



Annual Report 2016-2017



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Letter from the President

I begin this year's letter with a sense of pride and gratitude. Circles of Care has marked its seventeenth year providing quality health and human services through foster care, adoption, and youth and family counseling services. None of our accomplishments would be possible without the dedication and talent of our employees and our care providers.

Our focus has never wavered from our goals, as we have and will continue to work hard and make strides toward our Strategic Plan goals which include ensuring and maintaining the safety of children in placement; ensuring placement stability and reducing disruption rates; employing highly trained staff and creating a culture of support and professional development; providing quality programs and using best practices; ensuring and reducing time to permanency for children in foster care; administering the agency in a cost effective and operationally efficient manner; and expanding services, developing a continuum of care, and seeking additional funding

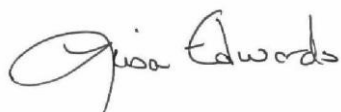
Some of the steps we have taken this fiscal year toward reaching our goals include the re-procurement of the STAR contract to provide needed family support and counseling to families in crisis, experiencing communication issues, dealing with child behavioral or school problems, and a host of other stressors that can negatively impact a family and its ability for effective living and growth. Placement stability in the foster care program has been impressive across the state with 89% of all placements requiring no sub-moves or discharges before program completion. Furthermore, we continue to work to decrease the length of stay a child has in our program, and we have been striving to decrease the length of time to permanency for each child whether that means reunification with parents, relatives, or adoption into a new home; our adoption program saw 48 adoptions this fiscal year.

We continue to develop training plans to have highly skilled employees and increase the development of our staff. Much of our staff has been trained and certified in Strengthening Families, a nationally and internationally recognized curriculum designed to aid families in improving relationships, communication, and parenting skills, reduce problem behaviors and delinquency, and improve social competencies and school performance. Several staff members also completed Triple P training this fiscal year, a nationally recognized program which helps improve familial relationships. Most of our staff have been certified in the Clinical Foundation of Trauma Informed Care through the University of Buffalo and through Early Pathways, an assessment and treatment protocol for addressing significant problem behaviors in children five years of age and younger.

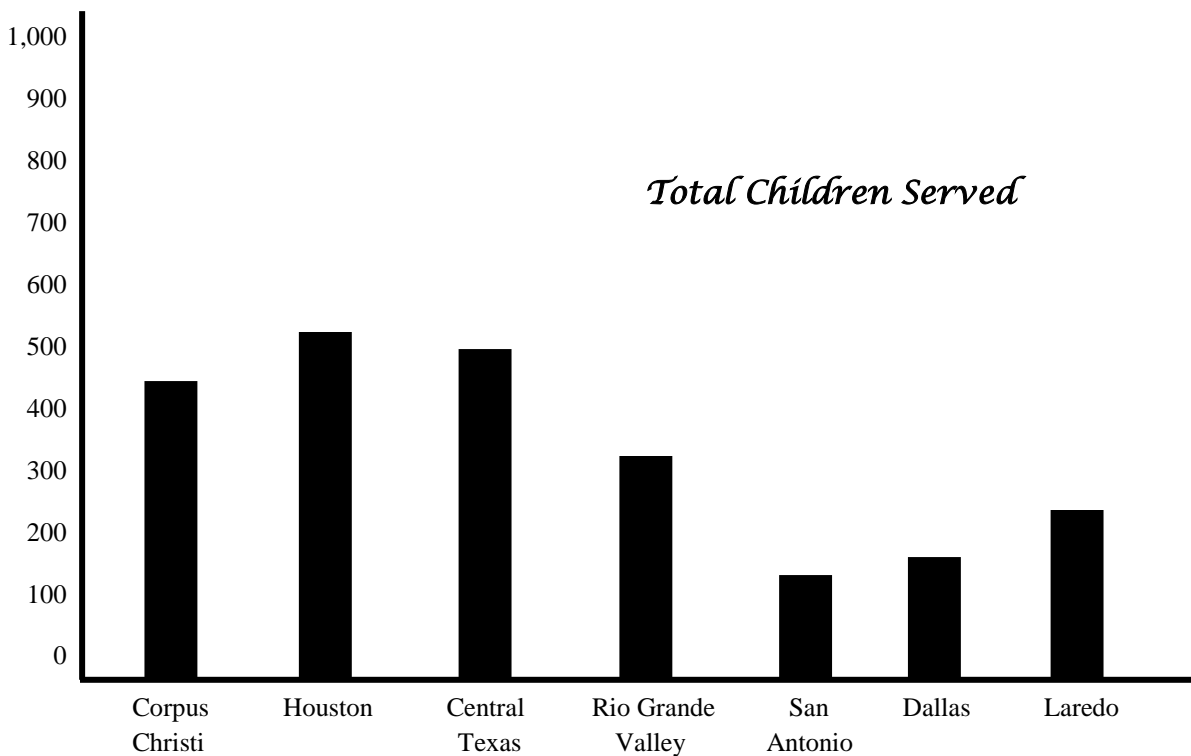
I am especially thankful to our staff who have worked on their own development so passionately and been so successful in improving our outcomes and meeting the needs of our clients. These accomplishments are just a few of our many this fiscal year, and we are continuing to work on our Strategic Plan goals and to meet our mission of enhancing children, youth, and families' ability for effective living and growth through social and mental health services.

Thank you to everyone who journeyed with us through this last year. I am looking forward to the next one!

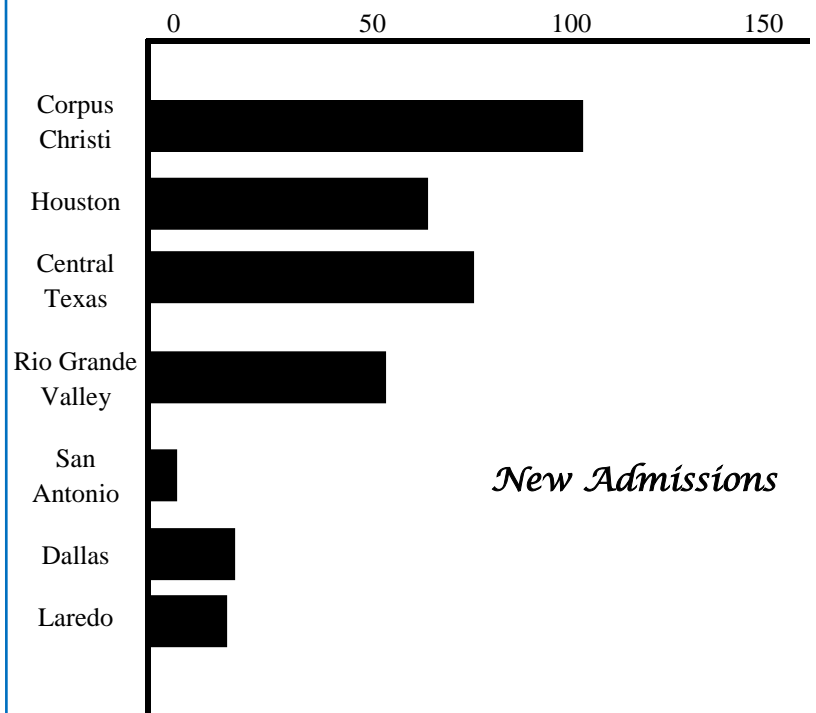
Sincerely,



Foster Care

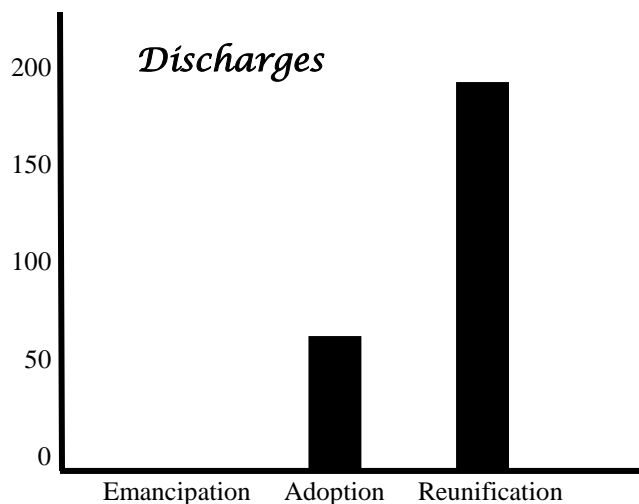


We provided placement services to a total of 2,249 children and youth in fiscal year 2016-2017, 377 of whom were new placements. Our Houston office served the greatest number of children at 514 followed by the Central Texas office with of 486. Corpus Christi led new admissions with 110 with Central Texas again following with 75 new placements. Children and youth were predominantly Hispanic, comprising more than 40% of the total census and following the demographic trends of the areas served. The average age of the children and youth served was 4.6 years old. Following the trend of the



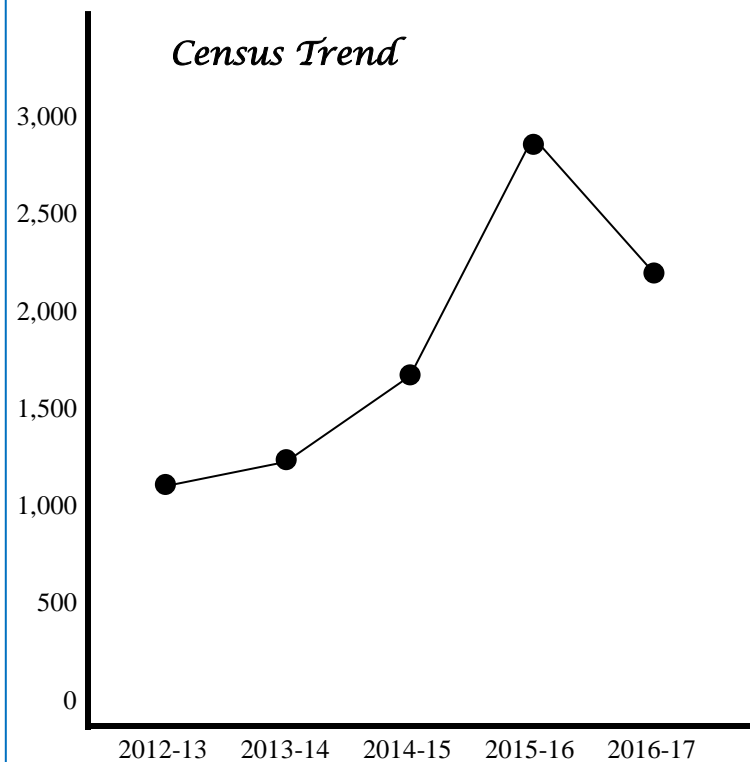
previous fiscal year, female placements were slightly more common than male placements. Females in care made up 51% of the total while males composed the remaining 49% of placements.

Of the 777 children in care who had siblings, 61% were able to be placed with some or all of their siblings. The State of Texas continues to experience a dearth of homes capable of accepting group or sibling placements, making these situations challenging and often resulting in the separation of sibling groups. Circles of Care attempts to combat this shortage by licensing homes specifically for groups and advertising campaigns to attract new families in an effort to prevent separations.



of 66. A total of 48 of those adoptions were conducted by Circles of Care; 18 were conducted outside of the agency. Circles of Care takes a special pride in adoptions; the process can be arduous and may often take several years. When completed, families become whole and children/youth are united with their parents forever. We celebrate these events with our families and congratulate them on their success.

Emancipations remained low, on par with the previous fiscal year.



There were a total of 151 discharges this fiscal year, the largest number of which was children and youth returning to their biological parents. Children and youth in care are returned to their families after permission has been given by the State, generally once the parents/guardians have completed training and education to prevent the behaviors which precipitated the removal. Most children and youth in care will eventually rejoin their biological families.

Adoptions experienced a slight dip in fiscal year 2016-2017, declining by 23% for a total

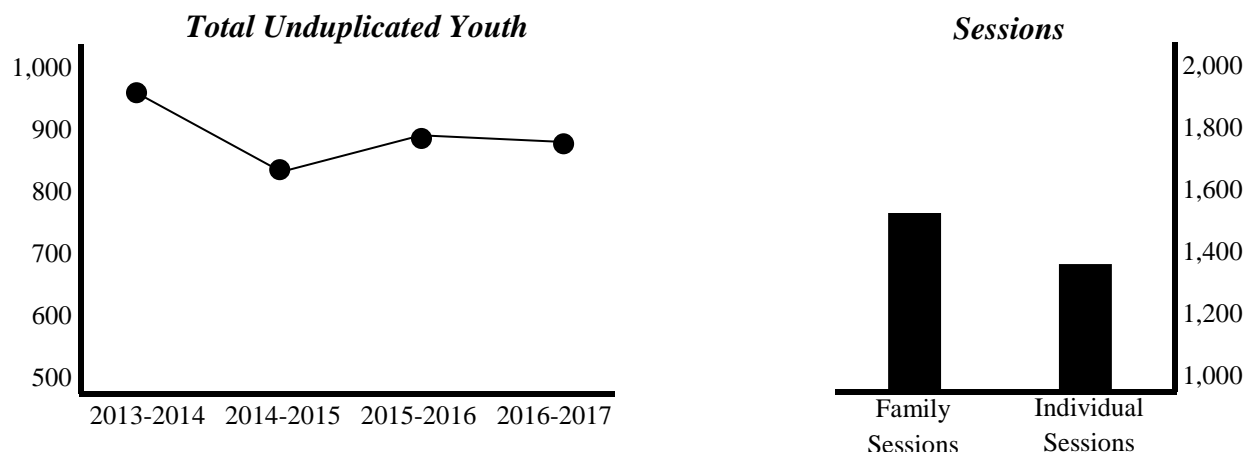
Services To At-Risk Youth

Our Services To At-Risk Youth program, STAR, is a free counseling program available to families and youth living in Nueces, Jim Wells, and Kleberg counties. It is designed to help individuals and families navigate crises they may face including school problems, a death in the family, divorce, conflict, and other issues a family may face. Our counselors work hands-on with clients to teach them the skills necessary to handle their problems safely and effectively. Our tools are evidence-based and proven effective at improving outcomes.

This fiscal year, the STAR program served 870 unduplicated youth representing nearly 475 families. Counselors conducted a total of 1,506 family sessions and 1,348 individual sessions, utilizing tools such as art and talk therapy and teaching valuable skills such as conflict resolution, communication, and even preparation for adulthood. Satisfaction surveys conducted once services have been completed indicated an improvement in overall family functioning after successfully finishing the program.

The State re-procured for the STAR contract this year as well, and Circles of Care was once again awarded the privilege of providing these services. The contract was extended for an additional five years which we feel demonstrates the positive impact we have made in delivering these services to the community. We will work to expand and hone our counseling services further in the New Year by training our staff and offering only evidence-based programs including Strengthening Families, Triple P, Cognitive Therapy, and Straight Talk.

As we enter 2018, we will also begin offering parenting and youth classes to the community. These classes are free and will feature the Strengthening Families and Triple P programs. These programs are evidence-based, instructor lead, and proven effective in helping families overcome obstacles and develop valuable coping mechanisms. Counselors will also lead the Arise program, an evidence-based curriculum aimed specifically at youth. Sessions will be offered in all three counties we serve and will be free to the public.



Annual Surveys

Our foster parents continue to be exceptionally happy fostering and adopting with us. They frequently commend our staff for their support, knowledge, experience, and availability. Our foster parents feel that they are well trained, that the training we offer is effective and beneficial, and that they are competently equipped to meet the

needs of the children they serve. Most of our families chose to become foster and adoptive parents out of a desire to improve the life of a child and to make a positive impact in their communities. When questioned about the issues they face as foster parents, the most common response was defiance and minor behavioral issues.

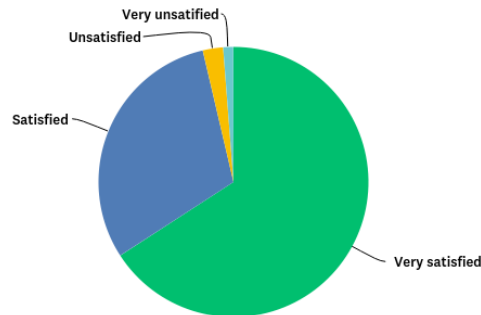
Our families gave special recognition to the following staff members: Clarissa Little, Norma Rodriguez, Jonicqua Hooks, Brittani LeMay, Amber Gonzalez, Anna Alvarado, Maya Sheen, Lesley Newburn, David Beltran, and Summer Solomon.

In their own words:

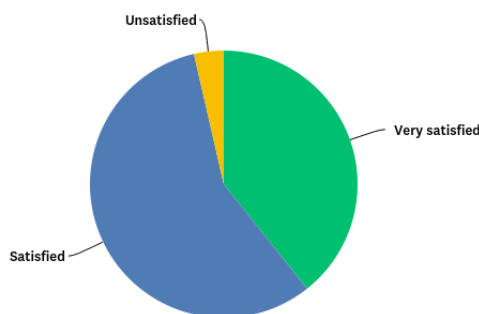
“Circles of Care is wonderful, and we recommend them to others interested in foster care.”

“They all work very hard to serve their families and children.”

How would you rate your overall experience with Circles of Care?



Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with Circles of Care?



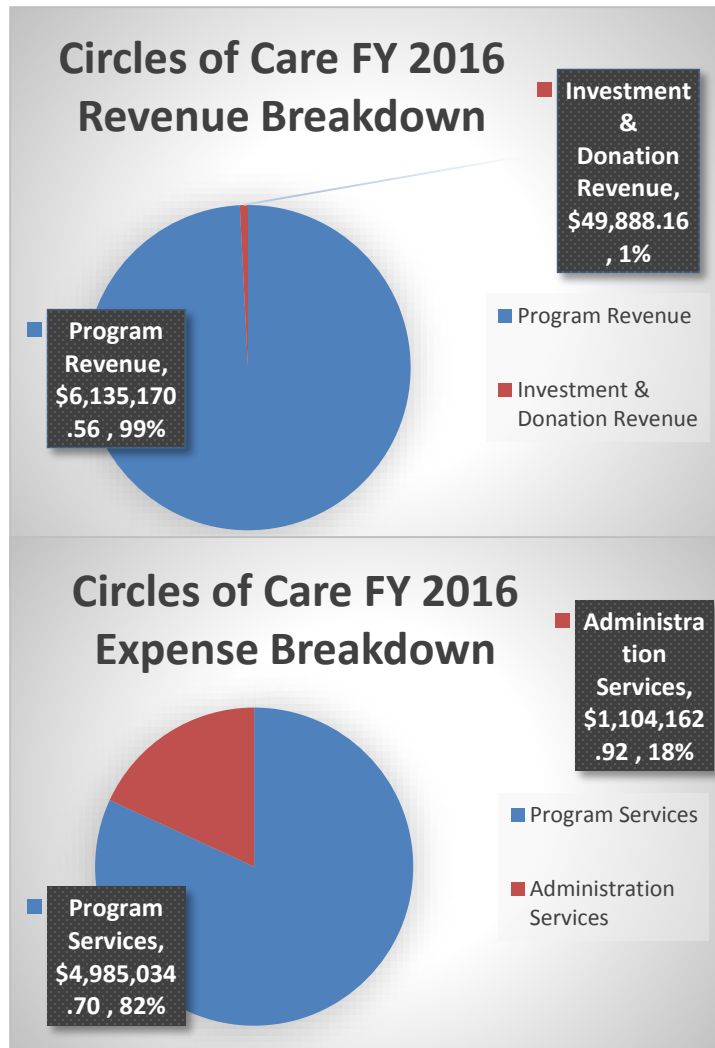
Our relationship with DFPS also continues to be strong and positive. DFPS workers generally agree that our foster parents are well-trained and knowledgeable, our staff is prompt and courteous, and that we provide excellent services and support. DFPS workers also commented on our dedication to the permanency of each child in our care, the end goal of foster care placement.

Comments, suggestions, and concerns on all surveys have been taken into account as we work to continue improving our services.

Surveys created by Survey Monkey.



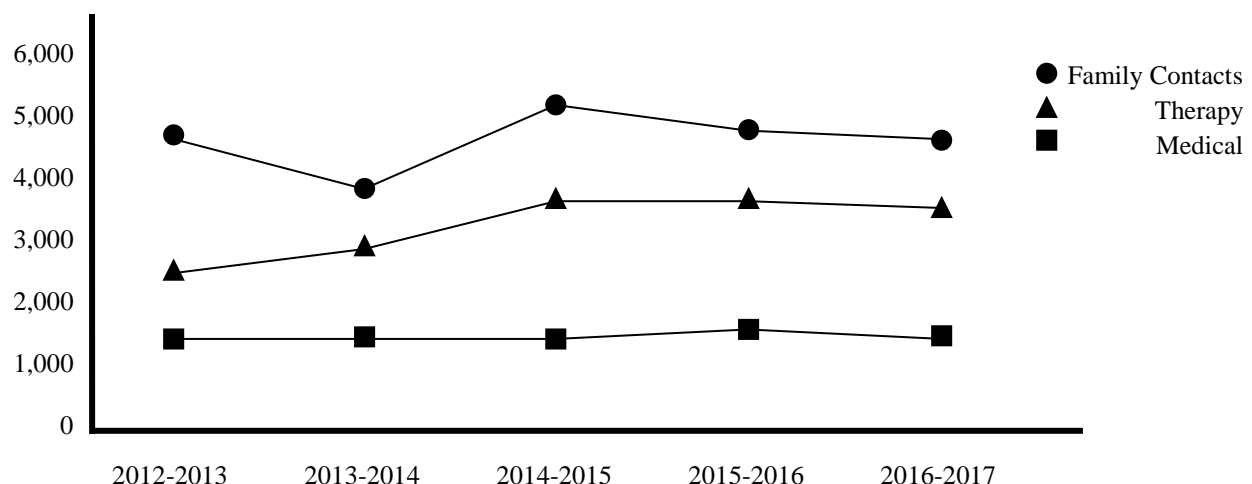
Financial Data and Outcomes



There were a total of 4,559 family and fictive kin contacts this fiscal year. These visits help children in care to maintain connections with their biological families and home communities and are a priority for Circles of Care.

There were 1,378 routine medical visits including physical and dental exams. Each child who comes into care receives these exams routinely to ensure that they are healthy and that their needs are met.

A total of 3,861 therapy sessions were held with children in care this fiscal year. Therapy is a valuable tool to help children transition to care, process their emotions, and overcome obstacles such as learning disabilities and behavioral challenges.



Events

We hosted our annual summer event once again this fiscal year to give our families and children the opportunity to celebrate the season with some fun in the sun. We allow families to choose from any of the wonderful attractions that Texas has to offer including Schlitterbahn and other water parks, local zoos, museums, the Space Center, aquaria, movies, and more. This event has expanded in size over the years as we have allowed our families more freedom in their selection and worked to accommodate special requests.

Easily the largest event that we host throughout the year, we purchased nearly 600 tickets and sent 129 families to attractions all across the state.

In addition to being our largest event, it is also our most popular. Families and children begin asking about tickets early in the year as they start looking forward and making their summer plans. They use the tickets at their convenience, ensuring that the entire family is able to participate and no one is left out. Through this gift, we are able to help keep the kids active throughout the summer, promote togetherness and bonding in foster families, and create a positive memory of their time in our care.

We also held our annual holiday celebrations across the state. Each of our offices hosts a party for our foster children and parents where we serve food, play games, and hand out individual gifts to each child. Local businesses such as Peter Piper Pizza, Dave & Buster's, Get Air, and Chuck-E-Cheese are kind enough to provide us with space for these parties and help make it special for the kids.



The Tirado family, in Corpus Christi, has been with us for 17 years, and Mr. Tirado, pictured above with some of the Corpus Christi staff, has been our Santa Claus for the last several years. This year we say goodbye to the Tirados, a generous and committed family who began foster care as a group home, often providing a family for up to 12 children at a time. Mr. and Mrs. Tirado worked with a variety of children from infancy to age 17, sibling groups, boys and girls, children with special needs, runaways, physically aggressive children, and more. The Tirados also completed three adoptions while they were fostering with us. They never shied away from a challenge and were always willing to work with whatever child came into their home.

We thank the Tirado family for all that they have done with our agency in the service of children in Corpus Christi area and around Texas. We know that they will continue their success and impactful way of living into the future.

Finally, we would not be able to put on this fun event were it not for the help of our community sponsors including: Winans and Thompson, AXA, Bob and Ruth Friedrichs, the Law Office of Fran Williams, Mike and Marina Harrison, Susan Kennedy, Peggi Wilson, Tom Hudak, Gary and Shirley Rodgers, Gail Milligan, Bay Area Anesthesia Associates, Mary and Walter Franklin, Stonebridge Alliance, the Leija family, Tomas and Nelda Cardenas, Allyson Gleason, the Chavez family, the Salado Women's Auxiliary, Asbury United Methodist Church, Ambu-Med, the Red Hat Ladies, Passion for Foster Friends, the Homeland Security Investigations Angel Tree, and the Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement. Thank you to who everyone who participated and helped make the season brighter for a child!



Children playing during the festival.



Case Manager David Beltran as a scary clown in the haunted house.



Compliance Monitor Melissa Aguilar as a zombie in the haunted house.

The Corpus Christi office put on its annual Halloween and Fall Festival once again this year. This was our 10th year hosting this event, so we went all out. Staff members and volunteers served grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, snacks, and sweets, and we passed out goodie bags stuffed with candy, toys, pencils, puzzles, and knick knacks.

Special guests at this year's event included Patches the Clown, a festival favorite who provided face painting and balloon animals, firefighters with a real fire truck who came by to speak to the kids and families and let them check out the truck, and the one and only Batman! We also put up our ever-popular haunted house for some fun spookiness. Staff members who spent the night giving fright are at the bottom left and at the top left of the next page.

This event is put together each year by Dawn Marwick, the head of our Halloween Committee with the help of Pat Edwards who reaches out to local organizations for donations. Companies that participated this year include: HEB, Wienerschnitzel, Schlotzsky's, Sonic,



Joseph as another scary clown.



Our full haunted house cast.

McDonald's, Yolanda's Speciality Cakes, Flowers Baking Company, Moody's Meat Market, and Pepsi-Cola. Tables and chairs were supplied by Oceanview Jump LLC, and bounce houses were provided by GIGS Inc.

We thank everyone who helped us put together this event and all of the families who got dressed up and came out to celebrate with us!

This fiscal year, much of our staff participated in the Strengthening Families training. This training will help our counseling staff to increase family bonds, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect as they work with our clients. It is a family focused and evidence-based training that our staff was very excited to take part in. It will continue to help us deliver excellent services into the new fiscal year as we redevelop our STAR program under the new contract.



A typical Circles of Care information booth at a community event; this particular booth was set up at the Ultimate Women's Expo.

We visited the Ultimate Women's Expo as part of our community outreach program this fiscal year. This fun event is geared toward women and mothers and features vendors, popular speakers, shopping, and informational booths. We participated at expos in Austin, pictured left, San Antonio, and Dallas this year to speak to women and families about foster care and adoption. The turnout at these events is remarkable, and they offer a great way for our staff to meet and interact with members of the communities we serve. As the Expo continues to grow and expand to new areas and cities of Texas, we look to follow suit and continue making those all important connections with our community families and partners.

Our staff also visited Corpus Christi's Barefoot Mardi Gras on Padre Island this fiscal year. This event brings community organizations together with families for a day of New Orleans Mardi Gras fun in the sun. We participated in the annual parade and festival and had a float (pictured below) hand decorated by our staff volunteers. We tossed out candy and treats for the kids along the parade route and were on-hand during the festival to meet with families and answer questions about foster care, adoption, and the STAR program. We will be attending the Barefoot Mardi Gras again in 2018, so look for us there!



Volunteers cooking and serving food in Rockport after Hurricane Harvey.

After Hurricane Harvey hit, we wanted to show our support for our affected communities. So, we traveled to Rockport, one of the areas hit hardest, with a group of staff and volunteers and prepared to do what we could to help. We cooked up fresh, hot meals for the local rescue workers and homeowners who were cleaning up after the storm and fed more than 300 people. We wanted to give back to the people who have supported us and help our families, children, and Texas communities through the difficult challenge of rebuilding.

Other events where we might have been spotted include: the Winter Growth conference, the Coastal Conservation Association Community Banquet, the Rubber Duck Roundup, Taste of Laredo, the HEB Fireworks Festival, the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, the Harlingen PD 5K Run/Walk with Heroes, the MLK Jr. Grand Parade, the National Foster Parent Conference, Freedom Fest, the Hutto Crawfish Festival, Taste of Dallas, and more!

All of our community events are listed on our website, so look for us out and about next year!

Success Stories



Jojo, pictured left, was placed in the Garza foster home in Corpus Christi on August 13, 2015. Since then, he has thrived under the care of the Garzas. Jojo graduated high school this year and is currently enrolled as a full-time college student. He intends to graduate with a degree and pursue his dreams after foster care.

Jojo has made and continues to make great strides toward independence as he enters adulthood. He currently holds a position in the service industry and works hard at his job around his class schedule. He is responsible with the money he earns and has learned to save for the things that he wants. In September of this year, Jojo participated in the Circles of Care Car Program and was able to purchase a vehicle of his very own. We provided him with \$4,000 toward his car and six months of insurance to help him get started. Jojo uses the car to travel to and from work and school and to socialize with friends when his busy schedule allows. It is an important step toward his independence and a reward for all of the hard work he has put in while in foster care.

Jojo is a responsible, respectful young man who has developed a close bond with the Garza family. In addition, he remains close to his biological family in his hometown of Waco. His family attended his high school graduation ceremony, and his younger brother, with whom he shares a close relationship, is placed with him in the Garza household. He has elected to remain in extended foster care while he works toward completing his education.

Congratulations, Jojo! Your future is bright, and we cannot wait to see what you do with it!



Megan, pictured left with her Case Manager Amber Gonzalez, was placed with the Dear family in Corpus Christi on June 1, 2015. Megan had a number of problems to overcome in care, but with therapy, outpatient assistance, and her own perseverance, she was able to thrive. Megan held a steady job throughout high school as a dog groomer and graduated, earning her high school diploma. She also participated in the Car Program and earned a vehicle for herself. After leaving care, Megan moved in with her sister and her boyfriend to take her first steps into the adult world.

Congratulations, Megan! We know you will be successful in all your endeavors!

The Bright family in Houston, pictured right with the presiding judge, completed adoption of Ricky and Onxia this fiscal year. The siblings were placed in Ms. Bright's home in January 2017, and the adoption was consummated just a few months later in April. They have been thriving in the home, earning good grades in school, and Ms. Bright reported no behavioral problems. Both children participate in Tae Kwon Do, and Ricky plays on his school chess team. Their youngest sister is also placed in the home with plans to adopt her as well before the end of the year. Ricky and Onxia are doing great, and they cannot wait for their sister to join their forever family!



The Riggan family, pictured left with the judge who completed their adoption, knew Jenna and Alyssa before they even came into care and before they themselves even became foster parents. They worked diligently toward licensure to ensure that they would encounter no obstacles to completing their family. Shortly after they were licensed, the girls' biological family reached out to the Riggins looking for a safe home for them. Although they were dealing with the unknown, Mr. and Mrs. Riggan accepted, confident that they could give Jenna and Alyssa the home and family they deserved. Then, on February 14 – Valentine's Day, it was truly a day of love as the girls were welcomed to their new family as Riggins.



The Horvath family, pictured right, has been fostering in Dallas since January of 2016. They had discussed fostering since before their marriage and both parents had expressed a desire to help children in need. Their very first placement was a young boy named Eden. The experience was an adjustment for the entire family and especially Eden who struggled with speech and behavioral issues. The Horvaths took an active role in Eden's emotional, educational, and developmental growth, and they consummated his adoption in May 2017. Now they say that they could not picture their lives without him as part of their forever family!



The STAR program also saw plenty of success this fiscal year. One youth in particular, a 17 year old girl, was not attending school and on the verge of not graduating before she began the program. In five months, she improved her attendance and not only graduated, but was accepted to a higher education institution.

One family was struggling with communication, behavior problems, and anger management. After working with one of our counselors, however, the family was able to resolve its problems. The mother reports that she feels more confident as a parent, her children are doing better, and the family spends more time together as a unit. They took the lessons they learned and applied them to see real results and reported that working with a supportive and judgment free environment was the key to their success.

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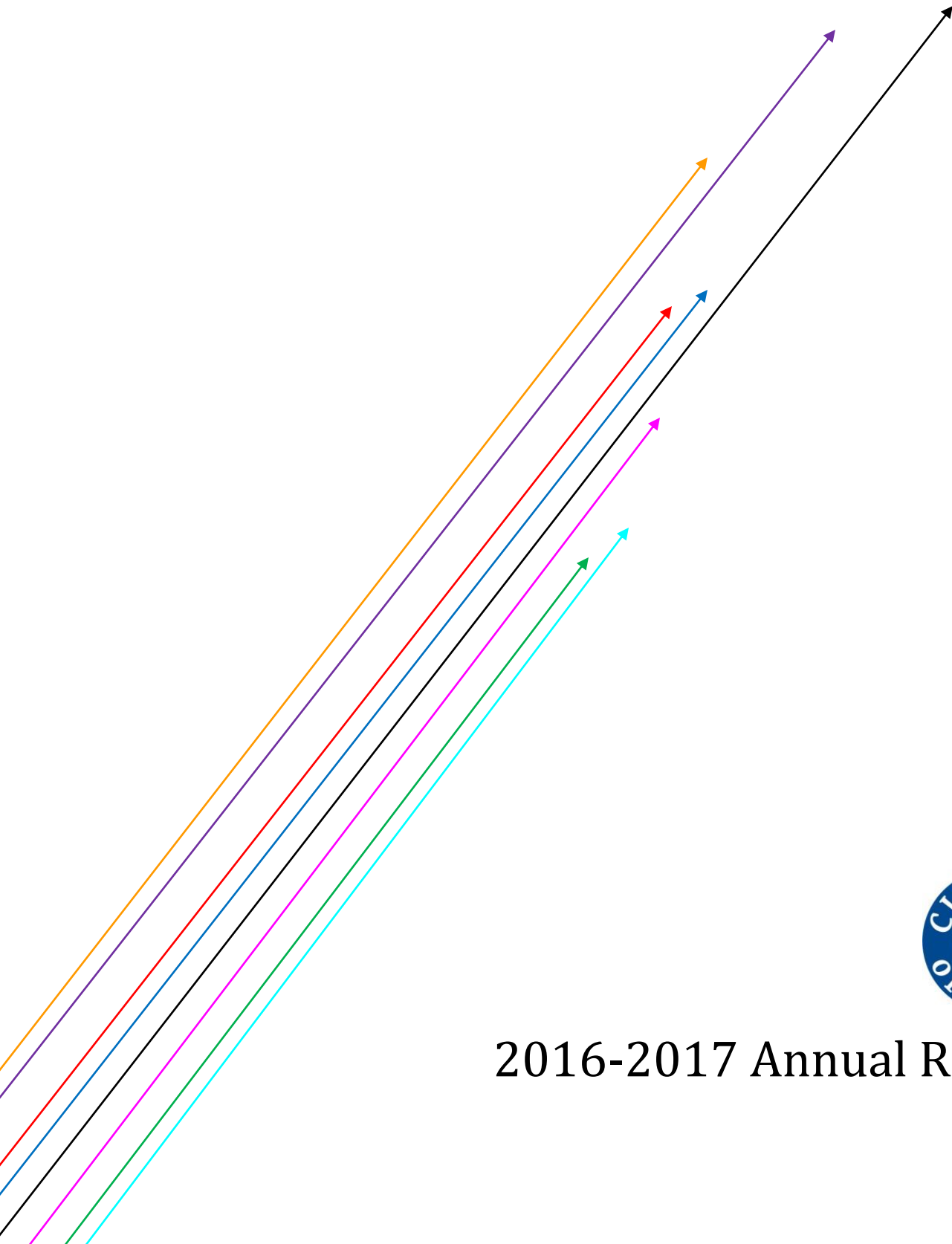
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Bringing children and families together.



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