



Neighbors Helping Neighbors | Community Partners in HUD's Region VI Respond to Needs Created by Pandemic **#Inthistgether**

As communities combat the coronavirus outbreak, HUD is highlighting stories of communities coming together to help their neighbors in need.

Harrison, Arkansas— In an effort to care for its most vulnerable community members, the Harrison Housing Authority partnered with Ozarks Share and Care food bank and community members to prepare and deliver more than 700 lunches, 1200 grocery bags of food, 800 rolls of toilet paper and other toiletries to more than 600 families. Given that Harrison is a city of less than 20,000 residents, this was a tremendous achievement. *“As we were all knee deep in the unknown and trying to plan and navigate how to operate virtually on a limited budget, we decided that if we could keep the families we serve inside, as well as others in the community, it could help stop the spread of COVID-19,”* said Harrison HA Executive Director Chonda Tapley. *“I am so grateful to my staff, friends, family, City of Harrison Public Works employees and the other volunteers, because without their labor to prepare the bags, drivers and vehicles to deliver the food, and monetary donations, we couldn't have done this.”* The Harrison Housing Authority hopes this small deed will encourage families to stay in and practice social distancing, and they plan to repeat their community effort in the future.



[Photo courtesy of the Harrison Housing Authority](#)

San Antonio, Texas – Trulight Youth Village, a foster care campus that houses up to 20 children, has had to get creative during the coronavirus pandemic. Since Child Protective Service home visits are on pause right now to keep staff and families safe, the village has been completely full. *“We saw a lot of our families and kids who could go to kinship, who could go to grandma and grandpa but because of COVID and things not being safe, they couldn’t go out there to do all the walk throughs so things slowed down to a halt with that,”* said Sondra Ajasin, who runs Trulight. The team has been finding ways to keep the kids busy with fun activities such as holding a cookoff. It was a fun activity for the kids but also educational with math and home economics lessons. *“We had the kids come up with their own recipes,”* said Ajasin. *“It had to be made from scratch.”* Now that restrictions are starting to ease in Texas, families are coming out of isolation and children can safely leave the village to a safe home. [Read more from KSAT 12](#)



[Photo courtesy of TruLight127 Ministries Facebook page](#)

Albuquerque, New Mexico— Patsy Gomez in HUD’s Albuquerque Field Office has been assisting her community in Albuquerque and across state lines in El Paso, Texas throughout the coronavirus pandemic. She coordinated a drive thru food distribution that served over 1,000 families in need and holds a bi-weekly food pantry that serves 100 families. Every Saturday, she also distributes food and essential supplies to people who are homebound due to a disability, elderly residents and veterans. On Easter, she helped deliver over 200 Easter baskets to children who are living in shelters or experiencing home insecurity. She has also been working with local funeral directors in El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico to provide free or very low-cost funeral services to assist families affected by the loss of a loved one due to COVID-19. [Read the full story from El Paso Times](#)



Photo courtesy of Patsy Gomez

Albuquerque, New Mexico – Keeping families safe during the coronavirus pandemic is the top priority, but the Albuquerque Housing Authority (AHA) also wants to help make sure their children have activities do while abiding by stay-at-home orders. AHA staff spent hours assembling and delivering 200 arts and crafts supply kits to homes of Public Housing and Section 8 residents. Furthermore, they worked with local retail outlets for donations to the cause - Target, Costco, Wemagination, Wal-Mart, and Albertson's made the project possible. The community effort organized by the AHA and their hard-working staff was a complete success in support of AHA families, helping bring fun with arts and crafts into each household. Linda Bridge, Executive Director of the AHA, said *"This is a challenging time for everyone, but working with our community partners helped bring some joy to residents of the AHA, and that helped bring joy to the effort and everyone involved. I want to say thank you to all who made this project a great success."*



[Photo courtesy of the Albuquerque Housing Authority](#)

Corrigan, Texas – The Corrigan Housing Authority (CHA) recognized that action was needed to assist their elderly, disabled, and low-income tenants struggling during the coronavirus pandemic. The CHA and the Corrigan Fire Department (CFD) helped rally the city to feed these vulnerable residents, securing funding for food from local employers Georgia Pacific and Roy O Martin, with Brookshire Brothers supplying donated milk. The CFD was able to deliver groceries to 56 CHA residents. It was a welcome surprise to public housing tenants, who also received guidance identifying emergency food resources for the elderly and high-risk residents of Polk County. Of their effort, CHA Executive Director Johnna Gibson said, *“This was the community coming together to help those who are most vulnerable. We are so proud of the city and local partners for making a difference in this moment of extreme need.”*



[Photo courtesy of the Corrigan Housing Authority](#)

Brownsville, Texas - During the mandated county-wide shelter in place to protect Cameron County residents from significant threats of COVID-19, the Brownsville EnVision Center, a collaborative partnership between the City of Brownsville, Revival of Cultural Arts (ROCA), and the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB) remains committed to serving the families of the Brownsville community. Revival of Cultural Arts (ROCA) continues to support three of the four pillars of opportunity, Educational Advancement, Health and Wellness, and Character and Leadership in its programming. Prior to local and state shelter-in-place mandates, instruction for the dance, music, and art programs were conducted in-person with highly qualified instructors at the Brownsville Performing Arts Academy and the Carlotta K. Petrina Cultural Center. In an effort to provide the utmost safety and well-being of these programs' participants, the Brownsville EnVision Center has shifted instructional learning to virtual platforms that assist in continuing to connect and serve youth through unique opportunities and experiences during these unprecedented times. HACB residents and children from the Envision Center surrounding community have received instruments and supplies that allow them to participate in virtual instructional videos and teleconferences thereby continuing their learning at home. This helps foster support of the EnVision center pillars in a unique way that provides the joy of dance

and music and structured activities for youth while maintaining their safety and health.



Photo Courtesy of the Brownsville Housing Authority

San Antonio, Texas - The East Side Education and Training Center (EETC), a HUD EnVision Center in San Antonio, and the WestCare Foundation held a community event to assist residents respond to COVID-19. The drive thru event included the distribution of personal protective equipment, such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, anti-bacterial soap, books for children, and USDA Grab & Go Meals for children who were present. They also provided access to a Digital Resource Hub where individuals and families could apply for COVID-19 relief online and print and scan documents. In total there were more than 1,400 children's meals, 700 children's books, 800 sets of PPE, 120 bottles of disinfectant, and 500 antibacterial bars of soap distributed. The Grab and Go Meal Distribution and Online Resource Center will continue every Wednesday until further notice, in response to the pandemic.

The event was done in collaboration with more than 20 other community organizations and EnVision Center allies. It is essential to have community organizations like this to improve the quality of life for residents of communities like San Antonio's Eastside, which is home to a HUD Envision Center, HUD Promise Zone, and considered one of the most disadvantaged and at-risk populations in the country. It makes HUD proud to work with such an outstanding network of community collaborators with relentless dedication to serve their community. *"When we work and live in communities with limited*

resources, it is vital - literally and figuratively - that we come together and pull all resources to meet the needs of our neighbors," said EETC Off-Site Coordinator and EnVision Center Lead Contact Delicia Herrera. "Our organizations are anchors in our community and must continue to be the resource our community so desperately needs."



[Photo Courtesy of EETC](#)

Brownsville, Texas - Long before the Buena Vida Choice Envision Center received its designation, community work has defined Buena Vida's commitment to the city of Brownsville. This work has been made possible thanks to countless people and community partners that have volunteered throughout the years. Andres Guerra, a high school senior and EnVision Center volunteer, has dedicated his time and helped further the spirit of volunteerism by setting the example from a young age. He has focused on connecting residents and the community to resources they needed, has expanded Buena Vida's use of Facebook and other social media accounts, and has helped in special projects. The EnVision Center received its designation on February

12th of this year and since then, Andres has continued to work but as the Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator at the Housing Authority City of Brownsville. “Having the opportunity to be involved and engaged with the EnVision Center has been a remarkable experience, unlike any other. We are fortunate to have a centralized hub in our community that is geared towards empowering individuals through four pillars. Although operations are currently virtual, I cannot wait to witness the wonderful programs and experiences that will come out of the building, specifically ones that will empower other young people to become agents of change for their community,” Andres said.

Andres recently won a grant through the Rep My City Challenge that came from a partnership between Pop-Tarts, Kellogg Company, and United Way Worldwide. He entered the competition with his idea, a city-wide day of giving, providing necessities to anyone who needed them and secured a \$5,000 grant. Brownsville was the only city in Texas to receive this award. On May 7, 2020, Andres with the help of community partners such as the Brownsville Wellness Coalition, the City of Brownsville, and H-E-B, along with volunteers, provided groceries, fresh produce, and supplies to over 1,000 residents in need at a drive-thru distribution event in the Southmost area of the city. The event was able to help individuals who were experiencing homelessness and those of low socioeconomic status. Through his hard work and dedication to his community, Andres raised awareness about food insecurity and food deserts while addressing the immediate challenges the community faces today.



Photo courtesy of Andres Guerra

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