



THE FIFTH WARD ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

# nickel EXPRESS

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## Celebrating A Summer of Creative Expressions

The FWEP 2006 Summer Project was celebrated on July 28 with a community festival, combining voices, movement, visions, and the written word to recognize the accomplishments of the youth participants' seven-week endeavor. The afternoon event was a truly intergenerational celebration. The positive energies of senior and young adults, youths, children and infants were meshed together, resulting in a overwhelming success.

The summer project theme, "Building Positive Identities through Creative Expressions," was reflected throughout the program. Each summer course exhibited a sample of the students' works and products at the Awards Ceremony. The Sandra Organ Dance Company, for example, taught the young men how to reflect their own personal attributes through dance movement. The young men demonstrated how

they took a single word or phrase and built it into a series of dance movements.

The "music composition" workshop, led by Vincent Knight, invited the young men to take the sounds in their heads and electronically transform it into music. A simple musical phrase, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" became an individual musical interpretation for each of his participants. One of the students performed his piece.

For drama, and thanks to Angela Couch of the Shakespeare Outreach, a skit written and produced by the young men was performed. Curley Marshall (Photography), Carlos Calbillo (Young Filmmakers), Donell Frazier, of Dragon's Gate (Mural Arts), Michael Hampton (Computer Refurbishing) and Damion Johnson (Silk Screen printers), either exhibited their students' works or shared with the gathering their

accomplishments to date. The publication of a journal by the Supreme Six' Creative Writers' workshop was also presented to the families of the new authors.

Awards for leadership, participation, community services and entrepreneurialship were presented to the deserving youths individually. Councilman Peter Brown issued a challenge to the youths to get more involved in civic engagement projects and offered scholarship awards to those who meritoriously respond to the challenge. Harris County Precinct 6 Constable Victor Trevino spoke to the youths and their parents about the importance of education. He effectively highlighted the attitudes and skill sets needed to strengthen families and communities.

For many of those gathered, and especially the summer youth participants, the icing on the day's

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# THE YOUNGEST FWEP ALUMNUS **Randy Bermudez**

*On the first anniversary commemorating Hurricane Katrina, the Nickel Express also recognizes Houston's connection with the storm, and its aftermath. Here we honor the experience of Randy Bermudez, who along with his family directly faced the hurricane's furious assault in New Orleans. He endured its torment, fled to Houston, recovered and now - one year later - returns to New Orleans with his family to resume his life in a city struggling to restore itself from near complete devastation. Bermudez, 14, shared his thoughts with Nickel Express.*

**Nickel Express:** What did you experience during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans?

**Randy:** We decided to stay. We didn't want to go. Hurricane Ivan came a year before. We evacuated and went to Texas for one day, but nothing really happened. When Hurricane Katrina came, it was two weeks before school started. On that Monday, the skies got really black, it started thundering and the rain started falling, raining hard. All of a sudden all of New Orleans heard a loud boom. We heard on the news that the levy had broken. We rushed to the car, but it wouldn't start. We went back into the house and hoped for the best. About two hours later it started flooding - about one foot in two hours - then three feet in the next four hours. So my mama told me to take everybody into the attic. We climbed the steps into the attic and stayed. We went downstairs to see how bad it was. The waters were rising and we decided to go to the roof. My 10-year-old sister was separated from us and I went back to find her. She had passed out and was under water. It was hard to break the door with all the water, but I kept punching and pushing until it finally gave and I was able

to break through to get to her. She was so heavy to lift, but I prayed for the strength and was able to swim and lift her to the roof. We made it to the (New Orleans) Convention Center and then to Houston.

**Nickel Express:** What enabled you to get through the storm?

**Randy:** It was God. I prayed a lot. All you got to do, whether it's in the morning or daytime, is say a little prayer. If you're under a lot of pressure, it'll help you through the days. I didn't really see any violence. I didn't really know it before, but I had two aunties here.

They helped us out a lot.

**Nickel Express:** What was it like being an evacuee in Houston?

**Randy:** The people here were really great. It was hard to go through all the changes, losing so much, but we found a lot of support here. For a boy like me, my age, I found a lot of help from the Fifth Ward Enrichment Program. I made some good friends. They helped me in school.

They cared about me. They put me to work in the summer. It was a great experience while I was here in Houston.

**Nickel Express:** What newfound experiences are you using to build on in your return to New Orleans?

**Randy:** I want to go home, but I want to stay here, too. It's like 50-50. I want a part of Houston to come home with me too. I

wish we could start up a Fifth Ward Enrichment Program in New Orleans. It could encourage a lot of people and help a lot of boys to get off the streets, stop using drugs.

**Nickel Express:** What if anything is different about you now than a year ago?

**Randy:** I learned a lot of things. I learned to be a lot more responsible for my actions. I used to get into a lot of trouble. Now, since I had an education that'll help me, I kind of know better about right from wrong.

Now I'm a leader. I'm not a follower any more.

## **Creative Expressions**

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"cake" was the distribution of the youth stipends itself. The funds were awarded based on daily and overall participation. Through their weeks of community service, life skills workshops, creative and enterprising pursuits, attendance and punctuality, the relatively small stipends were well earned.

# Youths for Social Justice



**O**n June 28, 15 FWEP youth participants arose before dawn to catch a bus bound for San Antonio. They were due to arrive that same morning to participate in the Texas Legislature's "Interim Hearings on Juvenile Justice,"

The youths were joined on the bus by youths from the French Town Civic Association, staff and interns from the Children At Risk program and a parent whose son was incarcerated in the Texas Youth Commission (TYC). The hearings were called by the House Committee on Juvenile Justice and Family Issues, chaired by Houston's own State Rep. Harold Dutton.

The committee heard testimony for juvenile justice reform and the need for addressing allegations of abuse and neglect at the TYC facilities. Two FWEP youths, DeVon Hartley and Kevin Andrews ("Big Diesel") addressed the committee on the importance of prevention programs, rather than detention, for youths. These young men are active in the "Voices of the Future" (VOF) program. Several legislators remarked that they were indeed "impressed by their attendance and interests in the issues". In discovering

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'go back home and share' what we learned."*

—DeVon Hartley—

what the youths themselves learned from their full day of involvement, Kevin remarked how impressed he was by the concern and support expressed by parents who spoke out passionately about the treatment that their children were experiencing in TYC. DeVon said it is important that he and other youths "go back home and share" what they learned.

The field trip was a dynamic learning lab. Support for the day's journey was generously underwritten by **City Councilman Jarvis Johnson** (District B), the **Rev. Robert Martinez** (La Roca Church), Children At Risk and the **Texas Coalition Advocating Justice for Juveniles** (TCAJJ). They provided 100 percent of the costs for the transportation and food, making the journey - this classroom on wheels - a reality.

## "Getting to Know You" FWEP Tour

**Janette Hammond**, Manager of Community Affairs at CenterPoint Energy, visited and observed summer youths participating in summer project on June 14.

Staff and interns of Children At Risk visited on June 21. Led by **Dr. Bob Sanborn**, **Barbara Stalder** and **Mandi Sheridan**, along with several CAR college interns, toured three FWEP facilities and observed summer youth program interactions under way.

**Sherra Aguirre**, Vice Chair of the FWEP Board of Directors, hosted **Sharon Phillips**, Regional Vice President of Washington Mutual, on July 7.

**Craig Ellis**, FWEP Board Treasurer, hosted **Paula Price** of KBR Communications Department and **Edwin Lloyd**, also of KBR. The delegation toured two FWEP facilities and met several parents and youth participants on July 7.

**Hasting Stewart** of Shell Oil Foundation toured two FWEP sites and held conversations with several FWEP youths and parents on August 3.

**Adrian Hudspeth**, Capitol One; **Katherine Butcher**, Community Relations Greater Houston Region for Wells Fargo; and **Paulette Wagner Scott**, Division Manager City of Houston's Housing and Urban Development. They two FWEP sites and were hosted by **Ron Price**, FWEP Board member, and were joined by FWEP parents and youths on August 10.

*If you're interested in participating in one of the bi-monthly "Getting to Know You" FWEP tours, please call Wanda Carrington at 713-229-8353.*

# THE FIFTH WARD ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

# *Calendar of Events*

## SEPTEMBER 2006

### September 4

Labor Day-  
Office Closed

### September 6

Open House @  
Fleming Middle School

### September 13

Board Meeting

### September 14

Open House @ E. O.  
Smith Middle School

### September 16

UNCF Walkathon @  
MacGregor Park

### September 18

FWEP Program Starts

### September 18\*

Parent Orientation @  
FWMBC 6-8 pm

## OCTOBER 2006

### October 2

HISD Closed—Fall Holiday

### October 2

Program Participants  
Fishing Trip

### October 5

Juvenile Justice Forum @  
United Way

### "Get to Know You"

Agency Tour

### October 14\*

Walk for Success @  
Nat Q. Henderson - TBA

### October 17

"Get to Know You"  
Agency Tour

### October 31\*

Halloween Party

## NOVEMBER 2006

### November 2

"Get to Know You"  
Agency Tour

### November 8

Board Meeting

### November 11-12

PP's Fall Leadership  
Retreat

### November 14

"Get to Know You"  
Agency Tour

### November 16\*

Thanksgiving Family  
Celebration

### November 20

HISD Closed—  
Professional  
Development Day

### November 20

Career Shadowing Day\*

### November 22- 24

HISD Thanksgiving  
Holiday

### November 23-24

Office Closed

\*: Tentative Items  
TBA: To Be Announced  
PP's: Program Participants

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