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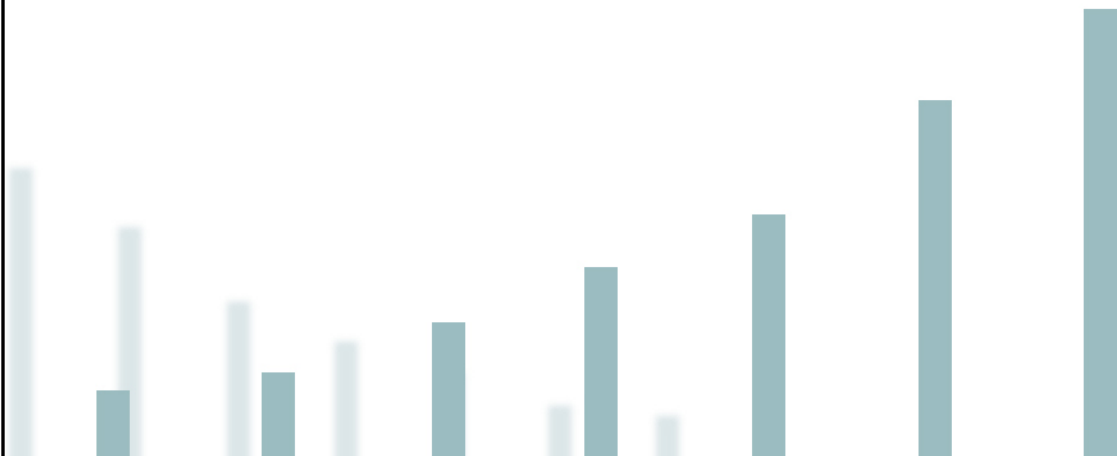
## **Houston's Kids**

### **Collaborating Across Sectors in Times of Crisis and Beyond**

*Hurricane Katrina was the catalyst for the formation of a group of first-time, cross-sector partnerships in Houston, Texas, focused on meeting the needs of displaced and disadvantaged children. The collaboration's ongoing success suggests long-term potential—for this group in Houston and also for other partnerships.*

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This report was prepared by Kristin Brennan and Alan Tuck of The Bridgespan Group, a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization applying leading-edge management strategies, tools and talent to help other nonprofits and foundations achieve greater social impact.

The contributors to this report include: the partners of the Houston's Kids collaboration and the children and youth who participated in the Houston's Kids programs, surveys and focus groups; the partners of the America's Promise Alliance, which have contributed time, leadership and funding to Houston's Kids; The Atlantic Philanthropies, which has contributed guidance and funding for the individual agencies delivering services to displaced children and youth, as well as guidance and funding for the Alliance's work with Houston's Kids, including this report; and the Bridgespan Group, which provided strategic assistance to the Alliance in its work with Houston's Kids and authored the report.

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*For more information about Houston's Kids, and for additional copies of this report, please visit [www.bridgespan.org](http://www.bridgespan.org), [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org), [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org), or contact the America's Promise Alliance at: 1-800-365-0153.*

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## Executive Summary

In August and September 2005, some 30,000 disadvantaged children, along with their families, arrived in Houston, Texas, driven from their homes by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Responding to the immediate needs of these children and their families, local agencies formed unprecedented partnerships to provide aid and support.

A year and a half later, those partnerships, supported by the America's Promise Alliance, have lasted long past the crisis that spawned them. And today, the collaboration that was created out of dire necessity has become a powerful model in Houston's youth services landscape and beyond.

Houston's Kids, as it is called, links and integrates the efforts of the Joint City/County Commission on Children, the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, the YMCA of Greater Houston, Communities In Schools Houston, Inc., the Alief Independent School District, and the Children's Museum of Houston. Together these core partners, along with other organizations that have joined their efforts, provide comprehensive support to disadvantaged children and youth displaced by the hurricanes, as well as to those living in Houston before the hurricanes.

Houston's Kids' offerings include after-school educational and recreational activities linked to in-school work; transportation to and from the programs; field trips; service learning opportunities; internships and part-time jobs; and connections to an array of services for children and their families, including mentoring, and vision and dental health services.

Initially, the work of Houston's Kids was reactive and responsive. Today it is proactive: The collaborative is expanding the depth and scope of its services, as well as refining the offerings it already provides. It is also carefully managed, with ongoing facilitation, a regular meeting structure, and formal evaluation measures to track children served, outcomes, and overall performance against goals. And, importantly, it is successful. Ninety-eight percent of children and youth who participated in the first summer of Houston's Kids programming report feeling "safer now than I used to," and 89% report feeling better prepared for school.

Houston's Kids represents a new, inspiring and effective approach to helping children and youth in the Houston area.

Equally important, the collaborative suggests a framework for organizations in other cities seeking ways to expand the depth and scope of their offerings to children and youth within the constraints of limited budgets, space and time. The lessons from Houston's Kids are already being shared and applied by communities in Louisiana and Mississippi striving to meet the needs of children and youth affected by Katrina and Rita. But in other areas of the country not affected by a monumental crisis, there are still children and youth whose needs are great. Where there are such needs, there is potential for organizations to join together to create a social safety net and provide services that are more than the sum of their parts.

This report was written to share insights and lessons about how organizations and agencies within a community can work together to meet the needs of our children and youth. A chronicle tracking the development and evolution of Houston's Kids is, by itself, an amazing story. Nonprofit organizations, government agencies and offices, and other groups went beyond their formal boundaries, overcame their bureaucracies, and established common ground and uncommon levels of communication and cooperation to fill gaps in services for children and youth. By themselves, they could not keep up with the sudden surge in need. Together, they did, and do.

But the implications are even greater for similar efforts in other cities, and for unprecedented collaboration among service providers at local and national levels. Absent crisis-level pressure, the local partners in Houston continue to find opportunities to collaborate outside of the context that brought them together. One small example: When there is unused space at a YMCA facility, staff members now look for opportunities to invite other service-providers to make use of that space. Organizations are participating in one another's trainings and finding ways to create joint services in locations across the greater Houston area. There has been a fundamental shift in mindset within all of these organizations regarding how they fulfill their aspirations and work with one another to support children and youth.

The partners in Houston’s Kids recognize the huge potential of their collaboration. As one commented, “The organizations involved are now more willing to consider opportunities, outside of the project, for children and youth. Now that we have developed the relationships, natural linkages are coming together, and it will be easier to make a phone call and link up our organizations in new ways.”

Another said, “I feel really privileged to be able to help with this program. Houston’s Kids is the kind of project that happens once in a career where organizations come together for a common purpose in a productive and long-term way. The difference with this project is that the organizations seem eager to continue the partnership regardless of the hurricane evacuee aspect. There is real interest in finding ways to benefit children in the Alief area of Houston without regard for job titles, money, or recognition. It’s truly amazing and is a fresh way of working in community outreach.”

The following case study demonstrates what is possible when individuals and organizations come together in unprecedented ways. The sidebar entitled “Launching a Successful Collaboration” offers take-away lessons that may help other organizations develop similar initiatives. The Houston’s Kids story also poses this question to all of us: What if we could all act every day with the same urgency, efficiency and teamwork displayed by the partners of Houston’s Kids when they were faced with this unprecedented need?

### **Challenge**

- Houston faces an extraordinary need when, virtually overnight, more than 30,000 young people relocate there as a result of Hurricane Katrina.
- Organizations and local government offices and agencies respond to the immediate crisis, but it quickly becomes clear that longer-term solutions are needed, as thousands of displaced families settle in Houston, overwhelming the existing community services.

### **Response**

- Leaders forge an unprecedented public/private community partnership to confront the crisis. The initial core group includes the Joint City/County Commission on Children, the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, the YMCA of Greater Houston, Communities In Schools Houston, Inc., the Alief Independent School District, and the Children's Museum of Houston. Supported by the America's Promise Alliance, these partners provide comprehensive academic and health supports to students in the Alief area of Houston.

### **Results**

- Ninety-eight percent of children and youth feeling "safer than I used to."
- Eighty-nine percent of children and youth feeling better prepared for school.
- One hundred percent of core partners report greater collaboration in assisting children and youth.
- "It's truly amazing and is a fresh way of working in community outreach." —Partner, Houston's Kids.

### **Implications**

- Applicability to cities across the U.S., which, faced with steep challenges, seek to leverage public/private partnerships to provide greater supports for local children and youth.
- Houston's response also acts as a roadmap showing how national organizations can spark change and work together effectively in support of local initiatives. (Specific operating insights can be found on pages 33 and 34.)

## Introduction

This report chronicles the activities of Houston's Kids, a local collaboration formed to support the children and youth who relocated to Houston, Texas in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as disadvantaged children and youth living in Houston before the hurricanes. The collaboration has been aided by the America's Promise Alliance (APA), a national cross-sector alliance for children and youth made up of civic leaders, businesses, and nonprofit and faith-based groups, which was founded under the leadership of Colin Powell at a summit of the living U.S. presidents in 1997.

Initially, Houston's Kids took the form of six organizations coming together to deliver a summer program that would help students in one area of the city cope with the challenges they and their parents faced when the 2005-2006 school year ended. The idea, in broad strokes, was to offer productive educational and recreational activities for the duration of the summer. Five hundred students participated in that program in 2006, and the results were extraordinary. Ninety-eight percent of children and youth who participated reported feeling generally "safer now than I used to," while 92% of children and youth felt that "now I have control over things that happen to me," and 89% reported feeling better prepared for school in the fall.

Since summer 2006, the collaboration has grown in scope and depth. The program has been extended into the school year, with more students enrolled, and the initial group of partners has expanded to include new allies in the city of Houston. Furthermore, the partners are exploring new ways to collaborate outside the context of the challenge that initially brought them together.

For the children and youth participating in Houston's Kids, this has been a transformative experience. Perhaps even more striking, however, is the potential for transformation of the way in which government, corporate, and nonprofit agencies work together on behalf of children and youth in Houston going forward. The number of children served by Houston's Kids' initial efforts is small when compared with the total number of children in need in the city. But the participating organizations in this collaborative effort are already working together in new ways,



beyond the confines of the program they have created together—and they continue to look for opportunities to do more.

What's more, the Houston's Kids effort and outcomes suggest the potential for similar collaborations in other locations. Although at first glance Houston's challenges may appear unusual, they are in many ways typical of the challenges facing many communities in the U.S. According to a study conducted in 2006 by the APA, Gallup, the Search Institute, and ChildTrends, more than two-thirds of American children and youth—34 million between ages six and 17—do not receive enough of the essential supports necessary for success as adults. Ten million of these children and youth are in the most at-risk category, receiving none or almost none of the supports that have been demonstrated to produce success as adults.<sup>1</sup>

The influx of children in need acted as a catalyst for action in Houston, but communities across the country face their own crises. A spike in gun violence or in teen pregnancy; a thoughtful new report examining the state of children and youth in the community—any of these can serve as an impetus for a concerted effort to address the needs of children and youth. What the Houston story offers is a roadmap: a description of the process by which one community confronted crisis and turned it into an ongoing opportunity to support its children and youth. The challenges this collaborative faced can serve as guideposts; the successes can serve as motivation to begin the journey.

The applicability of Houston's story to so many cities across the U.S. is the reason for this report. APA partners nationwide are committed to securing those basic supports for all children. Toward that end, they are working to bring them to 15 million children in this country, particularly those most underserved, over the next five years. That ambitious goal is possible only if communities come together as Houston has, to address the needs of their children and youth.

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<sup>1</sup> *Every Child Every Promise: Turning Failure into Action*, The America's Promise Alliance: Alexandria, VA, 2006, p. 6. Based on the *National Promises Study* conducted in 2006.

The local organizations engaged in the work of Houston's Kids hope that their story will be inspirational to other communities whose children and youth face tough odds, and also instructional, offering some lessons about launching, learning from, and sustaining a collaboration of this nature.

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## Background and Initial Efforts

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, among the most destructive natural disasters on record, affected the lives of 1.7 million people.<sup>2</sup> As the nearest large city undamaged by the hurricanes, Houston, Texas received the largest influx of displaced families, with estimates ranging from 90,000 to 150,000 people,<sup>3</sup> including an estimated 32,000 children.<sup>4</sup> According to a survey of families sheltering in Houston's Reliant Astrodome in September 2005, many had lived on the margin before the storm: two-thirds of the evacuees had no bank accounts; more than half had incomes below \$20,000 per year, and nearly half had no health insurance.<sup>5</sup> Upon arriving in Houston, their needs for the basics—shelter, food, and clothing—were acute.

Even before the storms, Houston was home to many children in need. Approximately 218,000 children in greater Houston lived in poverty prior to the hurricanes, and these children shared many characteristics with their displaced peers—specifically, a lack of access to the basic supports, such as adequate

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<sup>2</sup> FEMA registrations for disaster, housing or other assistance as of April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> A special U.S. Census report released in June 2006 estimated that 92,000 people evacuated to Houston; local estimates reported in the *Houston Chronicle*, *Newsweek* and the *Christian Science Monitor* place the number closer to 150,000.

<sup>4</sup> Estimated children and youth who evacuated to Houston, including those enrolled in public schools, those enrolled in private and parochial schools, and children under five. Public school estimates based on enrollment figures in districts in the greater Houston area as of winter 2005-2006 and conversations with local district staff (excludes children who never enrolled in school). Estimates added for children under five years of age and school-age children enrolled in private and parochial schools.

<sup>5</sup> Survey conducted by The Washington Post, The Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University.

health services and education, that ensure well-being and success later in life.<sup>6</sup> While the influx of children and youth displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was a singular event, it highlighted the needs of many young people in the community.

The remarkable response of Houston's government leaders, business community, nonprofit leaders, and faith-based communities to the crisis was noted nationally at the time as one of the bright spots within the tragic events of those months. The effective coordination between Mayor Bill White and Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, for example, was an important first step in establishing support for families displaced by the hurricanes. Together, the mayor's office and the county judge's office created the Joint Katrina Housing Task Force to coordinate housing and other services for displaced people.

As it became clear how widespread and wide-ranging the needs of these families were, the Task Force took on a bigger mandate. Its members began to offer some case management services, and, with facilitation from the United Way of the Greater Texas Gulf Coast, to convene weekly meetings of social service providers.

As Anna Babin, president of the United Way, notes: "It was clear on August 31, 2005 that the mayor of Houston and judge for Harris County needed and expected cooperation from all parts of the community in welcoming the Katrina evacuees. United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast was immediately called upon to coordinate the social service response and has been doing so ever since. Our public officials set the tone, and we followed suit."

In the weeks following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, local agencies all over Houston came to the aid of evacuees. In addition to its work with the mayor's and judge's offices, the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast raised \$7 million for immediate, intermediate, and long-term needs, and handled 67% additional

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<sup>6</sup> Children and youth younger than 18 in the Houston Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area living in poverty, as defined in the 2000 U.S. Census, based on household income in 1999.

volume in calls to its 2-1-1 Texas/United Way Helpline.<sup>7</sup> Communities In Schools Houston (CIS Houston), an affiliate of the national CIS network, which works to bring community resources into public schools to support children in need, added 7,000 displaced children and youth to its caseload of 30,000, and coordinated local efforts to deliver programs such as mental health services at school sites.

Volunteer Houston, an affiliate of the Points of Light Foundation, managed volunteers at the Reliant Astrodome and fielded as many as 3,000 calls and emails a day from volunteers, directing them to the areas with the most need. With sponsorship from Houston-area business Gallery Furniture, the YMCA of Greater Houston opened the Gallery Furniture YMCA inside the Reliant Astrodome. The Children's Museum of Houston set up satellite family learning activity centers at the Reliant Astrodome and at the George R. Brown Convention Center. It also offered free museum admission to families displaced from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (nearly 7,500 individuals that fall).

Despite this outpouring, however, many of the local organizations found that acting separately, or in collaboration with only one or two other organizations, they were unable to provide support on a large enough scale. A clear desire for more coordination across organizations was emerging. The sheer number of evacuees overtaxed Houston's social safety net. Demographics kept shifting, as families moved from one type of temporary housing to another. It was difficult to know how best to distribute the incoming resources and donations. Moreover, organizations were struggling to balance the needs of previous residents and the needs of their newest residents.

As Gladys Brumfield, director of one of the YMCA facilities in greater Houston, notes: "It was extremely hard to help the many families coming in our doors asking for help. People would come to the Y just to get away from being at home with nothing to do in a strange and new city. Because our facility is in a low-income area, we had a lot more people coming and asking for help than some other

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<sup>7</sup> *In the Eye of the Storm: 2005 Annual Report*, United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast.

facilities. Not only were they asking for free memberships but also after-school care, jobs, housing, food, resources, etc. This was a very stressful period."

## A LONG-TERM ISSUE

In addition, it was becoming clear that the needs of evacuees would be a long-term issue. In the early weeks after the hurricanes, it was estimated that as many as 45% of evacuees hoped to return to their homes. One year later, as the reconstruction and rebuilding in many Gulf communities proceeded more slowly than many had hoped, only 25% hoped to return home; 50% planned to stay and 25% were undecided.<sup>8</sup> Organizations once concerned with meeting the needs of new arrivals now knew that the initial outpouring of short-term aid was insufficient, and that a long-term solution was needed.

Children and youth were particularly affected by the hurricanes and their aftermath. In the first six months following the hurricanes, displaced families moved an average of 3.5 times, as parents struggled to find steady employment and continuously re-evaluated their options—causing disruption in home and school routines each time.<sup>9</sup> As many as 50% of the children and youth in these families are experiencing emotional or behavioral difficulties not present before the storm.

Many of the organizations responding to the influx of children and youth in Houston were local affiliates of partners within the America's Promise Alliance. This link proved important; even as these local groups were striving to meet the needs

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<sup>8</sup> Turner, Allan and Berger, Eric, "Storms left new human landscape," *Houston Chronicle*, June 7, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Cass, Julia, *For Many of Katrina's Young Victims, the Scares are More than Skin Deep*, Washington Post, June 13, 2006, and Dewan, Shaila, *Evacuee Study Finds Declining Health*, New York Times, April 18, 2006. The Washington Post and the New York Times cite *On the Edge—the Louisiana Child & Family Health Study*, a study of 665 displaced families conducted by the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University and the Children's Health Fund in February 2006. Nearly half of the parents in the study reported that at least one child in their household had emotional or behavioral difficulties that were not present before the hurricane.

created by Katrina, the board and trustees of the Alliance at the national level were seeking ways to support local recovery efforts throughout the Gulf Coast and to galvanize national support, starting with coordination of efforts and facilitation of partnerships. (The APA had established a Katrina's Kids working group for this purpose. This working group provided the initial coordinated national support for Houston's Kids' efforts.)

Led by APA board members, the national partners met to discuss ways in which they could help their local affiliates collaborate to meet the challenge. The APA partners were particularly concerned about addressing the long-term needs of displaced children, and about the need to provide support in a way that maximized the efficiency of the participating organizations' responses while minimizing overlap. (The APA board members included: Steven Miller, chair of the Points of Light Foundation, who also served on the board of the United Way of The Texas Gulf Coast; Stephen Goldsmith, Chair of the Corporation for National and Community Service; Dan Cardinali of Communities In Schools; Brian Gallagher of the United Way of America; David Eisner of the Corporation for National and Community Service; and America's Promise Alliance Chair Alma Powell.)

Earlier that year, the America's Promise Alliance had selected Houston and surrounding Harris County as one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People, based on the community's thoughtful and comprehensive approach to the welfare of children and youth. Houston was also in a good position to launch a broad collaboration on behalf of children and youth, since, unlike other Gulf communities, its infrastructure had not been destroyed and the response of government, business, community, and nonprofit leaders to the recovery had been so strong. The Atlantic Philanthropies, through its relationship with the America's Promise Alliance, pledged support for the collaborative efforts.

## Launching Houston's Kids

Throughout this initial period of discussion, the APA was in constant contact with the Joint City County/Commission on Children (JCCCC), an initiative of the Houston Mayor's office and Harris County Judge's office. With the encouragement of the APA, the JCCCC began crafting a proposal about what a large-scale collaborative effort might hope to achieve, and to envision the local partnerships that would be key to its success. During the proposal development phase, the JCCCC reached out to the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast (United Way).

Together, the United Way and the JCCCC had a strong legacy of leading efforts to support those in need in Houston, a strategic approach to children and youth, and the credibility to convene other organizations. And in January 2006, Sherea McKenzie, executive director of the JCCCC, and Anna Babin, president of the United Way, hosted staff from the APA to discuss the potential of Houston as a site for a significant collaborative project to aid children and youth displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The JCCCC and United Way agreed to co-lead the initiative and continued development of a proposal.

McKenzie and Babin also began to reach out to partners for the project. Here, the national-level relationships between the members of the America's Promise Alliance proved valuable; the national offices called their local affiliates to share the conversations taking place at the national level, encouraging the affiliates to be involved in the project and offering support. By March 2006, Cynthia Briggs, CIS Houston's executive director, and Linda Lykos, vice president of financial development and youth of the YMCA of Greater Houston, had committed to the project and had begun to explore possible programs they could offer jointly. The Bridgespan Group, which was assisting the America's Promise Alliance at that time in crafting a strategic plan, worked with the partners on a start-up strategy.



## FIRST STEP: ARTICULATING CLEAR PRIORITIES

To reflect their commitment to serving all children in need, the partners named the initiative “Houston’s Kids.” One of the initiative’s first tasks: to agree on and articulate clear priorities. These were:

- **Serve displaced children and also those living in Houston before the hurricanes.** The needs of displaced children and youth were acute—but the influx had also affected children and youth living in Houston prior to the disaster as well. Many classrooms became more crowded, and social services more strained. The partners wanted to ensure that the program was one that was open to all children, regardless of where they had lived prior to the disaster—while still ensuring that, through selection of program locations and recruitment, the program would serve a high number of displaced children and youth.
- **Deliver services to children and youth to meet their entire set of needs.** The partners recognized that the children and youth displaced by the hurricanes had a set of inter-related needs; a piecemeal program would not suffice. The partners adopted the America’s Promise Alliance’s Five Promises, which were consistent with each of their individual values, as a framework for providing services: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to serve. (See Appendix A for information about the Five Promises framework.)
- **Create a productive environment for the summer months.** Summer is often a difficult time for young people. Many children are at home all day alone while parents are at work, and youth violence escalates. The partners decided to move quickly to ensure a program was in place for the summer to engage youth in productive activities.
- **Set children and youth on a better academic trajectory.** Many of the displaced children had been in precarious situations since they moved to Houston, living with extended family while parents looked for work, never certain if they were staying or going. Most had missed school for some portion of the school year; some had not attended school regularly since they

arrived. A significant number of those who had lived in Houston prior to the hurricanes were also in academic jeopardy. The partners wanted to provide the kind of educational programming and enrichment that would re-engage students in school and help them to catch up for the next year.

## **FUNDING, LOCATION, AND THE FRONT LINE**

The next step was lining up funding to support Houston's Kids' pursuit of these goals. At the national level, the APA committed \$300,000 for the initial summer pilot program and \$110,000 for evaluation efforts that would allow the group to get real-time feedback and to document results. United Way committed \$600,000, the Houston Katrina/Rita Fund \$263,200, and the Greater Houston Community Foundation \$15,000. The total of approximately \$1.3 million was enough for the summer project, budgeted at \$1 million, with about \$300,000 to carry over for the fall.

The partners then began to search for a location to pilot the program. The JCCCC conducted a two-part analysis to identify potential sites. The first was an effort to identify the areas into which the most displaced children and youth had flowed. Children and their families had come into 26 school districts in the Harris County area, complicating the task. The analysis indicated that displaced children and youth made up the highest percentage of school enrollment in three districts: Houston Independent School District (primarily the West Region), Aldine Independent School District, and Alief Independent School District.

The second consideration was capacity: the partners wanted to choose a location where their efforts would have a significant impact, even with a short period to plan and execute. The partners knew they lacked the capacity to launch a program covering the entire area (a total of 314,000 students over nearly 450 square miles), but reasoned that a small, successful program would attract additional partners and funding. They also hoped that a successful program would attract the kind of positive attention that would inspire others to copy it and that it might be the beginning of a larger collaboration among the partners. At Alief ISD, 2,800 of the

47,500 students in the district were evacuees—one in every 20 students, or roughly one child per classroom.

The two important factors in terms of capacity were geography and the presence of strong local social service providers. Geography mattered given that school districts in Houston can run up to 100 square miles. Alief ISD, at 36.6 square miles, was relatively compact. This proved to be a deciding factor for the partners as they planned the logistics of managing across several new sites of a brand-new program.<sup>10</sup>

When it came to local service providers, both Communities In Schools and the YMCA also had a strong presence in Alief. CIS had a good working relationship with the Alief School District. Angelica Francis Adams of CIS Houston called John Perry, CIS school coordinator for Alief ISD, to gauge interest in a program like Houston’s Kids. The coordinator of Alief ISD’s Counseling Program, Dr. Jamey Cheek, then involved administrators from Alief ISD in a call with CIS, YMCA, and the United Way. The administrators at Alief ISD—Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Colleen Sanders and Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Joyce Eddings—were enthusiastic about the opportunity to address some of the challenges they were seeing in the schools, and Alief ISD came on board as another key partner. As one of the Alief ISD administrators said, “My part (and Alief’s part) began when I was contacted by Communities In Schools concerning this possibility. I had a strong personal and professional relationship with the staff at CIS, so I trusted their insight that this was a program to be considered. Most of the schools and personnel were looking for possibilities to help our students, and once I met with the committee—this was a partnership that could not be passed by.”

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<sup>10</sup>Alief data available in *Alief Methodology*, prepared by Joseph Le, Outreach Coordinator, Joint City/County Commission on Children, at the outset of the project. Aldine ISD and Houston ISD data available at <http://www.houstonisd.org/> and [http://www.aldine.k12.tx.us/district\\_info/fast\\_facts.cfm](http://www.aldine.k12.tx.us/district_info/fast_facts.cfm).

The inclusion of a small group of partners in the selection of the site for the program was a critical step in building a real collaboration in which the views of the partners are valued. Sherea McKenzie of the JCCCC emphasizes that, though the JCCCC presented options, its primary role was to facilitate the decision: “At the end of the day, we’re not doing the front-line work; we’re there to listen and facilitate, and to be a catalyst for this work.” In March the Children’s Museum of Houston came on board to provide enriching academic activities during the after-school program—important to the partners’ goal of setting children and youth on a better academic trajectory. With the Children’s Museum of Houston, the initial set of partners providing essential program elements for the summer pilot was complete.

Also in March, the leaders of each organization in the collaboration began to meet weekly. The overall purpose of the meetings was to design a program to be in place by June; the partners knew they had a lot to do, with very little time. The United Way provided a facilitator for the meetings. Each organization engaged in the project at the highest level; the representatives to the initial meetings were vice presidents and chief executives. Quickly, as the project became more concrete and the meetings more focused on implementation, the organizations also enrolled program managers in the conversations.

## **ROADBLOCKS AND SOLUTIONS**

Each week the partners took on new issues: program design, selection of specific elementary, middle and high school sites; recruitment of students to the program; logistics of signing up students; and transportation. As roadblocks surfaced, one or more partners would volunteer to address them. The partners worked through some critical and difficult elements of program design and logistics together.

For example, the partners quickly realized that they would need to work out an effective compromise to transport the students safely home at the end of the after-school programs. In order to get all of the students home, Alief ISD had agreed to run an additional late-afternoon bus route from the after-school program sites to the students’ neighborhoods. However, the YMCA’s policy for students participating

in its after-school program is to sign children out individually at the end of the day to a responsible guardian; it does not customarily release students at a bus stop. The partners worked out a solution whereby a YMCA staff member would ride each bus home with the students, satisfying Alief ISD policy, YMCA policy, and everyone's concerns about the safe transport of students.

In a number of cases, the presence of decision-makers in the room or within reach at the end of a phone line allowed the partners to solve challenges like this immediately. For instance, when it became clear at one meeting of the partners that the middle school program still had slots available, administrators from Alief ISD were able to get a principal from another middle school on the phone immediately and to obtain approval to add that school to the program. As problems arose, the group immediately sought, discussed and hammered out solutions. As one partner said, "A key element has really been the flexibility of the partner agencies to make changes, often significant and often very quickly, to implement the project and maximize its effectiveness."

## The Collaboration in Action: Summer 2006

The partners initially created summer after-school programs for four elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school within Alief ISD, based on the prevalence of displaced children and youth in those schools. They conducted outreach to ensure that displaced students had access to the program, but opened up enrollment to any student considered at risk. The families of students targeted for participation in the program received personalized notes and phone calls; the partners also advertised the program with flyers and open registration days. The programs opened up to 500 students, the maximum that the budget could accommodate. Five hundred also matched the partners' estimate of the total number of students in Alief ISD most in need of a program like this one.

The six core partner organizations in Houston were well aware that the displaced children—and their peers living in Houston before the hurricanes—were in need of multiple, inter-related supports. And so as the summer programs were being developed, the partners committed to delivering the Five Promises adopted by the America's Promise Alliance for all children and youth in the United States: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to serve. The summer programs were designed to ensure that every child received every promise, for the full length of the summer, as follows:

- **Caring adults:** The summer school faculty of Alief ISD and the YMCA, CIS and Children's Museum staff provided caring adults, as did the internships in which high school students participated.
- **Safe place:** The extended day—summer school followed by after-school activities for elementary school students and middle school students, and internships and part-time jobs for high school students—ensured that all of the students were in safe places all day.
- **Healthy start:** The presence of a CIS coordinator at each site ensured that children and youth had access to health care, including immunizations, dental care and vision care. Additional partners created a wide health safety

net: The University of Texas Dental School sent mobile dental vans, the University of Texas Department of Public Health told parents and students how to access programs for which they were eligible, and Alief ISD's director of counseling provided training to YMCA staff on recognizing and addressing mental health issues.

- **Effective education:** Students participated in academic activities in the summer school sessions, including the Children's Museum of Houston's nationally recognized curriculum, helping them to catch up academically and prepare for the next school year.
- **Opportunities to serve:** The program provided both paid and volunteer roles for high school students to work with the elementary school program sites.

While summer school was in session, CIS, the YMCA and the Children's Museum provided the after-school complement to Alief ISD. When the summer session ended, they offered full-day programming. Elementary school students participated in YMCA Day Camps, which included field trips, learning centers, swimming and sports activities. Middle school students participated in YMCA Teen Camps, which included service-learning activities and supervised field trips and workshops. Middle school students also received \$100 gift cards as an incentive for summer school achievement and participation in projects.<sup>11</sup> At the elementary school and middle school sites, the Children's Museum of Houston provided additional enrichment activities, and a CIS social service coordinator at each site connected students to social services. High school students attended summer school, with tuition paid by the program, and participated in internships and part-time jobs through CIS' Summer Youth Employment and Training Program. Throughout, Alief ISD provided bus transportation and school facilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Middle school students are traditionally difficult to attract to after-school programs; the gift card was an incentive to counter that.

## **MORE PARTNERS, MORE BENEFITS**

The partners also continued to expand service offerings by attracting additional partners. In addition to the program components described above, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Program provided funding for meals in an extension of the free and reduced meals program within Alief ISD. Staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters, who had been looking for an opportunity to reach more children and youth in Alief, contacted the YMCA and arranged for an opportunity to talk with parents about mentoring opportunities for the students. The YMCA reached out to the Harris County Department of Health, which trained parents and children on aquatic safety—an important benefit for the families who were living for the first time in apartment complexes with pools with no lifeguards. In several instances, the relationship with the America’s Promise Alliance was a real asset in reaching out to appropriate partners, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters. As Sherea McKenzie of the JCCCC notes, “It helped, the structure that America’s Promise was able to put forward, a cadre of collaborators on a national level—it was only natural to say, ‘You can connect here.’”

Steven Miller cites the importance of the on-the-ground collaboration in creating a safety net for the children and youth there: “When you think about the Five Promises, there are many agencies that work in one or two of the Promises but there really aren’t agencies that work in all five of the Promises. So if you’re really going to deliver the Five Promises you need to have a collective, collaborative effort.”

The number of children being served through the collaboration at the outset was modest compared to the total number in need in the greater Houston area. But the level of engaged involvement among so many distinct agencies and organizations was unprecedented in Houston, as was the potential for increasing numbers of children and youth as the collaboration found its footing and its activities gained momentum.



## Stepping Back and Evaluating Progress

From the beginning, the Houston's Kids partners committed to measuring and evaluating their progress, for two reasons: to ensure that the partners had real-time feedback so they could modify the program as needed to better serve the students; and to build a case for using this approach elsewhere, if it succeeded.

Both The Atlantic Philanthropies and the America's Promise Alliance saw Houston as a test case: an opportunity to document what it really takes to build a comprehensive, community-wide collaboration to address the needs of children and youth. In fact, there was at least one immediate need for that knowledge: The APA was looking for opportunities to support other communities on the Gulf Coast working to address the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and Houston's knowledge could be invaluable there. In addition, Atlantic and the APA saw Houston's efforts as an opportunity to demonstrate how any community, not just one grappling with the aftermath of a natural disaster, could come together and make a difference in the lives of children and youth. As such, it was important to observe and evaluate both the impact of the program on children and youth, and the effectiveness of the collaboration between the partners. To that end, the partners in Houston engaged a program evaluation specialist, Dr. Roger Durand of the University of Houston Clear Lake.

### **METHODS**

The partners wanted to be sure to have a sense of the effectiveness of the summer program as soon as possible, in order to be able to make mid-course corrections in the summer and again for the fall program. The method they settled upon for measuring impact on students was a survey of parents and of students at the end of the summer program, as well as 20 focus groups of students in the program, conducted by YMCA staff. The partners thought it was particularly important to balance quantitative data on the impact of the program with qualitative responses that would help them modify the program.

The questions in the survey aligned with the four goals the partners had initially set out to achieve:

- **Serving displaced children and also those living in Houston before the hurricanes:** The partners monitored the mix of students in the summer program.
- **Delivering the Five Promises:** Dr. Durand designed one survey for students and one for parents, asking them to compare the students' access to each of the Five Promises during the program to access before the program. The survey asked about the presence of a caring adult in the lives of the students, their access to safe places, health care and effective education, and the value they placed on having an opportunity to serve.
- **Creating a productive environment for the summer months:** The survey focused on children's feelings of safety and being cared for, their social competencies and positive personal identities.
- **Setting children and youth on a better academic trajectory:** The survey also asked parents and students about students' preparation for success in school (including specific subjects) and motivation to learn.

While it would have been ideal to conduct a survey as students entered the program, in order to develop a baseline for the students' performance on these dimensions before they engaged with the Houston's Kids programming, time was too short to allow for that. The partners decided that an end-of-summer survey would be valuable even without a reference point, and that they would build both a pre- and a post-survey into the evaluation design for the fall program.

Time was not the only challenge. According to U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, the partners needed a signed consent form from parents in order to administer the survey to the students. The partners surveyed all students who obtained a signed consent form—about 80 students or 15% of those in the program. In addition, about 10% of parents completed their own survey about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program for their children. Fortunately, the surveys received were a good representation of the full set of experiences in the program: They represented all

ages and all site locations. However, the relatively small number of survey returns heightened the importance of the 20 focus groups as a check on the information emerging from the surveys.

The method for understanding the effectiveness of the collaboration was a combination of Dr. Durand's observations of meetings between the partners, and a survey of partners at the end of the summer program to understand their perspectives on its effectiveness, what made it effective, and its prospects for sustainability.

## **PROGRESS AGAINST THE GOALS**

The results from surveys and focus groups were very consistent: The summer program was remarkably successful achieving the partners' four goals.

- **Serving displaced children and also those living in Houston before the hurricanes:** Twenty-eight percent of program participants were displaced, and 72% had lived in Houston prior to the storm. Given that about 5% of students in Alief ISD were displaced, the 28% represented successful, targeted recruiting of those students but also left a large number of slots for their peers.
- **Delivering the Five Promises:** Students and parents reported effective access to caring adults, safe places, health care, effective education and opportunities to serve. Among of the most compelling results, 85% of parents said more adults were concerned about their children at the end of the program than when it commenced, and 77% of parents reported better nutrition for their children compared to when the program commenced.
- **Creating a productive environment for the troubled summer months:** Ninety-eight percent of children and youth reported feeling generally "safer now than I used to."
- **Setting children and youth on a better academic trajectory:** Eighty-nine percent of children and youth reported feeling better prepared for school in the fall. (See Appendix B for full discussion of methodology.)

Some of the most compelling evidence came from the comments of parents and students involved in the program. The partners' provision of a safe place for students in the summer was a particularly important aspect of the program for parents. As one parent said, "The Houston's Kids program is a godsend; I was worried about my child's safety at the apartment complex this summer."

The program also had unexpectedly profound effects on some students and families displaced by the storm. One YMCA staffer told the story of elementary-school-age twins from New Orleans who had not attended school for the full year between the hurricanes and their entrance into the Houston's Kids summer program. One twin entered the program angry, using foul language and provoking arguments. The other was shy except during the time to read aloud, when he would lash out; the staffer came to learn that he was embarrassed that he could not read well. The first twin became engaged in sports and started to enjoy and interact well with his teammates. The second twin received one-on-one reading help and by the end of summer was the first to volunteer to read aloud.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence Durand collected confirmed for the partners that the program was valuable and should be sustained into the school year. It also helped the partners to consider key additions. For example, they included more reading and science activities in the year-long program because the survey revealed a lack of enthusiasm among many of the students in these two areas. They also committed to provide more skills development for nonviolent conflict resolution, based on input from the focus group discussions.

The school year program would also provide a new and more thorough opportunity for continued evaluation: to survey the students and parents at the beginning of the school year and at the end, and to compare results. (These results will be available in summer 2007.)

## **THE COLLABORATION**

The second thrust of the evaluation activities was to assess the effectiveness of collaboration among the partner organizations. Multiple staff from each of the six core partners—i.e., those deeply involved in the creation of the strategy and

service delivery—answered a standard set of questions. The aim of this work was to determine how well the collaboration was working and how likely it was to lead to long-term, sustained partnerships that benefit the whole Houston community. The anonymous survey allowed all of the partners to speak with complete candor. For that reason, many of the quotations below from that survey lack attribution.

The partners unanimously agreed that the program had produced greater collaboration in assisting children and youth, and that the America’s Promise Alliance, including its national partner organizations, had been helpful to the formation and success of the collaboration. They credited having a good facilitator and cited the importance of their collective ability to leave their egos at the door in the service of a larger mission (see Sidebar: Launching a Successful Collaboration).

The process required participating organizations to work through a number of details as they implemented the program. Among them: finding the time and energy in their organizations to devote sufficient attention to Houston’s Kids; defining clear and appropriate individual roles for the partners; and creating the right mechanisms to make the collaboration work.

### ***Finding the necessary time and energy***

The Houston’s Kids project was a significant investment of time for every partner, each of which was handling multiple projects related to the hurricane evacuees in addition to its ordinary workload. Overall, the partners agree that their organizations’ skills and capacities were used well. They acknowledge, however, the strain Houston’s Kids placed on their operations: “In my role, I have definitely felt stretched in terms of my own time because Houston’s Kids is a new program and more time-consuming . There was a very steep learning curve that put pressure on me and [my] staff in all areas.”

Gladys Brumfield, center director of the Alief Family YMCA, adds, “We don’t think it was all perfect, and it takes a lot of detail work. For instance, our office director handles the HR paperwork, getting everybody on payroll. She had an additional 60 people to put on staff. If I had it to do again, it would have been good for me to call

all of our staff together, everybody, and talk about the impact we were trying to make—what we call a “Charge!” meeting—for everybody who works for the YMCA.”

### *Defining roles*

The survey revealed a need for more delineation in the early days between the roles of the co-leaders, the United Way and the JCCCC. “The roles and responsibilities of UW and the JCCCC were not clearly defined initially, which resulted in some misunderstanding and confusion.” Over time the roles became better defined, emerging as the program took shape. These roles included: convener, program host, staff trainer, social services coordination, provision of facilities, and provision of transportation. Each partner became an expert over time on particular aspects of the program, and came to meetings prepared to answer questions. As one partner notes, “[The roles are not defined] by ‘official measure’ it has been much more of a process of ‘Who can take care of this?’ and then actual complete follow through by that person. Each partner and member has felt an obligation and responsibility and has met each of those in a timely manner. I believe that through this process, the roles have defined themselves by the strengths and resources of the partners.”

Says another partner, “I don’t know that there is anything documented regarding the roles, but some roles are evident as we work together. United Way has facilitated the process and keeps the group organized and well-focused. Other members provide leadership with funding and resources, program implementation, training of staff, working out the logistics with the different aspects of the school district, or with program evaluation. Each member appears comfortable contributing in all areas, but naturally or by design, lead responsibilities have aligned with various partners.”

The partners were quick to note, however, that the roles were not and could not be rigid. Flexibility was a must given the rapidly changing environment in which they were working. “Despite clearly defined roles, all chip in at a moment’s notice to do what needs to be done, even if it means stretching previous boundaries.” The

student registration process was a case in point. While the primary responsibility for enrollment rested with the YMCA and the school district, members from all the organizations worked side by side during every night of registration.

The partners also foresaw a likely need for more definition of the roles in general in the fall. “We have a loose definition and comfort level at this point, [but] I’m sure that when the program continues in the fall, roles will be clarified further and even redefined as needed.”

### ***Creating mechanisms to support collaboration***

Two primary mechanisms guided the collaboration: a facilitator and regular meetings. Partners credited both with keeping the collaboration moving forward (see Sidebar: Launching a Successful Collaboration). The meeting content and participants evolved to suit the needs of the program over time. “Probably the only aspect of the partnership that changed was that the discussions became more detailed, focused, and operationally oriented as time passed. In other words, the meetings in March were more global than the meetings in June after the program started operating.” As the partners began to grapple with specific program design and logistics, they brought in program operators from their organizations to attend the meeting. In the survey, partners acknowledged the need going forward to change the meeting format even further to address the ongoing operational details. “I do think that it would be helpful to have more subcommittee meetings to discuss details that are too specific for the large meeting.”

### **Sidebar: Launching a Successful Collaboration**

*The Houston's Kids partners identified several lessons they believe were crucial in launching their successful collaboration:*

- **Start small and expand.** The Houston's Kids collaboration started with two core partners, then four, then six, and now encompasses approximately 15 partners involved in some aspect of service delivery, with additional partners providing funding for the effort. Starting with a small group of core partners made it easier to establish general parameters for and roles in this collaborative effort at the beginning, when both were in development. Linda Lykos, vice president of financial development and youth of the YMCA of Greater Houston, notes, "To get something this large to move that fast, took a core group of folks committed to serving those in need. We focused and we got the task at hand done; that's when you bring in the other players you need." The smaller core group of six organizations was able to develop the idea into a concrete program and to be specific in their proposals to new partners about the roles they could fill, which made the proposition more attractive. Sherea McKenzie, executive director of the JCCCC, adds, "The probability of expansion was inviting from our end. We knew as the project jelled and became a system, you could bring in other entities in a way that was really functional."
- **Focus on something achievable.** The partners shared a commitment to improving the prospects of all Houston children and youth by creating a productive environment for them during the summer months and wrapping them in a holistic set of services. They also recognized the importance of evaluation to help guide long-term planning and document achievements. They might have gotten mired in the challenge of creating a city-wide effort for which they didn't have resources. Instead, they focused on what they could achieve in a limited geographic area, and their success has attracted new funding and partners. Linda Lykos of the YMCA says, "We knew success depended on working with a smaller district that was truly already meeting the needs of their students, and that was Alief."
- **Assign a dedicated facilitator.** The collective experiences of United Way, JCCCC and America's Promise told them that the collaboration would need a dedicated facilitator. For that role, they chose Sul Ross, an experienced nonprofit and government agency manager who was well-known to a number of the partners. The partners, busy organizational leaders, universally acknowledged the facilitator's role as critical in making the project happen and keeping it on track over time. Many of the partners commented on this: "Sul has been an amazing organizer and positive leader. His humor and positive good nature have created an atmosphere where everyone wants to participate, looks forward to the meeting, and feels that they are listened to and understood. The leadership has been amazing, and that is not an easy task in a room full of people who are all outspoken and strong leaders themselves."

*(Continued next page)*



- **Meet regularly.** The leadership of the core partners met weekly from March to November; program staff joined them as discussions about the program details began. The pace was dictated in part by the short timeline to create and launch the program, but throughout the planning and the summer phases, the partners found the weekly meetings critical as a time to reflect on progress made, nominate additional partners to fill gaps in service, and plan for the fall ahead. Having decision-makers in the room or accessible by phone also helped the partners move quickly to pull together something complex in a short time. The regular meetings and demonstrated commitment from all partners also built the strong relationships needed to do the work in such a short time. Said one partner, “As the partners have worked together week after week, relationships have strengthened, needs and goals have been clarified, and the vision continues to grow. As we see the successes and learn from experiences, we raise the bar and push to the next level.”
- **Create clear roles, but with flexibility.** Though the partners agree that it was important to develop a clear sense of responsibilities and areas of expertise, the flexibility and willingness to perform tasks outside that definition was important: “It seems that each partner developed their area and truly had answers for each of the questions ready by the next meeting.” However, as another partner noted, “Despite clearly defined roles, everyone chips in at a moment’s notice to do what needs to be done.” The flexibility was practical—it allowed tasks to be accomplished as efficiently as possible—and it signaled the partners’ dedication to one another and the project.
- **Leave egos at the door.** The partners all remarked on the importance of working together without concerns about turf or credit. “One of the strongest assets that this partnership has had from the beginning—and it is a rare occurrence, unfortunately—is that every single person who came to the table left their ego at the door and truly focused on targeting the best interventions in the best manner. I have never witnessed any portion of this program being about ‘me’ or ‘my agency.’ It has always been about the ultimate benefit of the children.”

## Continuing Evolution: Fall 2006

Word of the Houston's Kids collaborative and its original summer programs spread quickly, via word of mouth, local and national media, and the partners' deep connections within the community. (See Appendix C for examples of newspaper articles about Houston's Kids.) As a result, the initiative has continued to expand on several fronts. Despite its growing size, it has also been able to adjust its offerings to meet the continuing needs of recipients. Perhaps because of its growth—and because the partners recognize the need to remain responsive—it has taken steps to ensure that future growth and direction are carefully planned and thoroughly managed, so that the combined efforts continue to result in more than the sum of its parts.

### ATTRACTING ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The success of the summer program, and the excitement generated by the collaboration, attracted additional donors throughout the summer and into the fall. For example, the American Red Cross, which had funding dedicated for youth affected by the hurricanes, contacted the YMCA, visited the program, and contributed \$183,000 to Houston's Kids. In another instance, the YMCA and CIS both applied independently to the Chicago-based McCormick Tribune Foundation for funds for Houston's Kids; the Foundation granted \$71,000 across the two organizations, which CIS and the YMCA used for their Houston's Kids-related expenses—allowing them to put an equal amount back in the collective fund for Houston's Kids. The United Way applied for and received \$94,000 from JC Penney, thanks to a connection made by their colleagues in the national office of United Way of America. IBM contributed \$19,000, and Macy's/Foley's an additional \$10,000. These contributions helped the partners finance the extension of the program into the fall and beyond.

## **CONTINUING THE PROGRAM, WITH MID-COURSE CORRECTIONS**

By June 2006, just a couple of weeks into the summer program, the partners had begun to design the extension of the program into the school year. In September, the partners opened that expanded program with 530 students, about 20% of whom were displaced by the hurricanes.

It is significant to note that even with so many partners, the collaborative has been able to tweak program offerings and delivery methods as needed. The year-long program underwent a few substantive changes, driven by the partners' re-assessment of locations for the program, an opportunity to add a new core partner, and the programmatic needs highlighted by the focus groups over the summer.

The summer programming had essentially filled a vacuum at the sites where it was located; the partners created programs where none had been before. The situation in the fall was different. A number of school sites within Alief ISD, including those where the partners had placed the summer program, already had quality after-school programming. The partners thus re-evaluated the best sites for the fall. At the elementary level, they chose sites with no after-school programming. At middle and high school level, there were a number of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers in Alief whose federal funding for after-school programming was decreasing. At those sites Houston's Kids partnered with another organization—the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers. Houston's Kids brought new funding and a broader set of services to the students in those schools, while the Learning Centers brought critical tutorial classes in reading and math.

The addition of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers to the mix introduced another level of complexity to the partnership, as the Learning Centers are already-established programs, with funding restrictions that require them to provide fairly specific programming. As in the beginning, however, the partners have continued to work toward collaborative solutions: For instance, they have expanded the capacity of the Learning Center program to serve additional students. Students can now rotate through a number of activities with additional service providers over the course of the week, in the same space.

Houston's Kids has also added enhanced programming in areas identified in the focus groups: reading, science, and conflict resolution. Although the fall program launched before full results from the summer evaluation were available, the partners were able to meet those needs in some key ways. The Children's Museum, already focused on math and science, worked closely with Alief ISD to align its curriculum grade by grade with the students' learning in school. In addition, 25 of the YMCA staff working in the year-long Houston's Kids program trained in Alief ISD's approach to conflict resolution, so that they could integrate those approaches into their work with the students. Additional partners also continued to join the effort and to provide services critical to these students; the Harris County Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority is providing mental health counseling to children and parents.

## **CONTINUING RESULTS**

At the end of the summer, 94 out of the 135 students in Houston's Kids who had been displaced by hurricanes had completed the program. Given that most students leave all summer programs in the last week for family vacations and the continuing transient nature of those families, the partners were satisfied to have retained most of students for the length of the summer.

A side-effect of relocating Houston's Kids to new sites was that the students in the fall program were largely new to the Houston's Kids program; only about 50 students (or approximately 10%) attended both the summer and the fall programs. For those 50 students, however, the effects have been transformative. Julie Johnson, Employment Coordinator for CIS Houston, has witnessed significant changes in some of the students who have persisted in the high school program from the summer through the fall. "[One] young man lost his mother during the storm and really got behind in his school work, which is natural. Because of the partnership we were really able to pull together to help him in several ways. We got him involved in the district's credit recovery program. And in addition to the job placement, he worked with the district during the summer in their warehouse. The turnaround in terms of his self-esteem, and seeing him coming out of his shell—actually, his whole demeanor and personality changed. When he came, he was

withdrawn and not involved in many activities—but in the fall, he was involved, trying out for the football team.”

The year-long program created opportunities for three enhancements to the evaluations:

- The use of both pre- and post-surveys;
- The use of comparison groups;
- The use of some additional evaluation instruments.

To create a baseline, students and parents participating in Houston’s Kids completed surveys in the fall. In the spring, the same surveys will be administered again, in order to capture the changes experienced by students over the school year. For the yearlong project, Alief ISD has also identified comparison schools, where demographics are similar to the sites housing the Houston’s Kids, and administered surveys there as well. Finally, the evaluation has expanded to include two additional measures:

- Grades and behavior of Houston’s Kids participants will be measured against comparable groups of students who did not participate in the program;
- A school environment survey has been administered to teachers, site coordinators, principals, and school nurses at each of the Houston’s Kids sites, to allow for additional feedback on students’ progress from the full complement of staff who have one-on-one relationships with the students in the program.

## **BUILDING A PLATFORM FOR CONTINUED COLLABORATION**

The partners continued to meet weekly into November. Many had been observing that the purposes of the meetings had split over time: on the one hand, a need for strategy-setting and planning for expansion, and on the other, a need to address everyday logistical and programmatic challenges. The partners decided to create a steering committee to work on strategic direction, largely composed of more senior staff, which would meet less frequently, perhaps once a month or less. At the same

time, program-level staff would continue to meet at least monthly as a full group, with additional ad hoc and committee work as needed. As the structure of the group has expanded and changed, so has the facilitation role, as Kristen Schlatre and Jessica Palmer of the United Way have jointly taken on the ongoing facilitation and group communication functions.

In addition, a need emerged for broad and consistent communication among an expanding partner group. To that end, the partners have begun to create materials for the sites (such as pamphlets explaining the program to teachers) and also a newsletter for the larger partner group. A second key to communication is a liaison to attend both sets of partner meetings—strategic and programmatic—to provide a common thread and point of contact for the project. The partners are also beginning to codify some of the key workings of the group, for instance a template for keeping minutes, so that there are systems in place that do not rely on the presence of any particular person at the meetings.

## Concluding Thoughts

The partners agree that Houston's Kids is a remarkable collaboration—the most effective joint project on which they have ever worked. Significantly going beyond the project's success, however, is the new platform for collaboration among the individual organizations that the program has created. In the process of sharing information about their resources and programs with one another in order to create and support the Houston's Kids project, the partners have identified opportunities for collaboration entirely outside the Houston's Kids project. As one partner observes, “The various partners have learned infinitely more about one another's operations, capabilities and limitations than we would know otherwise.”

The partners' knowledge of one another's program offerings has made them a better referral system for children and families, more able to identify community resources that they do not provide themselves. In some cases, the partners identified new resources: The YMCA was able to secure the equivalent of \$56,000 for the 2006-07 school year in snacks provided by the USDA to its regular after-school programs throughout Alief ISD, a savings which translated into enough scholarship money for an additional 56 Alief ISD students to participate in the program.

Partners have not only identified more opportunities for working together but also new ways of doing so. For example, CIS has agreed to train YMCA staff in therapeutic interventions and coping skills, to the benefit of children enrolled in after-school programs throughout the city of Houston. CIS and the YMCA are also so pleased at the way that their program offerings complement one another that they are exploring a longer-term plan to staff and fund a CIS representative at every YMCA site. (See Sidebar: The Evolving Relationship between CIS and YMCA.)

As one partner notes, “The organizations involved are now more willing to consider opportunities outside of the project for children and youth. Now that we have developed the relationships, natural linkages are coming together, and it will be easier to make a phone call and link up our organizations in new ways.”

This broader collaboration is now the goal. The core commitment of Houston's Kids is to the children and youth enrolled in the program within Alief ISD. But as opportunities arise to offer aid and services in other venues, to a wider arena of recipients, the collaborative will be as responsive as it can be. As Sherea McKenzie put it, "They [the mayor and the county judge] created a tone in this city of caring and concern and just doing the right thing because it was the right thing to do. It was an immediate and human response to a crisis they witnessed our neighbors experiencing. And it spilled over, and created a spirit of collaboration that makes our collaboration seem easy to do."

#### **Sidebar: The Evolving Relationship between CIS and YMCA**

The evolving partnership between CIS and the YMCA provides one example of the ways in which Houston's Kids is leaving a legacy of collaboration that benefits the wider Houston community. Since they began working together on Houston's Kids, both the Alief-based and Houston-wide CIS and YMCA staff have had opportunities to learn more about the ways in which their programs are complementary and can work effectively together. Like the other partners in Houston's Kids, they have also forged personal and professional working relationships that make further collaboration much easier.

In addition to their work together on Houston's Kids, CIS and YMCA are working in the following ways:

- **Cross-training:** CIS has agreed to train YMCA staff in therapeutic interventions and coping skills; CIS staff are also invited to weekly YMCA staff trainings.
- **Use of facilities:** In Alief particularly, the YMCA staff have opened up the relatively large YMCA facility for the use of CIS. For instance, after the hurricanes, clothing donations poured into Houston, but distribution of clothing to adults was particularly challenging. CIS had received a large donation of women's clothing and contacted the Alief YMCA to see if they could use the facility for a donation event. CIS and YMCA staff worked together to sort the clothing, and to create a tremendously successful event that was one part clothing distribution, one part fashion show and party. Gladys Brumfield, Director of the Alief Family YMCA, says, "Now we just keep looking at our space and thinking, 'How can we use that space? Does CIS have anything they need to do here?'"

*(Continued next page)*



- **Collaboration in new locations:** In another area of greater Houston, the Upper Kirby District, CIS and YMCA have coordinated to ensure that the CIS services at local schools are also available to participants in the nearby YMCA after-school programs. Linda Lykos of the YMCA says, “The students there are in need of skills in conflict resolution, referrals to social services of different kinds from our work in the summer, we’ve learned about each other’s agencies and how together, we can meet all these families’ needs in a more effective, comprehensive way.”
- **Shared strategy and long-term planning:** The partners stay in regular contact at both the Alief and the greater Houston levels; Linda Lykos of the YMCA has joined CIS Houston’s program committee, and the two organizations, along with others, continue to look for joint funding to continue collaborative projects.
- **Hopes for the future:** The organizations are talking about how to realize an ambition of placing a CIS social services coordinator in every YMCA after-school program.

As Angelica Francis Adams, director of partnership development, CIS Houston, says: “The relationship with the Y has really provided opportunities for both entities (CIS and YMCA) to expand their scope of services.”

Linda Lykos of the YMCA, comments: “If we have learned nothing else from this experience, it’s that if you take the expertise that each agency brings to the table—work together for the same goal to serve more folks in need—we can accomplish anything. The sky is the limit, so shoot for the moon. You get the right people in the right place and it just happens.”

The partners will continue to explore different ways to work together and are excited about the possibilities for better and broader service of all children in Houston. As one partner put it, “Many times after participation in collaborative community efforts, one can’t wait for it to be over. The momentum and positive energy behind this particular partnership is providing excitement and impetus for continued future growth and development.”

## **NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

The work of Houston's Kids has had a significant impact on the national partners of the America's Promise Alliance who support it, and their efforts to support children and youth nationwide. Houston is one of three locations where the partners are now working to support local collaborations. Similar collaborations are in progress in Gulfport/Biloxi, Mississippi and New Orleans. The national-level Katrina's Kids working group continues to meet at least quarterly and sometimes more frequently to discuss ways in which they can support or create local efforts. (See Appendix D for a list of working group members.)

The national partners have been encouraged by what has been demonstrated to be possible in Houston and see inspiration there for efforts in other cities. As Mark Wright, director of partnerships, National Children's Museum, puts it, "Katrina's Kids serves as a testament to the power of organized and deliberate intention to respond to human needs in the face of nearly immeasurable loss. The initiative has combined proven business strategies with service agency best practices to reach communities that with time can be stronger than they were pre-Katrina and Rita. It is my hope that the lives of every person involved with Katrina's Kids (and with America's Promise) will be improved in some way by the immutable spirit that permeates this work."

Michael Hayes, director of state & field support at CIS National, adds, "Through the Katrina's Kids Project, Communities In Schools has been able to participate at a higher level of collaboration to join with other youth serving organizations in providing critical services to children and their families. These services have been more robust and timelier due to the effects of organizations working more closely together through the structure made possible by the project. This effort has demonstrated the value of greater collaboration, particular in response to crisis, and is a model that CIS has developed further into a network-wide training process."

Like their local counterparts in Houston, the national leaders are also observing that working together at the national level to address this pressing issue is creating

a platform for further collaboration. They're getting to know one another's organizations better and seeing potential for continued work together.

Catherine Taylor, communications and research manager for the Business Civic Leadership Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, notes, "The role we play is to help national business and national charity and human services link up, so for us working on the Katrina's Kids working group made perfect sense. By becoming more familiar with the national nonprofits, we can do a better job in the future whether it is on Katrina issues or other issues. The Katrina disaster is not part of annual planning, but everybody saw how communities and national companies really stepped up. It was amazing."

And Michael Hackman, director of public policy at Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, adds: "As a Katrina's Kids national partner, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been able to strengthen relationships with other youth-serving organizations making a difference in the lives of children and their families impacted by the hurricanes. The opportunity to collaborate with organizations such as Communities In Schools, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and America's Promise around positive youth development issues will help us all better serve our constituents, in the Gulf and around the country."

The national partners have also found that this has demonstrated for them a way of working together to foster collaboration on the ground. Hank Oltmann, director of the Office of Emergency Management for the Corporation for National and Community Service, says about the Corporation's experience with Katrina's Kids: "When you can facilitate things that create relationships locally, you are on to something. I hate to use the term 'model,' but it is easy to see how other national organizations could use this formula again. You could imagine other national organizations building off this type of collaborative approach to help pull locals together."

## Appendix A: The Five Promises

Excerpted from *Every Child Every Promise: Turning Failure into Action*, America's Promise Alliance, 2006

Research affirms what generations of Americans have regarded as common sense wisdom: To become successful adults who contribute to society, children need the compounded effect of basic, essential resources in their lives. Parents are the first and most important providers of these developmental resources. But they are far from the only ones. Other adults, schools, and communities (among others) all have key roles to play.

Drawing on the collective weight of this previous research, America's Promise Alliance in 1997 developed descriptors of five essential resources in children's lives that most directly correlate with success. We call them the "Five Promises." For our young people to thrive—and by extension, for America to continue to thrive—we believe that providing these basic resources must be nothing less than a promise we keep to every child. As General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret), the founding chairman of America's Promise Alliance, has described our mission, all Americans have a "solemn obligation" to ensure that every child has a chance to succeed.

These five research-driven and experience-proven essentials that all children need in their lives are:

- **Caring adults:** Every child and youth needs and deserves support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools and communities, including ongoing, secure relationships with parents and other family adults, as well as multiple and consistent formal and informal positive relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers and neighbors.
- **Safe places and constructive use of time:** Every child and youth needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe everywhere they are—from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities

to the virtual places of media—and to have an appropriate balance of structured, supervised activities and unstructured, unscheduled time.

- **A healthy start and healthy development:** Every child and youth needs and deserves the healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthful habits and choices resulting from regular health care and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, comprehensive knowledge and skills and role models of physical and psychological health.
- **Effective education for marketable skills and lifelong learning:** Every child and youth needs and deserves the intellectual development, motivation and personal, social-emotional and cultural skills needed for successful work and lifelong learning in a diverse nation, as a result of having quality learning environments, challenging expectations and consistent formal and informal guidance and mentoring.
- **Opportunities to make a difference through helping others:** Every child and youth needs and deserves the chance to make a difference—in their families, schools, communities, nation and world—through having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service.

## Appendix B: The Evaluation of Houston's Kids

Summer program evaluation description excerpted from: *Houston's Kids: Summer 2006 Pilot Program Final Evaluation Report*, September 15, 2006, Roger Durand, Ph.D.

### EVALUATION OF THE SUMMER PROGRAM

The process evaluation, conducted by the external evaluator, was done by means of direct observation, a survey of representatives of the Houston's Kids collaborating organizations, and through other informal "ethnographic" means. (The core collaborative partners included the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, the Joint City-County Commission on Children, Alief Independent School District, the YMCA of Greater Houston, Communities In Schools Houston, and the Children's Museum of Houston.)

#### *I. Evaluation Overview: Types and Activities*

In evaluating this project, both a process and an outcomes assessment were conducted. In general, process assessments are concerned with the implementation of a project or program, especially how the project is being implemented, how the various components complement one another, and how the various project participants or "stakeholders" perceive the project. In the present instance, the results of the process assessment were used *formatively*—i.e., for ongoing project development and improvement, as well as for the purpose of enabling the diffusion and dissemination of implementation information to others considering the adoption of a similar or identical program.

Outcomes assessments, on the other hand, are generally concerned with the comparing of actual to desired or expected goal achievement. In the present instance, the outcomes component were used *summatively*—i.e., to judge the project's effectiveness in producing desired outcomes.

In conducting the *process assessment*, the project's external evaluator (Roger Durand) engaged in the following activities:

- Attended the regular, weekly meetings of the Houston's Kids collaborative wherein the project's implementation was discussed;
- Developed and implemented the process evaluation plan;
- Participated in the project's kickoff activities and demonstration program;
- Attended and participated in a staff meeting of YMCA counselors;
- Met and had email contacts with America's Promise Alliance staff;
- Conducted an open-ended survey of the collaborative's partners that focused on sustainability and the evolution of the collaborative;
- Discussed collaborative partners' perceptions with them over the telephone;
- Met with staff of the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast concerning the project and its evaluation;
- Kept track of the timing and completion of program activities;
- Was in frequent and sustained contact with Project Director Sul Ross concerning the project's implementation.

In conducting the *process evaluation* of the 2006 Houston's Kids Pilot Project, an open-ended survey of the representatives of the collaborating organizations was conducted during the last week in July 2006. The survey was conducted by email with subsequent telephone contact to clarify and add dimension to some of the responses. Full and complete responses were obtained from eleven participants representing all of the core collaborating Houston's Kids organizations.

In conducting the *outcomes assessment*, the external evaluator engaged in the following activities:

- Designed and implemented the project's outcomes assessment plan;
- Directed discussions at regular meetings of the collaborative about the project's goals, intended outcomes, standards of success, and results;

- Worked with the staff of the Alief ISD to insure Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of data collection instruments utilized to gather information from human subjects, especially children;
- Designed a survey of parents whose children participated in the Houston's Kids Summer Pilot Program;
- Designed a survey (with two different versions) of children and youth who participated in the Summer Pilot Program;
- Designed a set of focus group questions which were utilized by YMCA counselors to obtain information about the needs of children and youth;
- Oversaw the collection of data gathered by means of surveys and focus groups;
- Coordinated the entry onto electronic media of data gathered by means of surveys and focus groups;
- Oversaw the consent process and maintained the confidentiality of all data collected from human subjects for the project;
- Conducted a systematic, statistical analysis of the survey and focus group evidence gathered for the project;
- Interpreted the results derived from the survey and focus group evidence;
- Prepared summary reports on project results.

Details on the methods for the outcomes assessment are discussed at length below.

## ***II. Project Goals and Success Standards***

Representatives of the collaborating organizations discussed the goals of the Houston's Kids Summer Pilot Project, as well as the standards by which to judge it "successful" or not, at considerable length. Indeed, this important discussion



continued even through the start of the project at the end of May. Eventually, the representatives achieved consensus concerning goals and success standards.

The representatives ultimately adopted eight goals for the Summer Pilot Project. These goals (see below) were based upon the America's Promise Alliance Five Promises—resources that young people need to become “productive citizens who contribute to their communities.”

In addition to the Five Promises, the eight goals for the Summer Project and their associated success standards were based upon the important idea of “developing assets” in young people. This idea has been the subject of pioneering work by partners within the America's Promise Alliance, particularly the YMCA and the Search Institute, through the Abundant Assets Alliance (<http://www.abundantassets.org/>). Central to the “developing assets” idea is the view that children and youth need certain positive experiences and qualities as basic building blocks for their lives. In other words, developmental assets are a strength-based approach to healthy development, a set of factors deemed critical to young people's growth.

The developing assets idea is supported by research, particularly survey studies, conducted by the Search Institute. One such survey study, *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, interviewed young people in 318 communities and 33 states across the nation (<http://www.search-institute.org/surveys/ab.html>).

The Houston's Kids collaborative representatives used the results from this extensive investigation to arrive at a set of “success standards” for the Summer Pilot Project (see below). The representatives reviewed the Search Institute's nationwide findings and adjusted them for two factors: the particular needs of the targeted Katrina-Rita children and the relatively short period planned for the Summer Pilot Project.

### *III. Outcomes Evaluation Design and the Activities Evaluated*

The important yet extended discussion among the Houston's Kids collaborative representatives about goals and success standards, together with the relatively short time period of the planned summer project, limited the type of evaluation design that was finally adopted to assess the project's outcomes. More specifically, a planned "pre-post" evaluation design had to be abandoned in favor of a less rigorous one: a post-hoc only design. The post-hoc design generally admits more possible "threats to interval validity" into evaluations, making it more difficult to establish true cause and effect. Nonetheless, given the time available and the project's available resources, the collaborative's representatives viewed a post-hoc design as the best option, and the external evaluator concurred.

The limited project summer time period together with the relatively late decision about goals and standards led to two other compromise decisions. First, the Houston's Kids collaborative representatives had strongly desired to evaluate the impact of the Summer Youth Employment and Training Program for high school students. However, the late decision about goals and standards and the short summer project time period—coupled with an even shorter period of employment training (two weeks) and the subsequent disbursement of youth to jobs throughout the geographically extensive Houston area—together proved difficult barriers to overcome. The collaborative representatives decided against evaluating the Employment and Training Program for the 2006 summer period, choosing instead to conduct a more thorough and comprehensive assessment at a future time (i.e., the expected year-long project to follow). In this decision the external evaluator again completely concurred.

The second compromise decision concerned the eliciting of outcomes evaluation information from Alief ISD principals, teachers, and staff. The original evaluation plan called for surveying these principals, teachers, and staff members concerning their views of students' progress in "developing assets" as well as of other outcome related matters (e.g., the availability of learning opportunities for children and youth). Again, however, the relatively short time period of the Summer Pilot Project together with the many other activities of the project led the collaborative representatives to decide not to collect such information, but to defer such

collection until the anticipated yearlong program. Once again, the external evaluator concurred.

#### ***IV. Outcomes Data Collection***

Data to assess the Summer Pilot Project outcomes were gathered principally by means of a post-hoc survey of parents whose children participated in the summer program; a post-hoc survey of children and youth participating in the summer program; and a set of focus groups conducted by YMCA counselors who were in direct contact with the children and youth.

All of these data collection instruments were reviewed and subsequently approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Alief Independent School District. The same was true of the informed consent procedures employed in the evaluation. Particular care was taken to obtain the written consent of parents in regard to surveying children and youth enrolled in the Summer Pilot Project.

Two slightly different versions of this survey were actually employed: one intended for high school youth, the other for elementary and middle school children. In all cases a parent's signed written consent form was obtained for each child interviewed. The surveys were administered during a YMCA camp session in the latter part of July or early part of August. In total full and complete survey questionnaires were obtained from 73 children and youth participating in the Summer Pilot Project.

Also included as part of the outcomes component of the evaluation was a self-administered survey of parents whose child or children participated in the Summer Pilot Project. This survey was administered at two different school locations at the end of July 2006 during a parent "wrap-up" meeting. Survey responses were obtained from 53 parents.

The outcomes evaluation component further included a set of focus group questions and a summary focus group form. Each YMCA counselor was asked to discuss the focus group questions with the child/youth members of his/her group. Following discussion of the questions, which took place during the last few weeks

in July, each counselor was asked to record his/her impressions of results on a prepared form. In total impressions were obtained from YMCA counselors that worked with 21 groups of children and youth during the Summer Pilot Project.

## **EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAM**

The year-long program created opportunities for three enhancements to the evaluations:

- The use of both pre- and post-surveys;
- The use of comparison groups;
- The use of some additional evaluation instruments.

Survey instruments used for the fall evaluation were similar to those used in summer, with a few small improvements. Three surveys were used: one for parents; one for elementary, intermediate, and middle school students; and one for high school students. Parent surveys were administered to parents with children in the program during the fall semester. Student surveys for elementary, intermediate, and middle school students were sent home with the students and also administered on site for students whose parent permission forms were completed. Finally, a survey was administered in the fall semester to high school students participating in the job training portion of the program.

Surveys were also sent to parents and students in schools without the Houston's Kids program. Those schools were identified by the district as having similar demographics to the schools with the program.

The pre-test data for the fall evaluation is currently being tabulated. A post-survey will be administered to parents and students (participants in the program and control groups) at the end of the spring semester.

As in the fall, focus groups will also be held to reinforce the survey data and create an opportunity for more qualitative evaluation. Focus groups will occur three times during the school year: once in the fall semester, once in the early spring semester,

and once near the end of the spring semester. YMCA counselors facilitate these with students participating in the Houston's Kids program.

In addition to the surveys and focus groups used in the summer, additional instruments are being used to evaluate the year-long program:

- Grades and behavior of Houston's Kids participants will be measured against comparable groups of students who did not participate in the program.
- A school environment survey has been administered to teachers, site coordinators, principals, and school nurses at each of the Houston's Kids sites. There will be a post-test in the spring semester. This school environment study will allow for additional feedback on students' progress from the full complement of staff who have one-on-one relationships with the students in the program.

## Appendix C: Sample Newspaper Articles about Houston's Kids

### HOUSTON CHRONICLE ARCHIVES

**Paper:** Houston Chronicle

**Date:** Thu 11/16/2006

**Section:** Star

**Page:** 1

**Edition:** 2 STAR

#### **UNITED WAY / As school day ends, lessons in life begin**

By MARY VUONG  
Staff

Glenn E. Donaldson wanted a job last summer. Houston's Kids gave it to him.

The program, which started in May, began as a community effort to help children displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast and Joint City County Commission on Children, with funding from America's Promise - the Alliance for Youth, led the planning efforts.

But Houston's Kids is not exclusive to hurricane evacuees. "Prior to the storm, we also had children who had the same needs," says Kristen Schlatre, community investment specialist at United Way.

Houston's Kids supports more than 500 Alief Independent School District students, including local youth such as Glenn. The 16-year-old junior attends Hastings High School, where his mom, MaryAnn Donaldson, has worked as a teacher's aide for nearly a decade.

She says thanks to the program, her son has become "more job oriented."

The class meets in a cafeteria at Hastings at 2:45 p.m. Typically, they eat a snack then gather in a nearby classroom to write in their journals for a half hour. Julie Johnson, an employment coordinator at Communities in Schools, then leads the class in exercises designed to build communication skills, job marketability and self-esteem.

Students earn minimum wage for the six hours they spend in the Tuesday and Thursday classes. Activities have included feeding the homeless, mock job interviews and a college tour. In the spring, some students will be set up with employment outside the school. Glenn expects to work with children again, like he did in the summer.

*(Continued next page)*

One day, after he came home from supervising children at the YMCA, MaryAnn Donaldson recalls her son saying, "Mom, they called me Mr. Glenn.

"It made him feel so grown-up and so important."

India Palmer, 17, just joined the program this fall. "It helped me organize my skills," says the senior, who is considering a career in the fashion industry. "I want to own a business."

Besides Hastings, Houston's Kids is held at Horn and Best elementaries, Klentzman Intermediate School and Olle Middle School.

The programs are structured differently for younger students. At Klentzman, where India's 11-year-old brother, Maqs, attends, the students are tutored in academics and participate in recreational activities, including field trips. Carletta Palmer, mother of Maqs and India, teaches cooking, visual arts and volleyball.

The Palmers are Katrina evacuees who spent their early days in Houston at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Carletta Palmer says it was difficult for her children to adjust to a new city and culture.

When Maqs and his 9-year-old sister, Imani, became involved in Houston's Kids over the summer, she adds, "that was the first place they wanted to go and not miss a day. They never wanted to go anywhere in this city (before that). I think since the program they feel more welcome."

#### HELPING KIDS

Houston's Kids is a United Way summer and after-school program that serves students in Alief Independent School District.

Cost: Free

Locations: Horn and Best elementaries, Klentzman Intermediate School, Olle Middle School and Hastings High School

Info: 713-685-2300

How to help: To donate to the United Way Community Campaign, which funds programs like this one, call 713-685-2800 or go to [unitedwayhouston.org](http://unitedwayhouston.org).

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THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

<http://www.philanthropy.com/premium/articles/v18/i21/21001501.htm>

**PROGRAMS RESPOND TO NEEDS OF KATRINA CHILDREN**

By Ben Gose

The public schools in Houston, and the children whose families moved from New Orleans to Houston because of Hurricane Katrina, are both struggling through an adjustment period.

On average, the displaced children are scoring far lower on standardized exams than other students in Houston schools. Several fights broke out last year, some pinned to a clash between the Houston and Louisiana cultures.

Meanwhile, the federal government, which provided \$890-million during the 2005-6 school year to assist school districts across the country that took in Katrina students, says it will not provide such aid this year. That's likely to cause budget problems in several Houston-area districts.

America's Promise, the youth charity founded by Gen. Colin L. Powell, has started a program called Katrina's Kids to help the estimated 500,000 young people displaced by the hurricane.

The program will cost \$3.5-million over two years, and is supported primarily by a grant from Atlantic Philanthropies.

The program began its first major project in Houston this summer, working with the Alief Independent School District, where 60 percent of the students come from low-income families.

The district has 2,800 displaced students, roughly 6 percent of its enrollment — a higher proportion of evacuees than any other Houston district.

Working with organizations like the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast and the local YMCA, America's Promise is providing summer school for 400 hurricane victims in elementary school, and 50 each in middle and high school.

*(Continued next page)*



"These kids have really lost a lot, and they're poised to fail unless somebody helps them," says Richard Wells, a vice president at America's Promise who is overseeing the Katrina's Kids program.

The charity has committed to supporting summer-school and after-school programs for youths displaced by Katrina in the Alief school district through the end of the 2007-8 school year.

"It will help them transition from the short-term recovery needs, so that they can develop a long-term plan," Mr. Wells says. "Schools are struggling with budgets for next year — they're guessing who will stay, and who won't."

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## Appendix D: Houston's Kids Local Partners

### **Alief Independent School District**

Deby Goolsby  
Supervisor—Federal Programs/Grants

Jennifer D. Key  
Executive Director of Special Populations

Colleen Sanders  
Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education

Norma Schott  
Nutrition Services

### **The Children's Museum of Houston**

Tammie Kahn  
Executive Director

Tara Lang  
Houston's Kids Project Manager

Cheryl McCallum  
Director of Education

Karen Milnar  
Manager of Strategic Partnerships

### **Communities In Schools Houston, Inc.**

Angelica Francis Adams  
Director of Partnership Development

Cynthia Briggs  
Executive Director

Julie T. Johnson  
Employment Coordinator

John Perry  
Houston's Kids Coordinator

Melissa Simon  
Director of Development

Sylvia Teague  
Director of Field Operations

### **The Council on Alcohol and Drugs, Houston**

Dr. Jamey Cheek  
Counseling Coordinator AISD

**Dr. Roger Durand**

Project Evaluator for Houston's Kids

**Harris County Precinct Three**

Belinda Price

**Joint City/County Commission on Children (JCCCC)**

Sherea McKenzie  
Executive Director

Joseph Le  
Outreach Coordinator

**United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast**

Anna Babin  
President

Linda O'Black  
Vice President, Community Impact

Amy Corron  
Senior Director of Community Investment

Kristen Schlatre  
Community Investment Specialist

Jessica Palmer  
Project Assistant, Houston's Kids

**YMCA of Greater Houston**

Linda Lykos  
Vice President—Financial Development —Youth

**Alief Family YMCA**

Gladys J. Brumfield  
Center Director

Elisabeth Cooper  
Houston's Kids Program Director

**Clay Road YMCA**

Melissa Cuff  
Program Director

## **Appendix E: America’s Promise Alliance—Katrina’s Kids Working Group (National-level Partners)**

**Note:** Houston’s Kids is supported by the Katrina’s Kids initiative of the America’s Promise Alliance. America’s Promise staff facilitates the coordination of national and local partners, providing proactive technical assistance on a wide-variety of implementation issues including partner recruitment, communication and evaluation. The Katrina’s Kids Working Group represents the partners of the Alliance and is the leadership body for the initiative.

### **Key America’s Promise staff support for the Katrina’s Kids initiative includes:**

Marguerite Kondracke, President & CEO

Melinda Hudson, Executive Vice President

Kris Minor, Senior Vice President, Alliance Partnerships

Richard Wells, Vice President, State and Community Mobilization

Jon Zaff, Ph.D., Vice President, Research and Policy Development

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America**

Michael Hackman, Director of Public Policy

### **Boys & Girls Clubs of America**

Perry Cooper, Senior Director Growth & Collaboration Strategies

### **U.S. Chamber of Commerce- Center for Corporate Citizenship**

Catherine Taylor, Communication and Research Manager

### **Communities In Schools**

Michael Hayes, Director of State & Field Support

### **Corporation for National and Community Service**

Hank Oltmann, Director, Office of Emergency Management

### **Hands On Network**

Toby Chalberg, Vice President, Policy and Strategic Partnerships

### **JA Worldwide™**

Carolyn Bassett, Director, Afterschool Programs Support

**MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership**

Cynthia Sturtevant, Director, Training and Technical Assistance

**National Association of Community Health Centers**

Jason Patnosh, Director of Partnership Development

**National Children's Museum**

Mark Wright, Director of Partnerships

**Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network**

Diana Rothe-Smith, Director, Disaster Initiatives

**United Way of America**

Christine Miller, Manager, Field Leadership

**YMCA of the USA**

Audrey Tayse Haynes, National Director Government Relations and Policy

## Appendix F: America's Promise Alliance Trustees

National leaders from all sectors who shape Alliance strategies, champion its initiatives and advise the Board of Directors

**Anderson, Steven**

President and CEO  
National Restaurant Association

**Bao, Rui**

Youth Partnership Team

**Bridgeland, John**

President and CEO  
Civic Enterprises

**Brown, Larry**

President  
Work, Achievement, Values and Education (WAVE)

**Brown, Michael**

President and CEO  
City Year

**Caldwell, Kyle**

President and CEO  
ConnectMichigan Alliance

**Cardinali, Daniel**

President  
Communities In Schools, Inc.

**Castellani, John**

President  
Business Roundtable

**Chernow, David**

President and CEO  
Junior Achievement Worldwide

**Cloninger, Kathy**

Chief Executive Officer  
Girl Scouts of the USA

**Cochran, J. Thomas**

Executive Director  
U.S. Conference of Mayors

**Culbertson, Steve**

President and CEO  
Youth Service America

**Donohue, Thomas**

President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

**Eisner, David\***

CEO  
Corporation for National and Community Service

**Engler, John**

President  
National Association of Manufacturers

**Floyd, Donald**

President and CEO  
National 4-H Council

**Gallagher, Brian**

President and CEO  
United Way of America

**Goodwin, Robert**

President and CEO  
Points of Light Foundation

**Graham, John**

President and CEO  
American Society of Association Executives

**Grant, Jodi**

Executive Director  
Afterschool Alliance

**Hayward, Jeff**

Youth Partnership Team

**Houston, Paul**

Executive Director  
American Association of School Administrators

**Isaacson, Walter**

President and CEO  
The Aspen Institute

**Katz, Irv**

President and CEO  
National Collaboration for Youth

**Kolb, Charles**

President  
Committee for Economic Development

**Kopp, Wendy**

President and Founder  
Teach for America

**Manza, Gail**

National Executive Director  
MENTOR

**Millard, Megan**

Youth Partnership Team

**Mims, Rhonda**

President  
ING Foundation

**Nicoll, Neil**

President and CEO  
YMCA of the USA

**Nunn, Michelle**

Co-Founder and CEO  
Hands On Network

**Pittman, Karen**

Executive Director  
Forum for Youth Investment

**Sawhill, Isabel**

Vice President and Director,  
Economic Studies  
The Brookings Institution

**Schepbach, Raymond**

Executive Director  
National Governors Association

**Smith, Kenneth**

President  
Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

**Southern, Kathy Dwyer**

President and CEO  
National Children's Museum

**Spillett, Roxanne**

President  
Boys & Girls Clubs of America

**Stoneman, Dorothy**

President and Founder  
YouthBuildUSA

**Van Coverden, Tom**

President and CEO  
National Association of Community Health Centers

**Vella, Jim**

President and Executive Director  
Ford Motor Company Fund

**Vredenburgh, Judy**

President and CEO  
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