

Good Works

HAA members help veterans find homes, provide meals for hungry families, save energy and promote health, education and good neighbors.

Each year, ABODE asks HAA members to share stories and pictures of the good work they've been doing to build stronger communities. This year, we feature several stories of our members going above and beyond to support organizations that HAA as a whole supports – Camp Hope and the Houston Food Bank – as well as efforts that directly serve their residents, such as National Night Out and after-school programs.

From HAA Staff Reports

HOUSING FOR HEROES

Many military veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, which can occur following the experience of a life-threatening event such as combat. The PTSD Foundation of America assists military veterans struggling with this disorder in various ways, including Camp Hope, a facility in north Houston that provides interim housing and support services for veterans and their families suffering from combat-related PTSD.

Once a veteran becomes a part of the community, he or she participates in a multiple-phase recovery process. Phase 1 begins with a 30-day detoxification period, during which the resident veteran does not leave the community and is never without a shadow companion, who is around constantly to ensure that the resident is adapting well. In Phase 2, they learn skills to increase chances of living a healthy civilian life.

In Phase 3 the Camp Hope resident graduates and returns to civilian life. Phase 3 is overseen by HAA member Lori Lindley, a property supervisor with Greystar and an ambassador for the PTSD Foundation and Camp Hope. Lindley helps find apartments for recent graduates. Since April she has helped 18 graduates find apartments.

Lindley is calling for HAA members to participate and support this initiative. She says helping them enjoy the freedom they've fought so hard for is the least we could do for veterans who come home suffering from PTSD.

Some HAA member companies are already helping with this initiative. Brook Furniture Rental has donated furniture so that graduates can begin living in a fully furnished new apartment.

"We are honored and proud to give back to these veterans that give so freely for their country," said Kim Ashley, director of national accounts for Brook Furniture Rental. "We should embrace them afterwards. After all we are family – multifamily."

Lindley stresses that she is not looking for free rent. The Camp Hope graduates are capable of making rent payments but need assistance in finding places to live where they can be approved with conditions. Many times graduates come out of Camp Hope's program only being able to find apartments in rough neighborhoods – environments that are not good for healing.

The people Lindley helps start a new healthy life rave about her with gratitude. She says it's the little things in life that matter the most and that a helping hand in a time of need does wonders. Bryce Simmons, a recent Camp Hope graduate, wrote Lindley a letter of thanks after he got settled in his new apartment.

"I cannot even to begin to measure up to what you have gifted me in a million years, but I can tell you I am speechless in how thankful I am. I am truly lost for words," Simmons wrote. "The apartment itself is absolutely amazing. You gave me the gift of shelter, where everywhere I went I was turned down. Just when I thought I was blown

away, I walked into my apartment to find a bounty of furniture. ... I hope you keep helping the guys at Camp Hope, because I know they appreciate it like I do. One day I hope and wish I can help someone in the same way you helped me."

For more information or to help Lindley with these efforts, contact her at llindley@greystar.com or 713-479-8814.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make neighborhoods safer, better places to live. Neighborhoods across the nation host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and other community events with safety demonstrations, seminars, youth events, visits from emergency personnel and exhibits.

On October 6, Monument Real Estate Services partnered with philanthropic health care organization Altus Foundation to celebrate National Night Out with a carnival at the Vista Verde Apartments on Broadway. The event drew more than 250 residents for an evening of community building.

Festivities included a variety of family-friendly activities paired with services from local organizations. Officers from the Southeast Patrol Division of the Houston Police Department spoke with residents about crime prevention, and children enjoyed a bounce house, face painting and entertainment from a magician and DJ. Residents had the opportunity to win raffle prizes, including children's bicycles, tablets and gift cards, and they enjoyed dinner from taco food trucks.

Representatives from Altus Hospice, Pharmacy and Infusion; Family to Family Network; the Houston Food Bank; Texas Children's Hospital; and Veterans Career and Recovery Resources provided information on their services.

"National Night Out is a positive initiative that aligns with our efforts to build a true sense of community at the properties we manage in Houston and around the country," said Stuart Zook, president of Monument Real Estate Services. "With our expanding Monument Cares programming, we aim to enrich the lives of our residents of all our properties by providing access to health care information and other vital resources."



TOP: Monument Real Estate Services partnered with the Altus Foundation to host a National Night Out carnival at Vista Verde Apartments, inviting officers from HPD and providing games, prizes and crafts for the community's children. ABOVE: Jeffery D. Wallace, president of the Altus Foundation, and Stuart Zook, president of Monument Real Estate Services, announced the winners of raffle items including children's bicycles and gift cards. RIGHT: Vista Verde residents enjoyed a variety of family-friendly activities, including face painting, entertainment by a DJ and magician and a bounce house.



SAFE HAVEN COMPUTER CENTER

HPD Officer Lloyd Anderson grew up in the Villa Americana apartment community in the South Park area of Houston. Along with Bridging the Digital Divide and several other community partners, Anderson is sponsoring a computer lab and organized sports, fine arts and field trips for the children who live at Villa Americana. The Apartment Safe Haven Computer Centers program is designed to provide holistic benefits to the children and adults living in the Villa Americana Apartments, located in a neighborhood with high crime and poverty rates. The goal is to benefit children academically and socially by providing a nurturing environment where they can be safe, learn and have fun.

The program uses retired donated computers, freeware and public domain software. Children participating in the Villa Americana after-school program will use the computers for their homework, tutoring, surfing the Internet or playing video games. The computers also contain educational programs, English as a Second Language items and reading readiness software that can be used by residents and volunteers to teach preschool kids how to read, write and count. Because the computer center has Internet access the computers can be used for GED, job searching and more.

Anderson says it is an honor to bring this type of program to his old neighborhood, but his real goal is to implement the program within every apartment community in the Houston area. For more information or to participate, visit www.bddhouston.org, or contact Anderson at 281-827-8332 or Johnny Molock with Bridging the Digital Divide at 713-240-3658.

SOLAR SAVINGS FOR NONPROFITS

In the past year, Green Mountain Energy has provided more than 500 solar panels to help community organizations in Houston. The array of 440 solar panels installed on the roof of the Houston Food Bank's warehouse is expected to provide 154,000 kilowatt-hours of renewable energy annually, which the organization estimates will generate enough savings to provide for nearly 30,000 additional meals every year. That makes a big difference to the 800,000 people in the community that the Food Bank serves every year.

The Green Mountain Energy Sun Club selected the Houston Food Bank to receive a



ABOVE: The Green Mountain Energy Sun Club installed an array of 440 solar panels on the roof of the Houston Food Bank's warehouse, which is expected to generate enough savings to provide for nearly 30,000 additional meals every year. **RIGHT:** The Green Mountain Energy Sun Club helped Main Street Theater celebrate its 40th anniversary by "flipping the switch" on a new 23.5 kilowatt solar array at the newly renovated theater. The panels are a result of a \$100,000 donation made by the Sun Club earlier this year.



\$100,000 donation earlier in 2014, and Green Mountain contributes \$4 per month on behalf of each Texas SolarSPARC customer to help accelerate the adoption of solar energy in Texas, giving organizations like the Houston Food Bank the opportunity to go solar. The Houston Food Bank and Green Mountain have also entered into a sustainable business partnership, where Green Mountain will help evaluate their building efficiency and offer solutions aimed at increasing the food bank's sustainability.

In October, the Green Mountain Energy Sun Club helped Main Street Theater celebrate its 40th anniversary by "flipping the switch" on a new 23.5 kilowatt solar array at the newly renovated theater. The panels are a result of a \$100,000 donation made by the Sun Club earlier this year.

Main Street Theater's sustainable addition includes 64 panels on the roof of the theater and an additional 13 panels on the face of

the building for a total of 77 solar panels. The solar array is expected to produce nearly 32,000 kilowatt-hours of clean electricity every year, which is like powering three homes annually. The energy savings will help offset some of the costs to power the theater's many productions. The theater's non-profit education department offers educational and outreach programs such as year-round classes and camps for local youth.

Since 2002, the Green Mountain Energy Sun Club has donated more than 80 solar and sustainability projects to nonprofits across Texas, with 13 solar projects in the Houston area alone. Other local Sun Club projects include Camp Hope/PTSD Foundation and the University of Houston. Nonprofit organizations interested in applying for a sustainability grant from the Sun Club can apply for projects via applications available online at www.gmsunclub.com.

(more)

WHEN I GROW UP

Stone Forest Apartments and Urban Outreach Inc. hosted a career day in October for the children in the apartment community's after-school program.

"The goal of career day activities is to help them understand the world around them ... about what they would like to be when they grow up," said community manager Norma Alvear, SMI Realty, "and teach them the importance of education to be able to succeed and become what they dream of."

Urban Outreach Inc. provides a recreational and educational program for the children at Stone Forest, providing monthly activities, teaching character education, reading, helping with homework and more. For more information, contact Liliana Perdomo-Clavijo of Urban Outreach Inc. at lilianaclavijo@hotmail.com.

The Stone Forest staff also hosted a fall festival on October 23 featuring an HPD helicopter, Houston Fire EMS and a patrol car for residents to discover.

"This was a great tool for the small children to explore and maybe consider becoming a police officer or a firefighter for their future," said Alvear. "We also had food, dental information, face painting, prizes and lots of fun!"

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LOWER RIGHT: Stone Forest hosted a fall festival featuring games, prizes and guests from HPD and Houston Fire & Rescue.



ABOVE, RIGHT: Stone Forest Apartments and Urban Outreach Inc. hosted a career day for children in the on site after-school program.



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SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER

Mark Denson and the On Site Towing staff worked with the City of Houston parks and recreation department and Chief Jasen Rabalais of the Harris County Pct. 3 Constables Office to provide meals and gifts last year. On Site Towing smoked 30 turkeys for Thanksgiving and delivered them Thanksgiving morning to families in need in Pct. 3 and purchased 200 toys and 10 bicycles to ensure that 200 little boys and girls had a Merry Christmas.

On Site Towing also donated food in a joint effort with Harris County Pct. 1 Constable Alan Rosen that provided 350 families Thanksgiving dinners. The meals included turkey or ham, dressing, potatoes, green beans, candied yams and more. ★

PHOTOS: Mark Denson and the On Site Towing staff worked with the City of Houston parks & recreation department and the Harris County Constables Office to provide Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts last year.

