

# Blue SKIES

FALL 2008



## Methodist Mission Home

Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future

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## On Their Own, But Not Alone

### 11 graduates ready to take skills learned at SCHI to the next level

Working at a job. Living independently. Maintaining life-long friendships.

These are the measures of success achieved by 11 students who graduated from the Southwest School of Higher Independence (SCHI) at Methodist Mission Home (MMH).

During the 34th annual graduation ceremony on June 27, the group of diverse students received their certificates in the Perry Chapel in front of friends and family.

SCHI offers individuals with disabilities a transitional education to learn social, work, and independent living skills.

"Today is a day about dreams," said David Kinder, Chair of the MMH Board of Trustees during the ceremony. "It's a day about having dreams, following dreams, and living dreams. When you have the kind of spirit these students have, nothing is impossible."

This year's graduating class includes Christella Barrera, Samantha Borjas, Charles Breedlove, Jeremy Carter, Kristen Mahaffey, Jeffery McBride, James Osborne, Lisa Raper, Adrian Richardson, Bethanye Ricks, and Jessica Torp.

"I've learned how to live on my own," said SCHI graduate Christella Barrera, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and came to SCHI to learn life skills. "I made lots of friends while I was here. I learned to control my anger and how to keep up good hygiene. I definitely will miss this place so much."

As one of five graduates who are deaf, Samantha Borjas says she has learned a lot from her time at SCHI.

"I learned how to do math, write a resume, how to wash and dry my clothes, and how to take my medication," Borjas said. "They taught me how to interview for a job at Six Flags. After graduation I plan to stay in San Antonio and find an apartment."

Many of the SCHI students participate in the



(Top) Southwest School of Higher Independence Class of 2008. (Back row) Charles Breedlove, James Osborne, and Jeffery McBride. (Middle row) Jessica Torp, Adrian Richardson, Samantha Borjas, Bethanye Ricks, Christella Barrera, and Lisa Raper. (Front row) Jeremy Carter. (Not pictured) Kristen Mahaffey. (Above) SCHI graduate Adrian Richardson receives his certificate from SCHI Director Dennis Tucker.

culinary training offered by the San Antonio Food Bank, one of MMH's Genesis Cooperative partners. Jeffery McBride says the class was great because it taught him basic skills in the kitchen.

"I learned to cook so I wouldn't starve," McBride quipped. "Learning to ride the bus was

See Graduates...Page 2

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# FROM MY HEART

**“Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.”**

*Author unknown*

In times like these, people have lost their homes from forces beyond their control. Yet, when the physical place we call home is gone, we find solace in knowing people make a home a home.

It is indeed people. People who have compassion. People who love us. People we trust.

For 113 years, Methodist Mission Home has been a home to people in need. People whose hearts are broken. People in pain. People who are lonely. People who have nowhere else to turn.

The needs of the people we serve have changed over time. What has not changed is the empathy, love and dedication we bring to our mission. Methodist Mission Home is a home where the heart is.

Adoption has been our signature ministry. We have placed 5,679 children in loving homes. Birth mothers and adoptive families come to our home for courage and love as they make life changing decisions.

Young adults with serious disabilities come to the Southwest Center for Higher Independence totally dependent on others. We help them on their personal journeys – overcoming obstacles, learning difficult lessons, and taking responsibility. With new life and vocational skills, our students achieve independence with dignity and pride.

Six years ago, we saw an opportunity to work in collaboration with other non-profit agencies. The Genesis Cooperative was born. Our campus has been transformed into a vibrant, interactive community - a place where people are enriched and empowered in their physical and spiritual lives.

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who need faith, hope and love in rebuilding their homes. YOU can help our Home with prayerful consideration of your holiday contribution.

Together we're creating a home where the heart is... Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future.

In God We Trust,

Jennifer Sample  
Executive Director

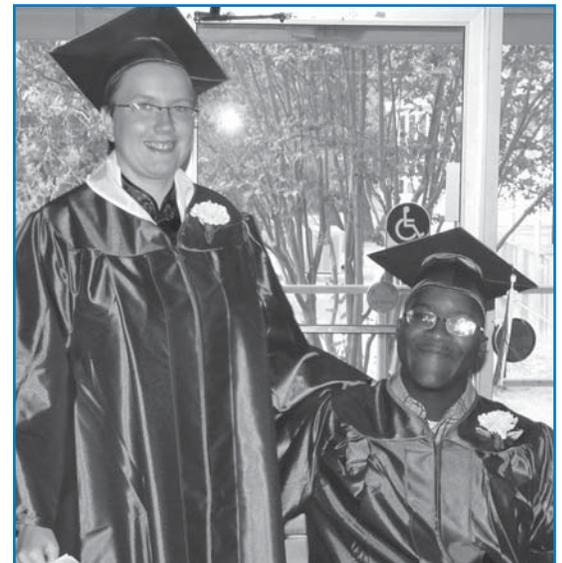


## Graduates share lessons learned in SCHI

was a cool experience. Now, I can get to my job and other places without help. In money management class, I learned how to spend my money on what I need and not on just what I want. I have improved and will be a better person and will do my best in life.”

Among the distinguished speakers at this year's ceremony were Gordon Hartman of the Gordon Hartman Family Foundation and Rev. Charles Anderson of University United Methodist Church, who presented the graduates with words of encouragement.

“You're on your own, but you're not alone,” Rev. Anderson said. “Today, we celebrate your independence. Being independent is not the same as being abandoned. While you have to live your life yourself, you don't have to live it by yourself. The love never goes away.”



SCHI graduates Christella Barrera and Jeremy Carter pose for the camera before the ceremony.

# HEARTS & HANDS CLUB

Looking for a way to change lives through community service? You can make a difference in our Home and with the people who live here by volunteering to work with **The Hearts & Hands Club**. As volunteers of the H&H Club you are able to earn service hours for school, get references for college, and train for specific skills. All individuals and small or large groups are welcome.

For more information contact Volunteer Coordinator Saren Spicer at 1-800-842-5433 or saren@mmhome.org.



Members of the Asbury UMC Youth Choir from Birmingham, Alabama work on a garden on the grounds of Methodist Mission Home.



College Mound UMC members from Terrell, Texas have some fun while putting a fresh coat of paint on the walls of the SCHI apartments.



The Pleasant Valley UMC Youth Group from Wichita, Kansas touches up the parking lot at MMH.

# PENNIES & PRAYERS



This year's Vacation Bible School Mission Challenge "Pennies and Prayers" was a terrific success. Methodist Mission Home would like to thank all of the church coordinators for their hard work!

In addition, we are so proud of the youth. The total amount raised was **\$8,007.44**. That is 800,744 pennies! If you made three equal stacks of pennies they would all be higher than the 110-story Sears Tower in Chicago. Or edge to edge they would make a trail over nine miles long!

## Thank You Vacation Bible Schools!

<b>Marvin UMC</b> Tyler, Texas	<b>Asbury UMC</b> Albuquerque, N.M.	<b>Tarrytown UMC</b> Austin, Texas
<b>St. Mark's UMC</b> Houston, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Liberty, Texas	<b>Terrace UMC</b> Hilshire Village, Texas
<b>Oakwood UMC</b> Lubbock, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Gatesville, Texas	<b>Oakhills UMC</b> Austin, Texas
<b>Dido UMC</b> Fort Worth, Texas	<b>St. Paul UMC</b> Hurst, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Gonzales, Texas
<b>Central UMC</b> Waco, Texas	<b>Kavanaugh UMC</b> Greenville, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Brownwood, Texas
<b>Northern Hills UMC</b> San Antonio, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Throckmorton, Texas	<b>Springtown UMC</b> Springtown, Texas
<b>New World UMC</b> Arlington, Texas	<b>Faith UMC</b> Spring, Texas	<b>St. Philip's UMC</b> Houston, Texas
<b>First UMC</b> Boerne, Texas	<b>First UMC</b> Childress, Texas	<b>Oxford UMC</b> San Antonio, Texas
<b>First UMC</b> Kennedale, Texas	<b>Palo Alto UMC</b> San Antonio, Texas	<b>St. Mark's UMC</b> Cleburne, Texas
	<b>Crosby UMC</b> Crosby, Texas	

**GRAND TOTAL:**  
**\$8,007.44**

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Matthew W. McCauley

## R. D & J. L. Wikoff

Mona McDonald

## Harold E. & Billie J. Bruns

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Alice Sheehan

## Elizabeth W. Hughes

Mona McDonald

## William J. & Martha J. Tiller

Dorothy Richardson

## Gregory D. & Lee Kiblinger

Cindy Kiblinger

## D. T. George & Margaret M. May

Mona McDonald

## Kenneth F. Schwenke & Sallie Gordon

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## Louise Addison Taylor

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## Karen V. Kinnison

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## Alex & Gretchen Bealer

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Bill and June Kinzie Gibson

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Joe Leinweber

Lobby Landers

Larry Bybee

Lucy Wilson

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## Robert H. Angevine

Isabel Angevine

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Elmer Haile

## Lois or John Bennett

Charles Bobb

## Linda Wells

Mary Lee Hays

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# IN MEMORY (Cont.)

**Mary Nell Bear**  
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Fred McIntosh

**Gregory & Donna Seiler**  
Elmer Haile

**Terry Hiller**  
Mary Lee Hayes

**Kristin Wright**  
Albert Menez

## GENESIS COOPERATIVE

### End of the Summer Splash

The entire Methodist Mission Home family and the Genesis Cooperative celebrated the final days of summer with an End of the Summer Splash event on Sept. 6.

The Genesis Cooperative is a collaborative partnership of four self-supportive, nonprofit agencies serving young adults with disabilities, adults who are blind and/or deaf, and mothers recovering from substance abuse with their children. All agencies operate from the MMH campus.

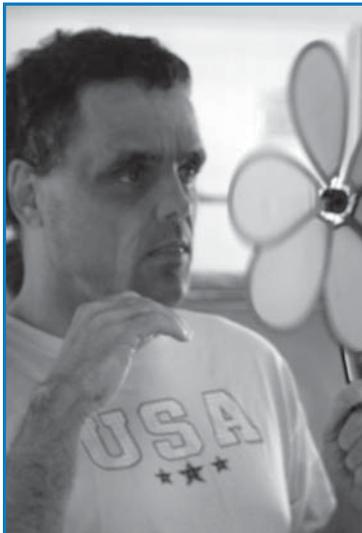
Joining the festivities for the third annual event were the residents of Hands On. Since many of the individuals from Hands On are deaf and/or blind and have other serious physical disabilities, tactile summer activities are essential for stimulating their senses.

Some of the activities this year included making homemade ice cream, playing with confetti eggs, shooting water guns, and enjoying a big lunch.

“Summer Splash is a time when the whole MMH family can get together and have fun,” said MMH Chaplain Gina Symons. “It really is a great time.”



MMH Chaplain Gina Symons shares a hug with a Hands On resident during the End of the Summer Splash.



A Hands On resident plays with a pinwheel.



A Hands On residents makes delicious homemade ice cream.



An SCHI student having fun with confetti eggs.

## Making the Best Decision

*Young woman finds support at Methodist Mission Home*

It came as a shock to Janette\* when she discovered that the man she had been seeing for more than six months was married with children. The issue was amplified when he decided to go back to his wife once he found out Janette was pregnant.

“The situation I was in wasn’t good,” Janette said. “I didn’t know he was married.”

Turning to the Pregnancy Resource Center in Rockwell, Texas, Janette was referred to Methodist Mission Home. Although she would have liked to parent the baby, Janette was already struggling to support another child she had from a previous relationship.

“I looked at other options but I decided that adoption was the best option for me at the time,” Janette said. “I have a five-year-old boy as well and didn’t really have a lot of money. Plus, being pregnant you can’t work very long. I didn’t have a way to support myself and my son and a newborn baby. I felt like this was the best choice for me, my son, and the baby.”

At 24 years old, Janette made the decision to come to MMH to place her child for adoption. According to statistics from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, more than one-third of unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. (1.1 million) were to unmarried women in their 20s.

“Any young woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant can come to MMH for assistance in making an adoption plan,” said Nicole Hill, MMH adoption counselor.

“Throughout her pregnancy she will be offered support on many different levels. If she is in need of housing, she is welcome to stay at our maternity center free of charge. If she already has secure housing, we will assist her with certain financial needs. If she is already a single parent and needs a place to live, we will make arrangements for her to live in a local, fully furnished apartment with her child.”

The opportunity to receive counseling was also a factor in Janette’s decision to come to MMH. Along with counseling on the adoption issues she faced, Janette was thankful she could talk to someone about other personal matters she never resolved when they happened.

“In the past, I was sexually abused by my father and I never received counseling for that,” Janette said. “After that situation, I started using drugs. It has been a problem



**According to statistics from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, more than one-third of unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. (1.1 million) were to unmarried women in their 20s.**

that I never got help for. [MMH counselors] helped me find help for that. (MMH can refer birthmothers to counselors off campus if they feel they need extra support).

“Right now we are focusing on adoption issues but after the adoption is over, I will continue to receive counseling for the other issues.”

Janette said she was worried that people would judge her for the decision she made. But at MMH, she was pleased to find that the counselors were available for all her needs.

“They’ve helped me with everything that I’ve asked for,” Janette said. “I didn’t think I would be treated this well and receive this much help.”

Currently eight months pregnant, Janette has already found the adoptive family with whom she will place her child. While looking through profiles, she searched for a family with a specific racial makeup and one that had a religious background.

She admits that “giving up a baby that has been growing in my stomach for nine months is going to be the hardest thing” she has ever done, but knows in her heart she is making the right decision.

“I felt like this was a decision that God told me that I needed to make,” Janette said. “It’s not because I don’t want the baby. It has been a hard decision, but I feel like this is the right thing to do.”

(\* indicates name change)

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## MMH partners with Sell For A Cause

Methodist Mission Home is now listed as one of the nonprofit organizations that can benefit from the donations allocated to Sell For A Cause (SFC). SFC is the only patent-pending fundraising/real estate concept in the country, which integrates traditional real estate transactions with fundraising, thus creating an untapped source of funds for nonprofits.

### How does it work?

Homeowners who sell their homes through SFC become a positive force in many children's lives by giving a tax-deductible donation directly to the aligned charitable organization of their choice.

"The simple explanation is. . . instead of paying Sell For A Cause a traditional commission, homesellers donate to charity," said Bo DePena, founder and president of SFC. "But the most important part of the SFC concept is that it provides homesellers financial savings and tax incentives while empowering them to help families and children."

To date, SFC has helped generate pledges totaling over \$50,000 for some of its aligned nonprofits, and hopes to generate over \$1 million in pledges by the end of 2009 in the San Antonio/Austin Metropolitan Areas, alone.

As several of our aligned non-profit organizations have learned, SFC provides a way for them to exponentially grow their contributions from existing supporters and friends, who have not been financially able to substantially contribute in the past, with an opportunity to give in a unique and significant way without effectively costing them a dime when they sell their homes.

To learn more about Sell For A Cause visit [www.sellforacause.org](http://www.sellforacause.org) or call (210) 828-9900.

## MMH UP FOR THE CHALLENGE!

This year, Methodist Mission Home has received a **Challenge Grant** from **Alamo Heights United Methodist Church** and the **Blue Bird Auxiliary** for a combined \$25,000.

The Blue Birds are a part of the rich history of Methodist Mission Home, beginning in 1922 when they became an Auxiliary to the Home. Generously lending support through gifts as well as serving as volunteers until Methodist Hospital became operative, the Blue Birds then became auxiliary to the hospital in 1962.

The funds from Alamo Heights UMC and the Auxiliary provide outreach, education, and support services to pregnant teens and young women who are struggling to parent, adoption grants to adoptive families, and scholarship opportunities for SCHI students from low-income families. We need the help of churches, UMWs, UMMs, youth groups, and people like you to meet this challenge. Every dollar you donate will be doubled!

Please complete the reply envelope enclosed in the center of this Blue Skies newsletter. Mark your contribution to the Challenge Grant and mail to MMH before **January 31, 2009**. Thank you for your continued support!

## NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

November marks National Adoption Awareness Month. The first major effort to promote awareness of the need for adoptive families occurred in Massachusetts in 1976. Then-Governor Mike Dukakis proclaimed Adoption Week and the idea grew in popularity and spread throughout the nation. President Gerald Ford made the first National Adoption Week proclamation, and in 1990, the week was expanded to a month due to the number of states participating and the number of events.

During the month, states, communities, public and private organizations, businesses, families, and individuals celebrate adoption as a positive way to build families.

Across the nation, activities and observances such as recognition dinners, public awareness and recruitment campaigns, and special events spotlight the needs of children who need permanent families.

*(From [www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com))*

At Methodist Mission Home adoption continues to be our signature service. For 113 years, MMH has served people in need of adoption services throughout the state of Texas and well beyond. Thousands of childless families have found children to call their own because of the selfless acts of birthmothers and the faithful care they are given at MMH. Since 1947, MMH has placed more than 5,652 children, now living all over the U.S., in loving, healthy homes. Thousands more will continue to find homes through our Family Services, which works with teens and young women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy.

Each month, Family Services holds Adoption Information Seminars across Texas. At these seminars, families interested in adoption can learn more about Infant Domestic, Older Child, and International adoptions. For more information on upcoming Adoption Information Seminars visit MMH's website at [www.mmhome.org](http://www.mmhome.org).

# AROUND CAMPUS



SCHI student Beuford Ackers celebrates his birthday with friends at MMH.



MMH adoption counselors Tiffany Foley and Barbara Yehl at the courthouse with twin sisters ready to finalize their adoption.



SCHI student Henry Plavets receives a certificate for completing the San Antonio Food Bank Community Kitchen Culinary Training Program.



SCHI students enjoy their weekend at the Summer Splash.

Blue Skies is the official newsletter of Methodist Mission Home. Your comments, suggestions and ideas for future issues are most welcome!

**Please write:**

Kiko Martinez  
Methodist Mission Home  
6487 Whitby Road  
San Antonio, Texas 78240

**Call:**

(210) 696-2410 ext. 177

**E-mail:**

kiko@mmhome.org

**Or visit us on the Web at:**

[www.mmhome.org](http://www.mmhome.org)

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Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future

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