

The Home Page

A bi-annual community newsletter

Winter 2020



Who We Are

Our mission is to promote healing and growth in children, young adults and families by providing a continuum of care, support and resources.

Who We Serve

We serve individuals who have experienced severe emotional trauma, abuse and neglect.

Visit us at settlementhome.org

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The Road to Foster and Adoption

A long and worthwhile journey and how you can support others.



The Foster & Adoption Program at The Settlement Home for Children receives several inquiries each week from community members wanting to learn more about becoming a licensed foster family. Everyone who reaches out to us has a desire to make a difference in the community by providing a safe and nurturing home for a child.

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Alumna Spotlight: Veronica

From a child in foster care to a law school graduate.



The children and young adults we serve at The Home have complex trauma histories. Yet like all children, they have hopes and aspirations for happiness and success in their futures.

Although she faced significant adversity, Veronica demonstrated perseverance, refusing to let her circumstances determine her future.

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Subscribe to our eNews and receive monthly updates about The Home! Visit our website at settlementhome.org/join-our-newsletter and join our subscriber community today.

A Long and Worthwhile Journey

The process to become a licensed foster family is lengthy. Interested individuals and couples must first attend an orientation, submit their application to our team and then gather references from friends, co-workers and family members. Once the application is approved, candidates must complete over 40 hours of required training. They must also have a health and fire inspection of their home, get a mandatory TB test, undergo a criminal background check and attend CPR and first aid trainings.

After these steps have been completed, an eight-hour home study and interview with our team is scheduled. The process requires patience, strong organizational skills and a willingness to be open with people they hardly know.



The Settlement Home for Children's Foster & Adoption Program Team

Left to Right: Program Director Megan Avery Zellner, Case Manager Yulhanna Rodriguez, Family Development Supervisor Ty Cliffler, Therapist/Supervisor Kaysha Herd, Case Manager Stefanie Pino and Family Development Coordinator Nydia Cabrera

“Fostering and adopting from the foster care system is an emotional, challenging process, yet there are many ways people in the community can come together to support these families.”

Individuals and couples often withdraw themselves from the process based on the many requirements involved. Some become disheartened if they learn that a child who they had their heart set on fostering requires a family with more experience. Although the foster and adoption process is a long journey, it is a worthwhile one because it can change the course of a child's life.

In 2019, our team received nearly 200 inquiries. Of this number, only 17 families completed the licensing process. While going through the foster and adoption licensing process may not be a fit for everyone, there are still many ways to support children in foster care. The motivation and energy it took for those original 200 families to reach out to express interest can be harnessed! The lives of children in foster care could still be impacted if those remaining 183 families served in another capacity. How might foster parenting change if those 183 families built a support system around a foster family?

Fostering and adopting from the foster care system is an emotional, challenging process, yet there are many ways people in the community can come together to support these families.

Visit our Foster & Adoption Program's website at settlementhome.org/foster-adoption-program

Karmin and Tony Gaytan, Adoptive Parents of The Year

The Home was honored to celebrate Karmin and Tony Gaytan, who were voted 2019 Adoptive Parents of the Year by the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services.

Karmin and Tony have been licensed through our Foster & Adoption Program since 2006 and have fostered a total of 20 children since they opened their home.

This family has done so much to make a difference in the lives of children, and we are thrilled they received this award.



The Gaytan Family

How You Can Support Individuals and Families on the Foster and Adoption Journey

Respite Care

Individuals can serve children directly by providing respite care to foster families. Respite care volunteers provide support by staying overnight with the child in the home when needed. This allows a foster parent to travel as necessary, for work or to respond to a family emergency, for example. When foster families receive regular respite care, they typically remain licensed longer.

Childcare

There are opportunities for individuals to babysit within a foster home. This gives our foster and adoptive parents the chance to take time for themselves, have a date night or simply see a movie. Additionally, at The Home we have a team of volunteers who commit to watching children several Saturdays a year so that families can attend our on-campus trainings. These trainings guide our families in trauma-informed care and are essential for mentorship and community building.

Transportation

Another significant way to support families is by assisting with transportation. Children in foster care have required doctor and dental appointments within the first few months of being placed in a foster home. Additionally, there may be required visits with the child's biological family. Most of our foster and adoptive families work during the day, which makes it challenging to get their children to daytime appointments and visits. Volunteers who have the flexibility in their schedule to provide transportation during the workday are paired with one of our foster families.

Donations and Peer-to-Peer Support

There are simple acts of support like providing meals for a family, donating school supplies or providing baby items. Peer-to-peer support is essential, too, because foster families can experience stress and feelings of isolation. Being a supportive person to a foster family might mean you are available for coffee to talk and listen, or it might be helping with household chores like cleaning, doing dishes or folding laundry.

Advocacy

Overall, the greatest need in our foster and adoption community is advocacy: bringing awareness to the importance of supporting families. Volunteers who have a passion for advocacy can host our Foster & Adoption Team in their home or place of worship to talk with their

network of friends about the many ways our community can support foster families.

Each person who reaches out to learn about fostering a child has a motivation to make a positive impact on our community. It's possible that the timing is not right for that person or there are time and financial barriers preventing them from becoming a foster parent, yet if that energy and motivation could be shifted to supporting foster families, the ripple effect would be enormous. Foster and adoptive families can be supported so that they have the energy and mindfulness to be a nurturing presence in a child's life.

If you are interested in learning how you can support foster families, contact us at info@settlementhome.org or (512) 836-2150.

December Foster & Adoption Family Training

Our Foster & Adoption Program Team provided an opportunity for learning and community at our Williamson Family Campus Training and Conference Center.



As part of the holiday season cheer, toys were collected prior to the training and shared with children and families.

P. Terry's Burger Stand served lunch to training participants.



Arriving at The Home

In the 1990s, Veronica was removed from her home by Child Protective Services (CPS) and arrived at The Settlement Home for Children as a teenager. She was enrolled at Crockett High School (CHS) and was committed to maintaining as normal of a teenage experience as possible by continuing her studies there. Often when children are in foster care and change placements, they must move schools as well. From the start, however, Veronica showed her strong determination by completing her studies and graduating from CHS.

When children are in our care, they are surrounded by a team who can make decisions about their safety and well-being. Our therapists and staff work together with involved legal parties to create a support system for residents. At the age of 18, children have the option to age out of foster care, and these resources are no longer available to them. Beyond foster care, Veronica knew that she did not have a family to support her in achieving her goals. She grew anxious about aging out of the foster care system, which meant losing the safety and stability she established at The Home, as well as being away from the adults who cared for her.

This anxiety is not unique to Veronica. For children in foster care, the anticipation of reaching the age of 18 can be distressing. Many do not have enough life experience or family support systems to provide the kind of guidance that could equip them for success. Homelessness, addiction, incarceration, unhealthy relationships—these are only some of the challenges youth face when they age out of foster care.

Aging Out of Care

In 1999, Veronica turned 18 and aged out of foster care. With a dream of becoming a lawyer, she planned to begin her studies at Blinn College in Brenham, Texas. But when she enrolled, her housing arrangements unexpectedly fell through. With no friends or family in the area, she had little access to resources to help her attend school, and her dream came to a halt. She spent the next several years fighting the obstacles that face former youth in foster care. She held several different jobs and experienced homelessness. Yet, through these hardships, she still held tight to her dream of becoming a lawyer.

After moving around, she found herself in Commerce, Texas and enrolled at Texas A&M University-Commerce. At the time, she was 19 and was in an abusive relationship. Veronica had given up on trying to break free from the cycle of poverty and abuse, and she slipped

deeper into a sense of hopelessness. During this time, Veronica was convicted of a felony, and as fate would have it, she was sentenced to serve two years in the same prison where her mother was—a woman she hadn't seen in years.

Veronica faced many emotions, yet while she was in prison and away from her abuser, she gained perspective. Though she loved her mother, she resolved that she would not follow in her mother's footsteps. Veronica realized that unlike her fellow inmates, she had a high school diploma and college experience.

She made up her mind: she would not let her felony, previous relationship and struggles with homelessness dictate her future. Veronica would finish her degree and change the trajectory of her life.

As Veronica reflects on her experience, she says: "What someone else thinks does not matter. As hard as it is, you must set small goals. Once you achieve one, you move on to the next. There will always be people who think you can't be successful, but you can. You are right about your success. They are wrong."



Above: Veronica at her law school commencement ceremony.



Above: Veronica and her family.

Making a Change

Upon her release from prison, Veronica reached out to her former CPS caseworker. The caseworker connected her to community organizations that helped her enroll in college classes and find affordable housing. It was not always easy, and Veronica had to lean on her new network for support. Through times of uncertainty, she remained focused on her goals.

Her perseverance led to a series of outstanding accomplishments. Veronica graduated with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in social work from Texas State University. She completed internships with the Texas Legislature and CPS, where she worked with the Research and Development Department to update CPS's comprehensive Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care. Soon after, Veronica moved to Houston and practiced as a licensed social worker, working with youth who had experienced human trafficking. Though Veronica had achieved many of her goals, she was ready to achieve her next dream.

When she first applied to law school, Veronica was denied acceptance because she had a felony on her record. In response to this setback, she showed her resilience once again by leveraging the connections she had made. A professional connection advocated on Veronica's behalf and through this, Dean Royal Furgeson of The University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law encouraged Veronica to apply. She applied and was accepted!



Veronica with her family and friends.

Looking Forward

Veronica graduated from The University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law. Currently, she is eligible to sit for the Texas Bar Exam and is awaiting character and fitness determination from the Board of Law Examiners. Additionally, Veronica is the mother of two wonderful children who are safe and loved in a healthy home. She and her family are looking forward to purchasing their first home.

Transitional Living Program and Aftercare Services

At The Home, our mission is to promote healing and growth in children, young adults and families by providing a continuum of care, support and resources.

We know aging out of foster care can be a time of serious uncertainty for the youth we serve. Our continuum of care includes our Transitional Living Program (TLP) and aftercare services, both of which are designed to help youth successfully transition out of foster care.

Our TLP provides 11 efficiency apartments on campus for young women 18 and older. These residents, who are not quite prepared to live on their own, choose to remain in the custody of CPS through an extended foster care agreement. Our TLP residents receive case management and therapy and continue to build life skills like financial literacy and job preparedness. This year we served 19 residents.

Our aftercare services help former residents increase their self-sufficiency, while supporting their educational and professional goals. Assistance includes:

- obtaining original documents like social security cards, state IDs and birth certificates (all are essential for job applications)
- guidance in finding affordable housing and navigating the public transportation system
- financial assistance for books and supplies for alumnae who are pursuing continuing education

We have found that when a young woman leaving our TLP has a mentor, driver's license and is employed or enrolled in post-secondary education, she has a significantly higher rate of success in maintaining steady employment and a stable residence.

TLP Happenings



Transitional Living Program Director Maggie Johnson (left) with Fresh Chefs Society Founder Shaleiah Fox (right).

Fresh Chefs Society aims to equip youth in foster care with necessary skills to support and feed themselves as they embark on their journey to independent living.

Here, Fresh Chefs Society gifted 10 welcome baskets to our TLP residents that included household items such as measuring cups, pots and cookie sheets.

Community Youth Council

About the Community Youth Council

The Home's Community Youth Council (CYC) is a group of Austin-area sophomores and juniors who are passionate about making a difference in their community. This inspiring group of young philanthropists support The Home through a variety of volunteer opportunities, while connecting with like-minded peers through service and community.

Our CYC members provide hands-on support that makes a difference in the lives of others, including serving a holiday dinner, completing campus beautification projects, running booths at our Summer Games Day and sorting donations throughout the year. Though members of the CYC have a variety of extracurricular interests and commitments, they come together with the common goal of service to others at The Home.

Learn More

To learn more about the CYC or to nominate a student, visit settlementhome.org/cyc or contact our Volunteer Coordinator Catherine Henning at (512) 836-2150 ext. 186 or chenning@settlementhome.org.



Addison Cummings at our Thanksgiving Dinner.



Brooke Williams and JJ Dare welcome guests to an event.



Lola Ohlhaber and Jackson LeGrande lend a helping hand.

CYC Member: Jackson Ritz



*Jackson Ritz,
2018–2019
CYC Member*

Why did you want to join the CYC?

I wanted to join the CYC because I love volunteering to help others in need. When I learned what the CYC does for kids, I knew that it was an organization that I wanted to be a part of and help in any way that I could. Many of these kids have struggled, and I wanted to help. I also just love to help serve with a great group of kids who come together with one goal—to have fun and help out where it's needed!

What did you enjoy about being a member of the CYC?

I enjoyed being a member because of the hospitality of the organization and the passion to help others in need. The CYC gives high school students exposure to the real world and works to make the lives of those at The Home a little better.

Why do you think it's important for young people to engage in volunteer work?

There will always be a time in our lives that we can help someone in a tougher place than where we are. And maybe the day will come that we need help. The time that I have spent at The Home has been very rewarding because I know I'm doing my part to help very deserving young people that didn't have the life that I was privileged to have. Volunteering is a perfect example of how the youth in society can think of others and perform selfless acts of kindness. This is another reason I love being a part of the CYC because it gives me a purpose in this world to help others in need.

What are your dreams and goals for the future?

My dreams and goals for the future are to attend college and pursue my passion in mechanical/biomedical engineering in college. I also plan to play college football. I would like to continue to volunteer wherever I end up in college because I realize that volunteering has helped me grow into the well-rounded person I have become.

To learn more about the CYC or to nominate a student, visit settlementhome.org/cyc.

Home Happenings

We enjoy providing enriching and memorable experiences for the children in our care. Here are a few highlights from our fall and winter seasons at The Home.

Run Club



JLA members are ready to participate in Run Club.



This year's Run Club voted to have red shirts, as well as the phrase "In running, I find strength" printed on the back.

Run Club is just one of the recreation clubs we offer our residents. Our Run Club has a long-standing partnership with The Junior League of Austin (JLA). Every Wednesday during the school year, JLA members meet with our residents and run alongside them for one hour.

Through their time and encouragement, these dedicated volunteers build supportive relationships with the children in our care. In addition to running on campus, JLA members and residents also participate in races and events around the Austin area.

Thanksgiving Dinner



Our gym was transformed to welcome guests.

In November, we welcomed residents, foster and adoptive families, staff and guests to our Thanksgiving dinner. This was a special evening to gather together, eat and express gratitude.

Our volunteers and CYC members provided hands-on support to make our event a success. Thanks to Premiere Events for providing linens to help us transform our gym into a dining space for this special evening.

Graduation



Our graduate is presented her diploma by our on-campus UT Charter School's Executive Principal Holly Engleman and Superintendent Melissa Chavez.

Our on-campus University of Texas Charter School held its winter commencement in December. Our staff, residents and special guests came together to recognize the outstanding academic accomplishments of our Class of 2019 graduate.

Our on-campus University of Texas Charter School serves students from sixth through 12th grades, within a supportive learning environment.

The 44th Annual Garage & Estate Sale

That's a wrap!

Thank you to our wonderful shoppers, volunteers, Settlement Club members, sponsors and staff for helping to make The 44th Annual Garage & Estate Sale a record-breaking success.

We were excited to open our doors this year and welcome shoppers to our 21 departments. From tools and furniture, to jewelry and art, there was something for everyone.

The Sale kicked off on Wednesday, October 30 with our Preview Party. Sponsors and attendees mingled and enjoyed early access to deals before The Sale officially opened its doors to the public. With live entertainment and dinner, the Preview Party is a special evening for shoppers.

Our annual fundraising event is much more than just a shopping experience, as every purchase makes a difference in the lives of youth in foster care. This year, we raised \$1,462,113.47 in gross revenue. All proceeds from The Sale go to The Settlement Home for Children to support individuals who have experienced severe emotional trauma, abuse and neglect. Every purchase made a difference, and we thank you for shopping and volunteering with us.

We invite you to mark your calendars for The 45th Annual Garage & Estate Sale!

***The 45th Annual Garage & Estate Sale
November 6–8, 2020
Palmer Events Center***



Garage & Estate Sale Co-Chair Suzanne Blackburn, Board President Sharon Woodul, Garage & Estate Sale Co-Chairs Cynthia Selman and Ellen Ducote



TOGETHER, WE RAISED

**\$1,462,113 TO SUPPORT
THE SETTLEMENT HOME FOR CHILDREN!**

Warehouse and Donation Information

Do you have items that you'd like to donate?

The Settlement Home for Children's Warehouse will re-open in mid-January and begin collecting donations for The 45th Annual Garage & Estate Sale. Volunteers will be available to collect your donations on Mondays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Donations are sorted into 21 different departments and feature new and gently used items, as well as vintage items.

Be sure to visit our website for tips and information about donations, as well as a list of what items we are able to accept: settlementhome.org/garage-sale

Sponsor Feature: Sharon and Frank Woodul



Sharon and Frank Woodul

"There will always be children in need of a safe, protective environment. It is up to all of us to take care of future generations and we can do that by supporting The Settlement Home for Children."

Board President Sharon Woodul and her husband Frank are committed to our mission at The Settlement Home for Children. With their continued service and support, the Woodul family has made a difference in the lives of youth in foster care for generations.

Sharon was first introduced to The Home by Frank's grandmother, Settlement Club member Ethel Woodul. Through Ethel, Sharon met members of The Club and learned of The Home's mission to help promote healing and growth in children in foster care.

While Sharon was working on her internship to become a licensed professional counselor, she had the opportunity to learn from Settlement Home staff. Through this experience, she developed an even deeper loyalty to our mission.

As current Board President and member of The Settlement Club since 1987, Sharon has served in numerous roles throughout her years of membership. Some of her past experience includes serving as a Garage & Estate Sale Co-Chair, many roles in Club committees, as well as various positions

on the Board.

Sharon and Frank, as well as Frank's brother Paul Woodul and his family are part of our planned giving program, The Mildred Gregg Wendlandt Legacy Society. The Woodul Family's journey with The Home spans many years, and their wish is for that journey to continue far into the future.



The Settlement Home for Children thanks Sharon and Frank Woodul for their commitment and support!

Thank you to our sponsors!

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Charles Granger	Staci Sprayberry
Nancy Nash Harper	Kathie Tovo
Bill Hudspeth	Philip Vescovo
Russell Korman	Darren Whitehurst

About Us

Our mission is to promote healing and growth in children, young adults and families by providing a continuum of care, support and resources.

We serve individuals who have experienced severe emotional trauma, abuse and neglect.

Vision Statement: Working to end the cycle of child abuse.

Value Statement: In serving children, young adults and families, The Settlement Home for Children values relationships, diversity, leadership and learning. We provide a nurturing environment that promotes a sense of dignity and self-worth.

Relationships: We value connections and recognize the importance that relationships have on our day to day work. We focus on hope and healing by seeking out opportunities to give our children stability.

Diversity: We value inclusion and honor the differences of our staff, children and community.

Leadership: We actively seek opportunities to develop leadership qualities within our staff members, for use within the organization and the community.

Learning: We are an innovative teaching community, where people come to experience growth professionally and personally. We strive for our staff to be well-trained in evidence-based treatment that best serves our children and families.



The Settlement Home for Children
1600 Payton Gin Road
Austin, TX 78758
(512) 836-2150
settlementhome.org
info@settlementhome.org

Sponsor Feature: Keller Williams



The Settlement Home for Children is grateful for the
ongoing support of Keller Williams!

A Century of Caring Tour



You are invited to tour The Settlement Home for Children!

Enjoy a complimentary lunch, tour the campus with our Executive Director and learn about the work being done to help children in foster care heal and grow. Join us on one of our upcoming tour dates and RSVP at **settlementhome.org/tour**.

January 24
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

March 27
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

May 15
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.