provide to our homeless students. From that Sunday, the 100 pairs of footprints came about. To date, these 80 members have contributed over 40 brand new pairs of shoes for our homeless students to start the new school year off with. But that was not enough. They wanted the students to have shoes for the summer as well so we identified those who needed shoes for the summer and distributed them.

The very first “Dinner in the Park” resulted in 75 individuals receiving a hot meal. In addition, as just a thought, they included area garden growers to bring surplus grown food to give away. My follow-up showed that many of the families we have identified as doubled up, and a few of our unaccompanied youth, participated in the program this summer. We have no other program or organization that feeds within a 20 mile radius. Without the church identifying the need and taking on the task, there would be no “Dinner in the Park.”

As a small rural community with limited access to any county or significant organizational support, we have come to rely on each other. Our homeless families and unaccompanied youth are seeing first hand a community “pay it forward” through which we support each other and lift each other up.

Case Manager

Andrea Garcia, Green Doors

Nominated by Christa Noland

Andrea Garcia joined the Green Doors team in February of 2009 as a Community Manager for our transitional housing program for veterans. From the first month on the job, veterans were expressing how compassionate and helpful she was. Since that first month, never has a month gone by that I have not had a thank you letter, call or conversation, where a resident was praising Andrea and how she supported them. In the fall of 2009, Andrea was promoted to her current role as a Senior Housing Specialist. Andrea is responsible for a transitional voucher rental assistance program which serves veterans and persons with disabilities (both individuals and families).

During my career, I have had over 100 staff I supervised – Andrea is hands down the most outstanding staff I have ever had the pleasure to work with. Her passion, work ethic, commitment, positive attitude, innovation, compassion and patience are without comparison. I cannot even begin to list all the areas she excels and makes a difference in our community, but I will try:

Compassion/Respect: Andrea treats every resident or potential resident who comes to our door with the utmost respect. She believes and sees the strengths in each one no matter how challenging that may be at times. She has effectively been able to work with people with severe mental illness, veterans, family violence survivors, etc – every person she meets she grows to help serve them better.

Work Ethic: Andrea has achieved balance in her life, but works so incredibly hard and is always willing to work on the weekends or an evening (without complaint) to help meet the mission of the organization and have a positive impact on our resident's lives. My favorite example of this is that she was at the hospital in labor with her second child and was emailing regarding a resident situation (she did not want them to have to wait until after she had her child). Further, as the organization has been a period of tremendous growth with a very sparse staff, she was always the first to step up and take on extra tasks.

Advocacy: Andrea has gone from a quiet voice to a passionate advocate for affordable housing and the elimination of homelessness. She participates in numerous local and state collaborative efforts.

Willingness to Learn: Andrea is always willing to learn more about her role, her community and the people we serve. An example of this is in the voucher program for persons with disabilities – we had a staggering number of deaf individuals apply for housing. Andrea realized the cost associated with translation services and how this took away from her having a complete connection and being able to communicate well with the residents. She started, in her free time, learning ASL. And now she is able to serve our hearing impaired residents with the same level of services/respect as the hearing. They are so incredibly grateful!

Positive Attitude: Andrea is always smiling, sharing successes with our team in the form of stories, and has never become defeated despite situations which could defeat any staff.

Innovation: Andrea is always the first to seek solutions when a problem or challenge arises. I have been utterly amazed by some of the creative, respectful solutions she comes up with.

Enriching lives: Andrea not only works with residents on their goals, but always seeks ways for our programs to further enhance our resident's lives. An example of this was when she managed a PSH program for families. She realized that our children had never had the opportunity to have Halloween costumes or carve pumpkins. She, through the support of her family and friends, hosted a Saturday event for all our families (this was so far above and beyond her role). I still am touched years later by the reaction of the children we serve, it was a day they will remember forever!

Leadership: As the organization has grown, Andrea has taken on more and more responsibility and loves to mentor our new staff. She patiently helps them understand the organization, funders, residents and communities. Our team consistently looks to her for guidance – she is a natural leader.

Competence: Andrea has succeeded at any task she has been assigned. Probably the most challenging was getting two new TDHCA contracts (HOME PWD & HTF VRA) operational. She implemented both programs, met all benchmarks and we have had our first monitoring visits without any findings. This was a monumental feat!

Detail oriented: In my experience, so many case managers are great at dealing with people, but are really challenged when it comes to files and tracking metrics. Andrea's files are impeccable!

Positive Outcomes: In her current role, Andrea serves as a case manager for 35 households spread throughout Travis County. Since she started in this role, we have only had positive results – 100% of participants remained in the program or have exited successfully! I have never seen a case manager working with a primarily chronically homeless population, where over 18 months into working with residents there is a 100% success rate. She finds the strengths in each individual, helps them access tools, treats them with respect, and amazing results are appearing every single day.

Andrea has made Green Doors a stronger agency, she has grown our residents into stronger and more successful individuals, and she has truly enriched our community through her leadership and involvement. We are blessed every day to have this amazing woman on our team. I cannot think of any person that would be more deserving for “Outstanding Case Manager.”

Homeless Liaison (Tie)

Kelley Romar, Galveston ISD

Kelley Romar will no doubt tell you that dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, followed by the devastation wrought on Galveston Island by Hurricane Ike, would certainly rank as career-defining, life-changing moments. Her dedication to the students and families of Galveston ISD, her leadership in bringing together the federal and state emergency teams to improve identification of families in need, her organization of distribution centers for materials and goods, and her commitment to revitalizing GISD schools and getting children back into school -- including arranging bus routes from mainland pick-up points back to the island -- all while undergoing her own personal inconveniences and losses, have earned her the respect and admiration of her peers.

These things alone would no doubt suffice as grounds for her receiving this award. The truth is, Kelley's commitment to the Children's Club, the enrichment of the students participating in the GISD homeless education program, and finding ways to support the educational success of children and youth in homeless situations have been the markers of her career at Galveston ISD since day one. They continue to be the goals she strives to achieve as she tries to improve every way Galveston ISD interacts with the students in her program. Kelley's award is a tribute to her on-going dedication to the values we honor.

Reina Gallegos, Bastrop ISD

Reina Gallegos's life can probably be divided into two monolithic eras: "BGF" and "AGF" -- "Before the Great Fire," and "After the Great Fire."

Before the great fire, Reina's passion for her homeless students was as apparent as after that fateful September 4 Labor Day weekend when the Bastrop Complex Fire forever changed the landscape and her life.

Reina's bold TXHEARRA initiative to get Bastrop's homeless students to graduate from high school and attend college, entitled "Pathways to Success," included summer trips to camps, businesses, and campuses. Reina shared a stunning moment with one student at "Sea Camp" who had never before seen the ocean or slept in a hotel. This young student experience left an indelible impression on her young life.

The week of September 12 was pivotal for Bastrop ISD: school resumed that day. By that time, Reina's genius at logistics had enabled the identification of 578 new homeless students, up from 200 prior to the fire. In just eight days, students had received clothes, snacks, transportation, counseling, lunch, and school supplies. As housing vouchers ran out and families moved again, ready contact information enabled students to be transported to school from their new locations with relative ease.

Never one to think she cannot do even better work, Reina asked for and received help from many quarters, including Kelley Romar, survivor and "thrifter" from Hurricane Ike. Together, these two liaisons exemplify the unyielding spirits around Texas who make life for homeless students not just bearable, but beautiful.

All Nominees:

Back on Track Program

Nominated by Vicki Ebner

The City of Irving initiated the Back on Track program in late 2009 to comprehensively and corroboratively address homelessness issues in the community. This in-house program, Irving's first such endeavor, provides case management, housing search assistance, and rent and utility payments for up to one year (or permanently in the case of Shelter Plus Care). The Back on Track program has a 98% successful exit of the program. Since November of 2009, the Back on Track program has assisted 1,808 homeless or near homeless people. To date, the actual performance of the persons served is at 104% of the goal, with one year left in a major funding source. Due to successful expenditure and performance rates, the Back on Track program was recently awarded additional funds from a key source. Preliminary monitoring by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs showed the Back on Track program as a leader in documentation, reporting, and compliance. Materials and tools developed by the program staff have been provided to other agencies. Additionally, the Back on Track team performs street outreach to homeless persons.

Melonie Baker

Nominated by Thomas Day

We Care Facilities provides affordable housing, services, and programs for Dallas/Fort Worth. They offer two types of affordable housing programs that reflect the fixed income of the disabled and the retired seniors of the community. Their founder, Melonie Baker, is a graduate student of the University of North Texas, and a thirteen-year ongoing Educational Specialist. She is a Ticket to Work Provider for the state of Texas and a member of the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance. She is certified in Schizophrenia, Bipolar, Mild Retardation, and PDD. She has extensive experience dealing with learning disabilities and individuals with developmental issues including MR, ADHD, and PDD. She is committed to the advancement of education, life skills, behavioral skills, social skills, career skills, and spirituality; providing a holistic approach which uplifts the individual, both inside and out.

My brother has been in Melonie's programs for over two years and it has benefitted him greatly. He has a college degree, but has never been able to work due to his mental issues. He is a senior and would be isolated in a nursing home if it were not for Melonie's "We Care Facilities." She does a wonderful job running this organization. She is wonderful, talented, and the services she provides are heart-felt. My brother has taken field trips, attended socials, taken classes, and grown as a result. He has learned cleaning skills and the value of teamwork. He receives counseling and attends church services. His social skills and behavior have greatly improved due to Melonie's efforts.

Noemi Berumen

Nominated by Sybil Collins

Noemi Berumen is the Homeless Case Manager for Belton ISD. Her program, Project Heartbeat, served over 320 students in homeless situations during the current school year. A major focus of Project Heartbeat is the effective program coordination between identified families and school/community services. Project Heartbeat emphasizes academic achievement, consistent attendance, and goal-setting. District and community-based presentations enhance identification of students, awareness of the program, and the availability of accompanying services. Special emphasis is placed on high school graduation rates. FAFSA support is also provided for graduating students that are pursuing higher education opportunities.

Noemi is an exceptional caseworker, not only for our district but for our community. She works tirelessly to support students and families that find themselves in homeless situations. She builds strong, positive relationships with school personnel and advocates the rights and needs of her clients. She provides individual attention for students and families. Ms. Berumen is held in high esteem by all stakeholders for her knowledge, integrity, and caring. Her program has high graduation rates and increasing levels of achievement on state assessments. Many families continue close contact with Ms. Berumen even after they have achieved permanent housing and are no longer enrolled in the district homeless program. Noemi Berumen is an outstanding case manager that always goes over and above with her students and their families. Her dedication and achievements make her a deserving candidate for this award.

Dave Davis

Nominated by Scott O'Brien

Dave's career working with the homeless population in Austin spans over 32 years. He began his public service as a Housing Coordinator with the Housing Authority of Travis County in 1979 before moving to the City of Austin's Manpower Division in 1983 developing employment resources for homeless individuals. While at the City, Dave served in the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office and by 1990 he was coordinating broad-based community planning for homeless services in Travis County and served on the Mayor's Homeless Taskforce. In 1996, Dave found his calling for case management and has worked for LifeWorks in numerous case management capacities from Tenant based rental assistance program to Passages Case Manager to his current position as HPRP case manager.

Dave's professionalism and quality of work permeate all aspects of his job. To say that Dave is passionate about serving others would be an understatement. When Dave begins working with an individual or family, they are guaranteed to receive the highest standards of case management. He commits himself completely to his clients and incorporates the practice of self-determination, recovery and resiliency into their self-sufficiency plans. Whether he is assisting a family of five to navigate the mind bending world of public assistance, or helping a veteran to get a job after years of unemployment and in the process gain his dignity, he works to keep his clients positive and on the right track. Dave helps his clients in all aspects of their personal, social and emotional well-being - including coordinating and identifying housing, employment, behavior and medical health needs.

He is a devoted and tireless advocate, consistently going above and beyond for his clients and their families, ensuring better outcomes for all. He always has time for those in need, treating them with unbounded compassion, even when those individuals are not eligible for his services. Dave demonstrates the powerful difference one individual can make through initiative, inspirational service, and contributions that improve the overall quality of case management practice. He is a true example of what a leader, case manager, and friend should be.

Dave's kind and friendly demeanor make him easy to get along with and a great collaborator. Building relationships with people is one of his greatest strengths. He is always on the lookout for another resource that can be utilized to enhance and complement the plan. He is truly an exceptional person and we're very proud to have him in our organization.

Kay Fohn

Nominated by Jo Kathryn Quinn

Kay Fohn began working at National Instruments (NI) in 1979 – less than three years after NI's founder started the company in his garage. During her tenure, she saw the company grow to become an international corporation with almost five thousand employees. Kay retired from her long-time career of supervising the researchers and engineers who developed and manufactured high-tech industrial control software in 1994.

Instead of “taking it easy” after retiring, Kay decided to follow her passion: helping people. Kay graduated from the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work in 1999. She has not slowed down since.

Kay began her second career at Austin/Travis County MHMR as a case manager for thirty children and adults with mental retardation. From there, she spent seven years with the local Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center as a social worker providing counseling related to the issues surrounding their addiction. Since 2009, Kay has been with Caritas of Austin where she coordinates the Housing Stability program. These programs provide safety net services to ensure that families at risk of losing their housing or who have experienced short-term homelessness have access to financial assistance and social services appropriate to regain housing stability and become self-sufficient.

Kay's private sector managerial experience, social work education, and practical human services experience make her an outstanding program coordinator. On a daily basis, Kay coordinates five Housing Stability case managers; tracks program expenditures from multiple funding streams; tracks/compiles data for City of Austin, Travis County, state, and federal reports; and carries a full case load. Additionally, Kay worked hard behind the scenes to integrate the requirements of multiple funding silos into a seamless continuum of services that is transparent to the client and a program that is easily handled by case managers.

She has accomplished so much at Caritas in coordinating Housing Stability programs and in building a cohesive case management team. The integrity, empathy, and compassion I observe is always strong. She is remarkable in her work with clients, her support of colleagues, and her respect of the profession.

During the last fiscal year, Kay and the Housing Stability team assisted 2,182 Austin residents with financial assistance to help them remain housed and provided case management to over 1,600 individuals.

George Gomez
Nominated by Jeff Fleming

Turning Point Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and is the only homeless shelter in Texas specifically for elderly and handicap individuals aged 50 and above. Basic services such as food, clothing, and shelter are provided as well as expanded services that include rehabilitative and counseling services, hands-on-job training and placement assistance, assistance in acquiring benefits such as SSI/Disability, food stamps, Gold card, and transportation to and from medical appointments.

For the past ten years, George Gomez has single-handedly impacted the lives of hundreds, if not a thousand, individuals. George has made it his life's work to help the unfortunate find their way to independence. There are between 80 and 100 residents that reside at Turning Point at any given time and he not only is the first person to assess each individual as they enter the shelter, but is also responsible for their path to recovery.

The vast amount of people George is responsible for on a daily basis is matched only with the types of difficult problems these individuals may have. George has assisted hundreds of individuals get benefits that they were entitled to frequently appearing at their hearings fighting for their rights. He continues to volunteer his time to help feed the homeless population in and around downtown Houston. George is an individual who continues to improve the quality of life of individuals and families by always going above and beyond his call of duty.

MHMR of Tarrant County P.A.T.H. Program
Nominated by Keena Pace

P.A.T.H. (Projects in Assisting the Transition from Homelessness) Program is a SAM-HSA grant funded program designed to provide outreach, engagement and transitional services to literally and marginally homeless individuals or families in Tarrant County who have a Mental Health or Co-occurring disorder. Karen Fisler leads the PATH team that includes Gay Hunter, Robert Ward and Karen Wright. Through the PATH Program, 980 unduplicated face-to-face contacts are made in the course of a grant year, 275 adults are enrolled in transitional/case management services, and all enrolled clients are provided with a PATH case manager until they are linked successfully with on-going mainstream community services.

PATH team members provide outreach/engagement, screening/assessment, crisis services, transportation or bus passes, referral/coordination of a variety of supportive services, and collaboration with other community outreach service teams to maintain a continuity of care for the county's homeless population.

One of the team's success stories is about Willie, a Vet who started drinking at age 12 and was a functioning alcoholic by the time he enlisted in the military. Willie had been homeless and living under a bridge in Arlington for six years. After numerous arrests, Officer Sheila Griffin asked if he wanted help getting off the streets. He finally answered "yes" and the PATH team was there to enroll him in MHMRTC's detox program and connected him to additional services and resources. He is now living in his own one-bedroom apartment, celebrated 6 months of sobriety June 28th, and hopes that some day

he can talk to teenagers in hopes they can learn from his experiences. He has also referred several acquaintances to the PATH program. We are very happy for and proud of Willie and all he has accomplished. We also miss his bright smile and joyful and contagious spirit. The PATH Team is very blessed to have been a small part of Willie's transformation and look forward to the next one, and the next one, and...

Pam Mossbarger

Nominated by Brittany Willard

In the summer of 2011, I began a Social Work internship at Faith Mission and Help Center under the supervision of The Director of Case Management at the agency. This summer, Mrs. Mossbarger has volunteered her time to train myself, along with five other interns, at the agency. I have learned many valuable lessons relating to my field of work as well as to my personal life. One of the most valuable lessons that Mrs. Mossbarger has taught me is the importance of receiving, processing, and evaluating information from individuals. As fellow colleagues or clients share information, she continually exemplifies the importance of thinking through necessary solutions in regards to the presenting problems. I have had the honor to learn by her example as she chooses the words to express herself with intellect and respect. Her compassion for the client is reflected in her response in her thoughtful processing of information. As her attention is solely focused on the person before her, the client benefits from this because they can see that she truly cares for their well being.

Although her title at the agency is the Client Services Director, Mrs. Mossbarger wears many other hats within the agency. She takes on the role of "mom" at the agency. The residents of Faith Mission have a desire to make her proud as they continue on their journey to rebuilding their lives. Clients in the community often stop by the agency to run into her office for encouragement. She illustrates the value of being a positive team player within the agency. She can be found outside working the food pantry in 102 degree weather in Texas, answering phones at the front desk, cleaning the bathrooms, restocking the kitchen for morning breakfast, and playing mediator between clients and other agencies in town. Clients within the community know and trust Mrs. Mossbarger because of her faithfulness to go above what is required in her job description. With true compassion, she allows clients to feel safe to open up their lives to her in their effort to receive assistance at the agency.

I have been honored and forever challenged by Mrs. Mossbarger.

Senator Steve Ogden

Nominated by Cathy Crouch

As Chairman of Senate Finance, Senator Ogden understood the benefit of this program and publicly stated in a number of public meetings that the funding should be continued. He worked to find alternative ways to fund the program and convinced other Senators and House members to utilize both remaining stimulus money as well as money from the Governor's office to help fund these services. Without someone in his position, the program would have been eliminated entirely this session.

Katherine Pruitt, LCSW

Nominated by Molly Batschelet, LCSW

Ms. Pruitt has three very challenging roles that she serves in as a Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Social Worker. She covers the HCHV walk-in clinic 1 day per week serving as the initial point of contact for homeless Veterans. She is also one of the designated SW who responds to homeless hotline calls. Her second role is providing case management to approximately 15 homeless Veterans who are in the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Transitional Housing Program. She also transports Veterans on a regular basis to fee-based dental appointments in the community. Her third role is as the point-of-contact for our newest contract residential treatment program for justice-involved Veterans. Ms. Pruitt screens and places Veterans in the program and follows them to monitor progress and ensure their needs are met. She assists with discharge planning and supportive services for individuals in this program.

I have seen Katie go above and beyond on several occasions to provide excellent customer service. Some examples are: 1.) transporting a Veteran to an out-of-town medical appointment that they would otherwise have to reschedule or miss, 2.) coming in a 0630 to transport a Veteran to the bus station, and 3.) transporting a terminally ill Veteran to the Social Security Administration and sit with him to provide emotional support and advocacy even though he was not on her case load.

Katie Pruitt is one of the most impressive Social Workers I have ever had the pleasure of working with. She is dependable, reliable, and highly skilled clinically. She is a wonderful advocate for the homeless population and works to improve the lives of her clients and empower them to become self-sufficient and improve their quality of life. Katie is a team player and is a highly valued member of the HCHV team.

Lon Ricker

Nominated by David Timothy

In 1955, James Dean starred in a movie titled "Rebel Without a Cause." He was a young man who walked to a beat of a different drummer. It's not so much that he was a wayward person, it was more that he was unconventional and did his own thing. Tragically, Dean died in a car accident at the tender age of 24. In Dallas, Texas, we may have found a modern day James Dean. His name is Lon Ricker and he, too, walks to the beat of a different drummer. Thankfully, Lon did not die prematurely, but recently he had his own brush with the grim reaper when in 2010 he had an accident and went over the handlebars of his motorcycle at 70 miles per hour. Miraculously he survived with only a few chipped bones, abrasions, and a fair amount of stitches.

In April 2007, after a 20-year career as a Software Engineer, Lon decided he was ready for a change. By this time he had cut his hair, stopped jumping out of airplanes, and even started wearing shoes on a regular basis. He'd had enough of a world where the focus seemed to be too much on profits and not enough on people. As fate would have it, Lon found that connection to help others during the 2007 Christmas holidays. He heard about the amazing Christmas event put on by the SoupMobile every year. They take 500 homeless men and women right off the streets and put them up at the downtown Dallas Hyatt Regency Hotel for Christmas. In addition, they all receive new clothes, fabulous gifts, lots of love, and a huge banquet is thrown for them in their honor. Most importantly,

when they wake up on Christmas morning, it's in a warm safe bed at the Hyatt - NOT in a cardboard box under some bridge. Lon knew this was an event he wanted to be a part of. He knew that this was his opportunity to give back, his chance to make a real difference in the lives of the less fortunate in the Dallas area.

After the Christmas event of 2007, Lon became a regular volunteer helping SoupMobile in their daily ongoing mission of feeding the homeless. In 2009, David Timothy, Executive Director of the SoupMobile, decided to offer Lon a job where he could use his business talents and expertise to help the SoupMobile help the needy. Since then, Lon has taken on many hats serving as Director of Development, Chairman of the SoupMobile Advisory Board, and Chairman of the SoupMobile's Christmas event for 2009. An unconventional man with a flair for the wild side who tamed his talents to become a driving force in the SoupMobile's mission of Feeding and Sheltering the homeless.

SAMMinistries Homeless Prevention Program Nominated by Elizabeth Cruz

July 2008, SAMMinistries procured private funding to begin providing direct homeless prevention services and financial assistance. Before providing direct services, a community survey was conducted to ascertain the breadth and scope of existing services as to not duplicate and we began to help organize community resources. The SAMMinistries Homeless Prevention Program provides rental assistance, utility assistance and supportive services to enable individuals and families who are in imminent danger of eviction, foreclosure or homelessness, or are currently homeless. Supportive services must directly relate to the prevention of homelessness. These services are provided in an effort to stabilize families in their existing homes, shorten the amount of time that individuals and families stay in shelters, and assist individuals and families with securing affordable housing.

Since program inception July 2008, SAMMinistries has served almost 2,000 households and 6,000 individuals and families and, of those surveyed six months after receiving services, 100% reported that the program prevented them from becoming homeless.

The clients SAMMinistries serves through our Prevention Services Program include single men and women, as well as, families with children under 18 years of age. This year, 2011, SAMMinistries has provided prevention services to almost 500 households consisting of over 1,600 individuals with numbers increasing daily.

SoupMobile, Inc. Nominated by David Timothy, a.k.a. The SoupMan

The SoupMobile is a mobile soup kitchen that was founded in 2003 by David Timothy, aka The SoupMan. The mission statement of the SoupMobile consists of 3 simple words spoken by Jesus himself: "Feed MY Sheep." We believe He meant more than just food. He also meant love, caring, compassion, and shelter. In order to fulfill the words of Jesus, the SoupMobile has 3 main missions:

Mission #1 - Feeding the Homeless

When SoupMobile began in 2003, the SoupMan served over 5,000 meals. Now we serve an amazing 200,000 meals per year. We have also implemented a weekly "Feed the Neighborhood Program" where we distribute 250,000 lbs. of food annually to needy residents on the south side of Dallas. Especially in the summer months, the groceries often

go to families with children not being fed as part of a school lunch program.

Mission #2 - Sheltering the Homeless

In 2009, the SoupMobile decided to expand its feeding operation to include sheltering the homeless through our venture called SoupMobile Village which consists of a series of group homes located in the Dallas area which are designed to be supportive housing for the homeless. In just over 18 months the Village has grown to 5 fully operational group homes in the Dallas area.

Mission #3 - Celebrate Jesus

The SoupMobile hosts a magical event each year at Christmas called Celebrate Jesus. 2011 will mark the 7th anniversary of this very special Christmas event for Dallas' homeless population. The SoupMobile, along with over 1,500 volunteers, will once again put up 500 homeless men and women at the fabulous Dallas Hyatt Regency Hotel for Christmas.

*Reverend Randy Wells, LMSW
Nominated by Brittany Willard*

Mr. Wells is the Director of Case Management at Faith Mission and Help Center in Brenham, TX. Mr. Wells often states that his goal at Faith Mission and in life is to empower his clients to become self sufficient in their personal life as well as within their community. In addition, Mr. Wells has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to inspire clients to embrace the mission statement at Faith Mission, which is "making His mission our mission." His inspiring actions foster a level of confidence for clients that will generate successful lives for many.

After hurricane Katrina took its toll on his home town of New Orleans, Mr. Wells came to Brenham for presumably a temporary stay. In the fall of 2007, I had the privilege of completing my first internship for a Social Work class with Faith Mission under the supervision of Randy Wells and a few years later requested to complete a second one in the summer of 2011 again under Mr. Wells. I have now completed my 400-hour internship. Mr. Wells has never kept a lesson from me and there has not been a single day that I did not learn valuable information. I appreciate Mr. Wells for giving his time to make it possible for me to learn by example as I watched him work at the agency with his clients, colleagues, and the interns under his supervision.

Although Mr. Wells is a LMSW and Ordained Pastor, he is still found bussing tables at an agency benefit, selflessly giving his time on a Saturday night responding to a crisis call presented by the community, teaching a job partnership class three times a week in the evening, or presenting the Gospel during a local Bible study at night. These are just a few of the endless examples I have witnessed my supervisor doing during the time I have known him. Mr. Wells believes in creating community therefore he makes it a priority to sustain healthy relationships with other agencies in the community.

I am forever grateful for the immense amount of information, lessons, and knowledge attained during my time under the supervision of Reverend Wells.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a nomination.

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2012 awards, please send an email to: conference@thn.org
or look for more information on the website
beginning January 2012.*

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