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## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

### Community Awareness In Action for Youth

Alta Gardens Apartment's Community Awareness Group, led by Social Service Coordinator, Patricia Chew of UJIMA, is no stranger to the power of community involvement. Residents expressed a strong concern for the safety of children who were forced to catch their school bus daily at a busy traffic light. Chew helped to lead efforts to move the bus stop to a safer, more accessible location by partnering with parents and apartment management. Through meetings with school officials, letters and signatures from parents, the stop was moved inside the apartment complex in September.

### Stepping Out and Standing Out

Settegast Heights received the Mayors Banner for winning First Place in the Northeast Houston region for National Night Out participation and events. August 7, Tyler Jackson partnered with Houston Police Department, Houston Fire Department, City of Houston and Councilman Jarvis Johnson's office for the community's events. Over 350 residents participated in the community celebration.

### Volunteer to Work

Terrilyn Thompson and Cheryl West, Settegast Heights residents, are now full time VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) for their community. With responsi-

bilities that include leading community activities, clerical work and reporting the women are gaining the skills and experience necessary to eventually work for organizations off site. In addition, they are becoming excellent models for UJIMA's volunteer to work initiative, which aims to train and transition unemployed, volunteering residents to secure full or part time employment and achieve economic stability.

### UJIMA Community at HUD Level 2 Status

Gulf Coast Arms has been approved for the first stage to qualify for technical assistance, advancing the center to a Neighborhood Network Center Level 2 status. Coordinator LaToya Shields developed and submitted a business plan report to HUD, which was endorsed by Houston's HUD coordinator, Mary Byrd late October. Shields has plans to move the Vince Salvagio Community Center to a model 3 status.

### Coordinator Awarded at HUD Conference

Social Service Coordinator Tyler Jackson was recognized November 7 at the HUD Social Service Coordinator Conference for his leadership in developing Settegast Heights into a Level 2 Neighborhood Networks Center. Jackson has completed 7 of the 9 stages toward moving the Yvette W. Scales Learning Center to a Model 3 status.

### Friends of UJIMA

January 2008, UJIMA will begin launching the **Friends of UJIMA Individual Giving Campaign**, centered on 9 dynamic initiatives. Visit [www.ujimainc.org](http://www.ujimainc.org), for details. More Exciting News, Events and Updates to Come!

## CLIMBING NEW HEIGHTS FOR HOUSTON'S YOUTH



*David Powells, Settegast Heights resident, masters the pamper pole!*

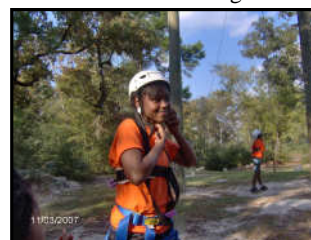
From sing-alongs to campfires, UJIMA's 2007 Overcoming Obstacles Challenge Camp, held November 2-3, was an authentic overnight camping adventure. The event challenged and equipped 21 youth to explore their strengths and discover what it means to overcome obstacles.

While the event was made a success through the service of UJIMA staff and volunteers, the entire UJIMA team is applauding the more than 40 individuals who sponsored youth or a portion of the program. As a result, each participant was able to experience the program at no cost.

Friday, November 2, seven volunteers traveled with the boys and girls to Huntsville, Texas for their over-

night stay at Carolina Creek Christian Camp. Patricia Chew, volunteer counselor and a member of UJIMA staff, taught the children a fireside spiritual. "They loved it and sang it for the entire two days," Chew said. Apparently the youth were not the only ones with the song bug, as staff could be heard humming it during work at UJIMA's offices the following Monday.

Saturday, boys and girls participated separately in low ropes courses. Guided by Carolina Creek staff, group obstacle course challenges like the zip line, pamper pole and rock wall provided tangible experiences of character building, teamwork, integrity and self-esteem building. Tarsha Marcelus, UJIMA administrator and volunteer staff, said, "They learned how to overcome challenges in



*Taneshia Carlton of Gulf Coast Arms gears up.*

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*Our Mission: To assist families of disadvantaged communities in overcoming obstacles by promoting the achievement of economic self-sufficiency.*

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

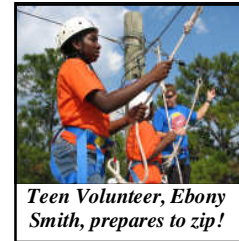


*Overcoming Obstacles Challenge Camp 2007 participants, staff and volunteers.*

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their lives. They did things they had no idea they could do." Chew, a coordinator for Alta Gardens Apartments, described the personal triumph of one of the youth from her site. "My participant who has a few medical issues was able to climb the zip line platform and start up the pamper pole. Although not completing either activity, she went at it with such enthusiasm and confidence and was quite satisfied with herself over the out-

come," said Chew.



*Teen Volunteer, Ebony Smith, prepares to zip!*

Overcoming Obstacles 2008 will aim to offer a longer stay at the camp for more youth and involve more partnerships with individuals and organizations.

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

The Vince Salvagio Learning Center at Gulf Coast Arms has seen an influx of bodies moving, hands doing and mouths spreading the word about UJIMA programs. LaToya Shields', the site's UJIMA Social Service Coordinator, commitment to bringing UJIMA's mission to life has brought many wonderful programs, events and services to the Gulf Coast Arms Apartment community. But for Shields, "It's a mindset thing." She attributes the center's increased resident participation, a trend not seen at the onset of her service, in part, to a simple changing of minds.



*The Beauty of Community Residents Marquez Carroll (r) and Ashley Betty (l) at a Gulf Coast Arms Event.*

lives of those close to her (family and peers), and to make change in her community." Part of the girls' requirements for membership is a minimum of five hours of community service per month and character/career building assignments as homework. "They think positively and they are confident about getting to where they want to go. We initially started out with five and now we are at 18 girls," says Shields.

### YOUTH ON THE MOVE

Youth at Gulf Coast Arms (GCA). have enjoyed programs like the After School Enrichment (ASE) program and are excited about new initiatives, including the Girls Empowerment Production (GEP). Partnerships with Junior Achievement, Boy Scouts, Houston Center for Photography, Houston Food Bank and Washington Mutual Bank have added great weekly and monthly events to Shields' ASE programming. ASE engages children ages 5-13 with programs including tutorials, photography lessons and excursions, arts and crafts, nutritional classes, the School Savings Program and computer fun.

cess has spread to the classroom for a special group of students who had academic and behavioral problems prior to Fall 2007 and were initially resistant to even stepping foot in the community center. In full contrast, this school year, they are in the learning center consistently, have seen an improvement in their grades; moving from F students to C and B students, and have not had any behavioral reports sent home.

The Girls Empowerment Production, designed by Shields, is one of Gulf Coast Arms' newer initiatives for youth. This program entails educational activities, field trips, monthly etiquette training, self esteem and character building for girls ages 9-14. "The goal of this group," Shields describes, "is to create a young lady who will have the authority, ability and competence to make wise decisions and to implement change in her own life, the

### ADULTS FIND SUCCESS

Youth at Gulf Coast Arms are not the only group seeing positive change among their peers. For the community's adults, Shields has introduced a number of programs that inspire, equip and mobilize. The computer technology class, held twice per week, is one of the many adult initiatives at GCA. The course is taught by the community's Americorp VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) volunteer and has taken residents who were unable to turn on a computer and transformed them to individuals who are knowledgeable of basic word processing and internet navigation. Within three weeks of beginning the course, one resident was able to browse the internet for jobs, fill out an application and is now employed at a local daycare.

During the month of September alone, an additional five resi-

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dents have also secured employment through Shields' Workforce Development and Resume Assisting Program. In partnership with AGM, a job training/placement company, and the Worksource, UJIMA at Gulf Coast Arms has produced job preparation and readiness workshops. Shields was excited that Antoinette Marmon, owner of AGM, has helped one resident who has a criminal history find employment. "She uses the Strengths Perspective Model," residents, not only with their financial health, but their physical, spiri-

employers who don't have an issue giving second chances to people."

Adult residents in the community are also gaining financial freedom and independence through Washington Mutual's 8-week long Road to Financial Literacy Program. Each week participants are informed about financial pitfalls and danger zones, and are taught the steps to building a bright financial future.

The time ahead will bring promise for residents, not only with their physical, spiri-

tual and mental health. There is no doubt in Shields' mind that more

*Within three weeks...one resident was able to browse the internet for jobs... and is now employed at a local daycare*



Johnnie Beatty (r), Treshea Walker (l) practice dining etiquette while out with the Girls Empowerment Production.

great things are to come for UJIMA at Gulf Coast Arms, as she projects, "The future is bright. I see it."

## Seeking A Beautiful Change

### RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT



**Stitches Of Hope**

Johnnie Beatty sews buttons with GEP

A hopeful Johnnie Beatty has dedicated much of her time to continuing the success of UJIMA programs at Gulf Coast Arms Apartments. The 37-year-old mother of three is now filled with promise and expectancy where months ago there was none.

Beatty connected with

UJIMA in 2006 through LaToya Shields', her apartment community's social service coordinator. "She met me when I was pregnant," Beatty said, "She was passing out papers and I met her." At the time, Beatty was pregnant with her third child and not receiving adequate health care. Shields, who describes Beatty's condition as "unhealthy", gave the resident direction and connected her with the resources needed to have a healthy pregnancy and delivery. "I found a good doctor and I kept going until I had my baby," Beatty said. Recently celebrating her daughter's 1st birthday, Beatty notes that without Shields' intervention, her pregnancy would have been a much more difficult journey.

Yet Beatty has experienced a new life beyond the birth of her daughter. "She wasn't hopeful," Shields said, "Where she was, she thought that was all she could be."

But today a different Johnnie Beatty is serving her family, her community and herself through UJIMA programs.

Her entire family participates in the many services and events developed for residents. Though she regularly attends the women's program, her joy has been helping with children's programs, including the Girls Empowerment Production (GEP) and After School Enrichment. "Since I've been helping Ms. LaToya, the kids run and see me and they give me a hug," Beatty said, "And it feels good. I always wanted to volunteer and work with kids and now I do."

Her connection to the social services has impacted her tremendously. "I don't have to stay in the house everyday," Beatty said about her growing service commitment and participation with UJIMA at Gulf Coast Arms, "It changed me a whole lot." Shields has recently been assisting Beatty, who currently lives with her mother, with moving into her own apartment, and hopes to have Beatty become a VISTA for the community. As a VISTA, Beatty will gain the experience needed to expand her resume, add to her talents and skills, secure employment, and ultimately create a life of economic stability for herself and family.

Each day, Beatty is moving closer to her goal of working in early childhood at a daycare or elementary school. With the ongoing work of LaToya Shields, who Beatty dotes on as "a sweet and great person", residents at Gulf Coast Arms, including Beatty, will continue to discover the great things that are waiting for them. As for Beatty, she is holding tight to the beautiful change that has occurred in her life, saying "Before I didn't have dreams, but I have them now."

*Heavenly Ms. Shields, focusing on Health, Economics, Standards and Social Structures.*

## A LOOK AHEAD

### WINTER QUARTER

#### JANUARY

- 16-23 **Mini Fairs: Health/Economics** at all UJIMA Apartment Communities  
29 **Children's Defense Fund Financial Literacy Conference** at the United Way Community Resource Center

#### MARCH

- 11 **Friends of UJIMA Site Visits** begin at all UJIMA Apartment Communities  
15 **UJIMA Fitness Challenge** begins with a community-wide rally at Settegast Heights

### SPRING QUARTER

#### APRIL

- 4 **Tools to Touch Lives 2008: Care For the Caregiver** Conference at the United Way Community Resource Center  
22 **Friends of UJIMA Dinner Parties** begin

#### MAY

**Friends of UJIMA Site Visits/Dinner Parties** Continue

### Supporters, Partners, Volunteers and Donors...

Stay connected at [www.ujimainc.org](http://www.ujimainc.org) for updates on UJIMA apartment site events, UJIMA organization events and service opportunities.

The Collective

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