



Fitness is a key component of the Teen Center at Brand. Teens can participate in a variety of recreational activities that will challenge not only their competitive nature, but will teach them how to build character, work in teams, and develop their leadership skills. Teens are involved in teaching newcomers how to properly care for the equipment, do basic routines and spot one another when lifting weights. Members can choose organized activities such as Karate, boxing, and weight lifting. On Tuesdays and Thursdays,, staff set up the net and a friendly game of volleyball is played.



## Teen Entrepreneurs Learn the Value of Making a Dollar



Raul Herrera, a.k.a. The Candy Man, sells candy bars to finance his future.

Never say that teenagers are not willing to work to get what they want. For two Brand teens, they want to become DJ's. Raul Herrera, 17,

and Pablo Garcia, 17, are aspiring to become Techno DJ's and are saving up to buy equipment. One way they are raising money is by selling chocolate bars and other treats at the BGC-Brand Unit.

They got the idea of selling the candies after talking with their Keystone advisor. One of the components in Keystoning is entrepreneurship. Instead of asking their parents for the money to buy the equipment, they asked for seed money to buy their first box of candy bars. They also asked Christy de Leon, Brand's Unit Director, for permission to sell during the after school program.

The teens learned the concept of

supply and demand after they underpriced their products and made little profit. But with the earnings, they bought more candy and adjusted the prices at a reasonable rate. They also diversified their products by selling bags of chips and smaller pieces of candies to sell at 25¢ for those children that had little money with them.

Raul and Pablo know the cardinal rule in sales is to keep the customer happy. From time to time, they have used a portion of their proceeds and bought pizza and other treats for the teens. "It is our way of saying 'thanks' to the Boys & Girls Clubs for allowing us to make our dream a reality," said Raul.

## Brand Center Hosts Soccer Tournament

In October, the Brand Center invited the other BGC-McAllen teen centers to a friendly game of soccer. The Retama Unit came in full force with a team of over 15 players. Unfortunately, due to the recent rains, the games had to be moved indoors. But this did not hamper the teens' spirits. Instead of playing for their units, five teams of six players (plus one alternate) were formed. Two teams represented the Retama unit while Brand had three. A tournament bracket was formed to determine the order of play. After two hours and several games later, La Cruz Azul from Brand won the tournament.

Regardless who won, the teens from both units had a lot of fun playing soccer. They had a chance to mingle with teens from other parts of McAllen and meet other staff.

As for the Brand Center, recruitment for teens shot up. One of the conditions for playing in the tournament was that all players had to be members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of McAllen. "We saw a surge of new faces coming into the center," said Robert Gonzalez, teen staff. "At first, all that



the new members wanted to do was play soccer, but now they have gotten involved with the other activities."

## UTPA Recruiter Visits Brand Teen Center

On October 23, 2007, the Boys & Girls Club Teen Center at Brand hosted college night as part of the Goals to Graduation national program. Myra Martinez, a recruitment officer for the University of Texas-Pan American, spoke to the teens on the importance of an education. She told her personal story; a story of perseverance. "As a teen, I was not the best student," she said, "many people thought I would not finish school, much less enter college."

"I did not know how I was going to pay for it. I wanted to give up, but I wanted to prove everyone wrong." Ms. Martinez added. Through hard work and determination, Ms. Martinez graduated and now works to recruit students into the University.

The teens, especially those that are not the best students academically, were shown that there are options for them. Ms. Martinez explained that a college education is for everyone so long as they want it. She explained how students could pay for their education. "Whether it is through loans, grants, or scholarships, the University is there to work with you."

"I learned that UTPA offers a lot of interesting courses," said Eric Hernandez, 14. "Although I want to go to Texas A&M, I learned that there are many good opportunities close to home."

All those in attendance also received a "goodie" bag with a UTPA T-shirt, pens, and informational brochures. To this day, the teens are seen sporting their UTPA shirt proudly.



top left: JoAnna Gutierrez shows off her new UTPA T-shirt.

center left: Ms. Myra Martinez passes out the "goodie" bags to the teens.

bottom left: Erika Gonzalez learns what UTPA has to offer by reading the brochure.

right: Eric Hernandez asks questions regarding the majors available at UTPA.



## Young America Acts: Can You See Us Now?



Marcos Cervantes, 17, gives a helping hand by unloading a bus full of clothes and school supplies

This year, the 2007 National Keystone Project is entitled "Young America Acts: Can You See Us Now?" National BGCA wants clubs to showcase the various talents and skills that teenagers have to offer. The Boys & Girls Clubs of McAllen provide local teens many opportunities to be seen. Through community service, tournaments, the arts, and sports, teens are given the chance to shine. This newsletter is testament to that.

The Keystone Club at the Brand Center has been active in both the community and the center. While other teenagers were asleep or just hanging out, the Keystoners were busy helping the community for 3 weekend in a row in September. They volunteered to unload, sort

and distribute clothes and school supplies donated by the residents of McAllen during the "Fill the Bus Campaign." During football registration, the teens were in force distributing school supplies. They also seize the opportunity to fund raise. The teens kicked off their "One Campaign" by soliciting donations in the form of support cards.

In October, the Keystone Club nominated and elected their officers. All current members that attend the meetings were eligible to run for office.



## Teens Help Beautify The Rio Grande Valley

When Rio Forestation XVI called for volunteers to help plant seedlings at Ranchito tract of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the teens from the Boys & Girls Clubs of McAllen responded. Keystoners from the Roney Center and the Brand Center, along with their advisors, met on Saturday, October 27, 2007 to help plant tree and shrub seedlings on 36 acres of Refuge farmland. The project will restore valuable wildlife habitat and create green space that contributes to the quality of life in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.



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## Spaghetti Dinner at Brand

On October 23, 2007, the staff invited the teens to a spaghetti dinner at the Brand Center. Over 30 teens were treated to a delicious meal that was prepared by teen volunteers under the supervision of Lauriano Aguirre. The teens divided the duties: one team made the lemonade, another cooked the pasta, and the third team handled the sauce.

While preparing the meal, the teens talked about family recipes and explained the "real" way of making spaghetti (which varied from teen to teen.)

"You need to add salt to the water," said Marlen Bocanegra, 13, "then you put in the spaghetti."

"You don't have to put any salt in," disagreed another teen.

No matter which recipe was followed, the volunteers enjoyed cooking together. They also liked the fact that some of the teens that ate were asking for seconds.

After the meal, the teen volunteers also learned that part of preparing a healthy meal is cleaning up. They washed all the utensils, stored any unused items and picked up the chairs and tables in the lunchroom.

Next month, the Club plans to serve Chalupas with Agua Frescas.



Teens and staff do their part to clean the Brand Center while our custodian was on vacation.

Frank Bermea (left,) and teen staff, Robert Gonzalez (right,) prove that men CAN clean, too! (Although they posed more than they actually cleaned)



# Teens Perform During Red Ribbon Kick-Off



While most teens were tucked in their beds on Saturday morning, Jessica Ramirez, 14 and Eddie Garza, 16, were performing at the Red Ribbon Rally outside the Brand Center. Both teens are regular members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of McAllen.

Under the leadership of James Arredondo, Jessica and Eddie learned to play and sing the song "How to Save a Life" by *The Fray*. They practiced everyday for two weeks until they got the music right. Mr. Arredondo would even come in on his days off to practice with the teens.

**top left:** Eddie Garza, 16, plays the keyboard while James Arredondo (in red cap) is on drums.

**bottom left:** Francisco Gonzalez sings backup and plays guitar.

**right:** Jessica Ramirez, 14, sing lead to a crowd of over 200 people.



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF McALLEN

Tel (956) 630-5323  
Fax (956) 682-4023  
<http://mcallenclub.org>

**Othal E. Brand**  
2620 West Galveston  
McAllen, TX 78501  
(956) 682-5791

**Glen E. & Rita K. Roney Center**  
4501 N. 34th Street  
McAllen Texas 78504  
(956) 687-3910

**La Retama Unit**  
1200 North 25th Street  
McAllen, Texas 78501  
(956) 630-3212

**South Roosevelt Unit**  
4801 South 26th Street  
McAllen, Texas 78501  
(956) 630-4354



*Red Ribbon Week 2007*



## The Positive Place for Kids!

Othal E. Brand Center's youth program is still on the rise, we are currently serving 110 members on a daily bases. These past months have been busy for our youth, they recently had elections for Torch Club and S.M.A.R.T. Girls. Club members have been involved in helping with the distribution of clothes and food that were donated to the Club over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Our young club members have enjoyed our new reading program, Kidzlit. Club members listen to stories and get to act them out and take a test on some of the books they have read. Club members will have a Christmas celebration before they break for the holiday. Toys 4 Tots donated toys for the members.

