



# Positive Place Highlights

## SIMPLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Parents as Mentors



Laura Reagan-Porras

I recently took a trip with one of our board members, Laura Hinojosa who also serves our community as Hidalgo County District Clerk. We were driving to Austin to attend a meeting of the Texas Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs. We talked about our families and our work.

I updated her on our original social research project at the club where we ask youth to comment and categorize how and why they admire mentors in their lives.

They have listed four significant areas of influence, 1) caring adults they have fun with, participating in activities; 2) caring adults that help to solve problems; 3) caring adults that teach a skill; 4) caring adults that help with a crisis. Our research is validating other research that postulates one of the most protective factors against acting out with negative behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, poor school performance, teen pregnancy or juvenile crime, is the presence of an adult in a crisis as perceived by the youth or teen.

When I asked Laura Hinojosa who most influenced her when she was growing up or who she would name as her mentor, she answered quickly, her own mother, Ms. Bertha Hinojosa. Laura states that she was always a "daddy's girl." In high school however Laura became close again with her mother. A girl started a rumor about Laura. Laura was crushed. Her mother was truly there for her and coached her through the self-esteem issues of adolescence.

It was a critical time that young Laura perceived as an identity crisis. Her mother counseled Laura to stay true to herself and affirmed that happiness and identity are not found in what others think of you, but rather in what you think of yourself and how you uphold your own values. "She was actually tough on me; she told me what she did and didn't agree with; but she always communicated unconditional love," recalls Laura. Laura and her mother's example reflect what we have learned from club

members. One of the most protective factors from at-risk behavior is the caring, helpful presence of an adult in a crisis.

From that time forward, Laura formed a new bond with her mother that continues to guide her today. She admires her mother for being strong, independent, confident, intelligent and funny. She also says her mother doesn't rely on others to make her happy. Laura sees her mother as "the ideal mother and grandmother, a true lady." Laura says, "My mother is my best friend."

Laura naturally affirms that her mother's parenting example has positively affected how she parents her own children. "I've taken the same role in my children's lives as she did with me. My kids



Laura Hinojosa

can come to me for support but they respect me, without being afraid of me."

"My mother also influenced my life's causes." (The well-being of children is at the heart of her life's causes.) "She was volunteering before volunteering was cool. She volunteered up and down the Valley with schools and churches and served on the board of Mujeres Unidas. Of course my father has a life of public service; he served on various state boards. He is a past president and lifetime board member of the Boys & Girls

Club of McAllen. I too served as president of the Boys & Girls Club of McAllen and now serve statewide on the Texas Alliance of the Boys & Girls Clubs. My parents taught me to accept and respect others; they taught me not to judge others and be grateful for what we have."

In a recent Harris Poll, Boys & Girls club alumni say they learn the difference between right and wrong from club youth development professionals. Most credit the club as changing or saving their lives. But parents are still our first role models and can be our best mentors. Happy Mother's Day to all mentors who nurture our youth!

---

Laura L. Reagan-Porras, MS is a sociologist and the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of McAllen and may be reached for comment or questions by calling (956) 687-5791 or emailing [lreagan\\_porras@bgcmcallen.org](mailto:lreagan_porras@bgcmcallen.org).

# Congressman Rubén Hinojosa Announces \$139,000 Mentoring Grant For The Boys & Girls Club of McAllen



Congressman Hinojosa

Washington, DC – Congressman Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) announced today that the Boys & Girls Club of McAllen has been awarded \$139,000 by the U.S. Department of Education for mentoring education. The funds will be used to provide one-on-one mentoring relationships to approximately 500 at-risk area youth. The money will also make it possible for college students from UT-Pan American and South Texas College to mentor youth.

“The McAllen Boys & Girls Club has impacted the lives of thousands of young men and women in our region. Their at-risk prevention curriculum is incredibly effective at taking kids off the streets and giving them the support they need to succeed,” said Hinojosa. “This grant will help them reach even more at-risk youth who need individualized attention and access to the services these clubs offer.”

“Our alumni credit our mentors with changing or even saving their lives. As the youth development specialists in our region, we are thrilled to be awarded this grant that will afford us the opportunity to begin one-on-one mentoring for our at-risk

youth. This program will allow us to impact the future of hundreds of students who need and deserve a role model in their lives,” said Laura Reagan-Porras, Executive Director McAllen Boys & Girls Club.

The grant will directly affect the Club’s Youth First Afterschool Alliance. Launched over a year ago, the collaborative effort is aimed at the development of area youth through outreach in the areas of health, academic success, gang prevention, and character building. Partners include the McAllen Independent School District, Sylvan Learning Center, and Quest Academy of Idea Public Schools.

Partner agencies provide learning and prevention services during after-school hours through the use of culturally relevant mentoring relationships that confront social barriers. The Youth First Afterschool Alliance has served more than 600 at-risk youth and teens by engaging students in positive activities and minimizing the negative effects of social factors in their lives. It has built up an impressive record of success reflected in improved test scores and credit recovery.

The Boys & Girls Club of McAllen has played an integral role in the community for 42 years, providing daily programs and services to more than 15,000 young people. It is part of a national network of more than 3,700 neighborhood-based facilities annually serving more than 4.4 million young people, primarily from disadvantaged circumstances.

## Mentoring Our Youth



### **At risk of educational failure or dropping out of school:**

Research directly correlates the high school dropout rate with the rate of juvenile crime in a community and because McAllen serves students located in the 78501 ZIP code determined by the State of Texas as a juvenile high crime region for youth (ages 10-17). It is easy to see why the dropout rate for MISD exceeds state ratios.

Nine out of ten of those prisoners did not finish High School and the

majority dropped out at ninth grade, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin.

**Youth are involved in criminal, delinquent, or gang activities**– According to the McAllen Police Department, 15 % of all arrests in the city are juvenile arrests. Sixty percent of these arrests involve males; 40% are females. More than 10 gangs have been identified as conducting activities in city parks in the 78501 zip code. Exposure and involvement in juvenile crime is a critical issue for area youth and therefore a programmatic focus.

**Youth lack positive role models** - Social researchers say one of the most significant protective factors for keeping a child or teen from becoming involved in “at risk” behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, juvenile crime, poor school performance or drop out and early sexual debut with the consequences of disease or teenage pregnancy, is that an adult is truly available for that youth in a moment of crisis. For this crucial reason BGC’s youth development professionals, MISD teachers and community partners engage youth not only in meaningful afterschool activities but also in vital mentoring conversations to prevent “at risk” behavior.



# POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence. The Boys & Girls Club of McAllen changes lives, even saves lives.

You can be a part of our mission, **to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens**, by giving generously to our *It Just Takes One Campaign*.

The Campaign involves an annual contribution to the club which reminds us that it just takes one encouraging word to build confidence; one positive place to build brighter futures, one caring adult to change a child's life.

## It Takes Just One...

### The 2008 Annual Campaign for the Boys & Girls Club(s) of McAllen Response Card

I want to support the 2008 Annual Campaign for the Boys & Girls Club(s) of McAllen!

My contribution of  \$5,000     \$2,500     \$1,000     \$500     \$250     \$100  
or other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ will be paid on the following date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ should be charged to my credit card.

American Express, VISA, Discover and MasterCard accepted.

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My company will match my gift \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

Wishing you all the joy you can gather,  
all the memories you can keep,  
and all the love your heart can hold.

In honor of your, birthday, \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME OR FAMILY) has made a donation to The Boys & Girls Club of McAllen

\_\_\_\_\_

# 2008 Board of Directors

## President

David Calvillo

## President-Elect

Trey Murray

## Treasurer

Larry Lyles

## Vice-President Fundraising

Dru LaMantia

## Vice-Sports Chair

Mark Voss

## Immediate Past President

Candelario Ontiveros

## Liaison to Board of Governors

Candelario Ontiveros

## Texas Alliance Board Member

Laura Hinojosa

## Members

Elsa Fernandez

Jennifer Yarto

Veronica Whittaker

Stephanie Moore

Ric Godinez

Brian Lewis

Carlos Guerra

John King

Sophia Sewell

Courtney Cardena

Dr. Carlos Manrique

Gustavo Acevedo

Kaylynn Norman

Cynthia Gutierrez

Dr. Chris Freels



**Ex-Officio: City Parks & Rec.**

Rick Krausse

**Lifetime Member**

Jim Darling

**Lifetime Member**

Congressman Ruben Hinojosa

**Lifetime Member**

Ron Kilby

Photos of Baseball Opening Ceremony