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Like most people, I have a love/hate relationship with television. I love tuning in to my favorite programs but I hate that I continue to watch mindlessly even after those programs are over. Of course that's not to say that all television is mind numbing. There are some useful and educational programs out there. For example, I enjoy listening to the news on the small television in my bathroom while I am getting ready for work. And, when I am home alone, I keep both the upstairs and downstairs sets turned on for fear I might miss what Rachel's going to cook or what those crazy ladies of The View are going to dish. But my absolute favorite time to indulge my television habit is during the holiday season. Why? Because it seems that there is always a story about people overcoming adversity to band together for the greater good. The settings and plots may change but the outcome remains the same: the characters, regardless of their lots in life, seem to always find a way to make the best out of a situation that is less than desirable. In these heartwarming tales of the triumph of the human spirit, the characters always come to the realization that any situation, regardless of how dire, can always be made better by people reaching out to help one another and working together for a common cause. By the time the credits are rolling, everyone has remembered the things that are truly important in life: family, friends and God.

I think the reason I like these holiday stories so much is because they reflect our attitude at RMYA. We all strive every day to help our children realize that, no matter how frightening or hopeless things may appear, we must all work together in order to make the situation better. At no time is this more important than during the holidays when families gather together to celebrate. Our children do not have families with whom to share the joys of the season. There are no fathers reading "Twas the Night Before Christmas," no mothers serving a beautifully roasted turkey at the holiday table and no Christmas morning filled with the wonder and awe of Santa. It is easy to see why this is a difficult time of year for the children that we serve. That is why it is so important for all of us as a community to reach out and help these children who are less fortunate and do everything we can to make their lives better. Giving involves more than just toys and games; some of the best gifts we can give the RMYA children are our time, our love, our understanding and our encouragement. It is up to us to show them that we are all in this together and that, when you work together, everything gets better. By remembering what is truly important in life, family, friends and God, everything is better.


Gloria Berumen Kelly
Chief Executive Officer

Watch the Birdies

The Valero Texas Open will take place May 10-16. Can't hit a barn with an elephant? Don't worry—you don't have to be Arnold Palmer or Lee Trevino to be a winner at this charity event. All you have to do is watch the birdies!

Through Birdies for Charity, you can support the Youth Alternatives programs and children by making a tax deductible pledge per birdie and participating in the Guess the Birdies contest. The way it works is simple: guess how many birdies (one under par) will be made Wednesday through Sunday of the tournament week. More than 100 prizes will be awarded throughout the event and, the person who guesses correctly will drive away in the grand prize: a Ford Taurus.

Your pledge can be as little as \$0.01 per birdie for an individual or \$0.50 for a corporation. With an average of more than 2000 birdies each year, that adds up to a range from \$20 to more than \$1200! Regardless of the amount, EVERY dollar of your donation will benefit the programs and services RMYA offers to the hundreds of abused and neglected youth in our community. Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed pledge form or you can complete the form online by visiting:
www.golfsanantonio.org/charity.

Your support will make an enormous difference in the life of a child. Good luck and watch those birdies!

RMYA & The Plaza Club

You are cordially invited to join us for lunch on February 9 at 11:30 a.m. at San Antonio's premier private dining facility, the Plaza Club. Enjoy a delicious three course meal and listen as legendary San Antonio businessman Tom Frost shares his stories of the rich history of our great city. A portion of all proceeds from the luncheon will benefit RMYA.

The luncheon is part of the Plaza Club's exciting new, bi-monthly speaker series titled "This is MY San Antonio." They are the Club's way of recognizing those members of our community who have made San Antonio great, as well as a way to give back through various charitable organizations by allowing each speaker to select the charitable recipient.

In addition to being recognized as Mr. Frost's charity of choice, RMYA has been selected by the Plaza Club's Social Committee as its 2010 charity. We look forward to a year filled with fun fund-raising events including the annual Plaza Club luncheon and fashion show in the late spring followed by the "Who's Buying the Great Chefs of San Antonio" event in the fall.

We invite you to join us at each of these events and we will provide you with updated information in our newsletter as the dates draw closer. In the meantime, we look forward to seeing you at the "This is MY San Antonio" luncheon featuring Tom Frost. You can find more information on this and other events at our website www.rmya.org or at the Plaza club Web site at www.clubcorp.com. As always, we appreciate your continued support.

Spreading Holiday Cheer

Brightly wrapped presents under a beautifully decorated tree. Families gathered around a fireplace reading stories and sharing laughter. Children tucked into warm beds, too excited to sleep as they wait anxiously for Santa. These are the memories holidays are made of. For the abused, abandoned and neglected children that we serve at RMYA, these are the things about which they only dream.

The holidays are an extremely difficult time of year for the children of RMYA. Far too many have awoken on Christmas morning to find that it is just like any other day—complete with all of the physical, emotional and sexual abuse from the day before.

There are no new toys to play with or clothes to wear. There is no one to sing carols with or wish a Merry Christmas. Our children long for a home to spend the holidays in and, although we provide them with a safe place to live, many of our children become depressed at the thought that they are away from their families during this time of year—even if their family life was less than ideal.

But our children are fortunate to have a huge extended family that includes hundreds of individuals, corporations, service groups, social organizations and more, all of who come together to give our children the holiday that they, and all children, deserve. That is why we want to send a heartfelt thank you to all of those who donated their time and resources to host parties, bring presents, bake cookies, sing carols, and provide food and entertainment. But most of all, we want to thank you for showing kindness and compassion, and demonstrating the true spirit of the holidays to our children. Because of you, many of them enjoyed their first holiday celebration or received their first gift. Some even saw Santa for the first time! Thank you for helping our children to create new holiday memories filled with love, laughter and people who care. We are truly blessed and grateful.

Therapist Corner

Just how many text messages is your child sending and receiving each day? Take a guess. Twenty? Thirty? Forty or more? Try 80! That is the average number of text messages sent and received by children in one day. Even scarier, according to AAA, 46% of teens admit to sending and receiving text messages while driving. That's a pretty sobering statistic. Based on these numbers you may be tempted to hide your child's cell phone or yell and scream, but all that will get you is a headache and a sore throat. A better and more constructive alternative is to model responsible cell phone use and set firm limits over who pays the bill.

Instead of lecturing, threatening and screaming, consider a more effective statement such as this one based on the "Love and Logic" model: "Honey, you may have a cell phone when you can afford to pay for it. In the meantime, if it helps, tell your friends that your parents are so old-fashioned that they believe that talking face-to-face with your friends is better than texting. Oh-and by the way—we love you and would miss you if you died while texting behind the wheel."

Teaching the Gift of Giving

If your children are like mine, chances are that they start making their Christmas wish lists before the last piece of Thanksgiving turkey is eaten. They make these lists with the confidence that comes from knowing that, on Christmas morning, Santa will deliver. While there is nothing wrong with making wish lists, two years ago, I decided to show my children what a true "wish list" looked like. I decided to gather my children, their friends, and their friends' families and organize a party for a RMYA MeadowLand cabin. The first order of business? Shopping for presents!

I set out with my two young boys to fill the wish list of a child in need. At the top of that list? Underwear and socks. "Who would ask for underwear and socks for Christmas?" asked my then 5-year-old with visions of toys and games dancing in his head. "Children who don't have any," I replied. "But isn't that what mommies are for?" he questioned, with all the innocence of his age. "Yes but some children don't have mommies and daddies to take care of those basic needs for them like you and your brother do," I explained.

That message really made an impact on my children and taught them a valuable lesson about the true meaning of Christmas.

We have continued this tradition as my boys have gotten older and this past year, my now 7-year-old, really took to his role as "wish filler," and delighted in personally presenting each child with a gift. More than that he, his brother, and their friends, finally understood that the children at RMYA are just like them with the same interests, dreams, desires and, yes, wishes that every child has. Unfortunately, unlike my sons and their friends, they will have to work harder to achieve their dreams and rely heavily on the kindness and generosity of others.

If you have young children, I highly recommend sponsoring a cabin for an event—and not just during the holidays. There are plenty of occasions for celebrating including birthdays, end of year parties, graduations, or a "just because you're special event."

It is never too early to instill empathy and social awareness in our children and to teach them that every person is worthy of kindness and love—regardless of how different their circumstances may be from our own. It is incumbent upon us as parents to raise a generation that is willing to take the time to help those in need. Lead by example—even if it means stepping out of your comfort zone. Don't shy away from those in need or think that you alone cannot make an impact. You can. And the gift that you give your own children by teaching them to give to others is the most valuable gift of all.

by Bonny Osterhage

Learning from our Four-Legged Friends

At our MeadowLand campus there has always been a population of dogs and cats, each of which has its own journey to our door. The dogs generally are rescued from shelters, or from total abandonment. Cats are usually left anonymously in the area and find their way to us. Sometimes they are feral- that is, they have not been raised in close contact with people, and consequently are permanently affected by an inability to gain trust in people and to form relationships- aside from living among us and consuming the food and water we provide. At least we are able to trap them so they can be spayed and neutered. Then they return and make MeadowLand their home.

Dogs seem relatively unaffected by lack of contact with humans in their early weeks, and if adopted will soon enough learn to trust us bipeds and make a good family pet- though dogs still are vulnerable to abuse, to which, sadly, they are often subjected if they are born unwanted, and which often leads to dangerous behavior.

Though the details are different, human children have essentially the same needs for care and attention as dogs and cats. They also suffer the same negative consequences if those needs are not met. That's where we come in at RMYA, where many of the children we serve are victims of abandonment, neglect or abuse. It is in our earliest weeks, months and years that we are most profoundly harmed by these experiences that teach us, wrongly, that people around us are to be feared, not trusted.

Cats and dogs grow up much more quickly than people. I bring out this fact when teaching adolescents about sexuality. While our four-legged friends, as early as one year of age or less, are both sexually mature and capable of raising their young, it's another situation for humans. At puberty, when we still have a lot of growing up to do, we are capable of reproducing, but not capable of being good parents- a job that lasts at least 18 years. That job requires well-developed living skills, emotional maturity, and a source of income well above the low wages available to teenagers and young adults with limited education.

The next part of the lesson is the need to delay parenthood in order to gain better preparation for that all-important task. It is simply too easy for teens to yield to sexual impulses and bring children into the world before they are ready and willing to take on the role of parents. We can all imagine other potential undesirable consequences of sexual activity. In this and other areas, young people may make careless choices rather than learn from others' mistakes.

As a society we need to consider how to encourage responsible decision-making by our teens and parents, in order to diminish the magnitude of the problem of child abuse, neglect and abandonment. Meanwhile, we at RMYA will continue to try to make a positive impact, in this regard, on the many young people we serve.

And we do just that. It's a blessing that we sometimes see the people who passed through our programs years ago. Kids who have gone in a good direction, who furthered their education, who made good choices in careers and spouses, who have children of their own that they are capable of raising right, with plenty of loving care.

Brian Schill, LCSW
MeadowLand Campus Therapist

2009 Governor's Volunteer Awards



The Governor's Volunteer Awards have a long tradition of recognizing those in our state who devote their time and talents to serving others. These awards allow Governor Rick Perry to recognize some of the individuals, organizations, corporations and public entities that truly embody the Texas tradition of community service. RMYA is proud to announce that two of our supporters, Lana Duke and the late Don Strange, were recognized by Governor Rick Perry at the 2009 Governor's Volunteer Awards, Dec. 9 in Dallas, during the 32nd Annual Governor's Leadership Conference. The awards were presented by First Lady, Anita Perry.

The late Don Strange of Don Strange of Texas, Inc. received the 2009 Governor's Volunteer Award in the Community Collaborator Category for creating and strengthening partnerships within Texas communities. The award was accepted by his wife, Frances Strange. Lana Duke, owner of

four Ruth's Chris Steak House restaurants, including the two in San Antonio, received the 2009 Governor's Volunteer Award in the Community Motivator Category. Community Motivators have a strong ethic of service, a pure compassion for people and an inspirational nature to inspire those around them to serve.

It was our honor to nominate both Don Strange and Lana Duke for well deserved recognition by the Governor's Volunteer Awards—CONGRATULATIONS and THANK YOU!

RMYA VIP

Edmund Ladendorff, Jr., 1925—2009

It is with a very heavy heart that we announce the loss of one of our most dedicated and cherished RMYA Board members. Edmund Ladendorff Jr. passed away peacefully on Dec. 1, at the age of 84.

Ed served on the RMYA Board for 6 years, during which time he was instrumental in implementing some very significant changes that have bettered our organization. His expertise as a management consultant was a valuable asset in transitioning RMYA from a small charitable organization to one that is geared for future growth and expansion.

A strong and vocal supporter of RMYA, Ed was a firm believer in the importance of our mission to the children we serve. He devoted hundreds of hours to helping us restructure and grow, and for that we are forever grateful.

But it was not just RMYA that Ed served so tirelessly. He was an active member of our community, serving on the Board of the Winston School as well as on numerous church committees. His commitment to serving others extended to his illustrious career, which included time spent as a Lieutenant in the US Army Air Corps, and a Smoke Jumper with the US Forest Service in Montana. He may be best known, however, for his role as Vice President of the Beverage Division of Lipton in New Jersey, before his retirement to San Antonio in 1993.

Our heartfelt sympathies are extended to Ed's wife, Marybeth, as well as his five children. Ed's absence will be felt by all who knew him - especially all of our Board members and staff of RMYA.

Les Dames d'Escoffier

The amazingly talented women of the prestigious international culinary group Les Dames d'Escoffier - San Antonio Chapter hosted their second annual FALALALALA Food and Fun Luncheon at The Bridge, Dec. 22. As the name suggests, residents and staff were treated to delicious food and lots of merriment from this enthusiastic group!

The children got down to business decorating beautiful gingerbread houses as the Dames scurried around like Santa's elves preparing a family style meal complete with Filet Mignon, Green Beans, Mashed Potatoes, Caesar Salad and Dinner Rolls. Dessert was a deliciously decadent assortment of homemade Brownies and Blondies. Not a detail was overlooked from the linen tablecloths and napkins to the fine china and flatware.

Following the mouthwatering meal, the guests were treated to a visit from Santa himself, who handed out gifts to all the residents. It was a FALALALALA-lotta fun!



MEMORIALS

DON STRANGE
 Richard & Dianne Azar
 Paul & Glenda Beyer
 Charles & Brooke Bremer
 Candy Cheney
 Daisy Tours & Conventions
 Molly Eaton
 James & Susan Glover
 Della Guidry – The DMC Roundtable
 Rebecca & Thomas Howard
 Dan Allen Hughes, Jr.
 Bill & Margie Klesse
 Janet Martinez & Diana Gonzales
 K.B. & Shannon McFarland
 Sandra Merrifield
 Sarah Meuth
 Old Glory Ranch
 Barry & Nancy Portnoy
 Nancy Puckett
 Rio Cibolo Ranch, Inc.
 Rene Rone & Fred Lesieur
 Lenore Stehouwer
 Bill & Jennifer Todd
 Donna Vaughan – The Guenther House
 Ed & Denise Wayman
 Wedding Planners, Inc.
 Kenneth & Gail West
 Sidney & Kaye Wilkins
 Tom Wright

ED LADENDORFF
 Jim & Carolyn Alley
 Robin Barton
 Phil & Virginia Bennacks
 Lawrence "Yogi" Berra
 Frank Boehly
 Charles Bowker
 Joe Carson
 Hebron & Janice Cutrer
 Janet Dadaian
 Alan L. Davenport
 Gene & Janet Davenport
 Donald Deal
 Yvonne Duvall
 Thomas Evans
 Georganne Freund
 Barbara Haley
 Ruth Hamann
 Robert & Sue Harris
 Harris Design, Inc.
 Debbie Herbst & Ericsson, Inc.
 Philip & Ann Howlett
 Charles Karulak, Ed.D. - The Winston School
 Dick Koon
 Chris & Rhonda Kurz
 Michael & Kathleen Kurz
 Janet Martinez & Diana Gonzales
 L.A. & Shirley Meyers
 Edward & B Ann Oppenheimer
 Paul Parker
 Jim Rizzuto

ED LADENDORFF - CONT'D
 Bart & Gloria Kelly
 Kathy Glascock
 Waid Rogers
 Robert H. & Patricia Smith
 Dr. Barry & Mrs. Suzy Solomon
 Al Stewart
 Charlotte Travis
 Rodney & Belva Williams

WILL BARTH
 Sandra Barth

PAUL R. CLEVINGER
 Dana Krisch

COLIN EMERTON
 Diana Gonzales
 Gloria Kelly
 David Prejza

COL. JAMES MACIA
 Kathy Glascock
 Bart & Gloria Kelly

ETHEL LOUISE LEONARD
 William & Mildred McVey

KRISTI SEVERSON
 Jackie Fremming

MeadowLand Charter School Makes a Difference

In only its second year, the MeadowLand Charter School has expanded. We now offer classes for students from grades 7 through 12 and, on Dec. 18, we graduated our first two seniors!

MLCS is making a difference in the lives of the children we serve both at MeadowLand and within the Boerne ISD. Children who may otherwise struggle to succeed are finding renewed self-confidence and hope for the future within our classrooms. We think this letter from a proud parent sums it up beautifully:

To the Teachers, Administrators and Board Members of MeadowLand Charter School:
 Thank you so much for the excellent job you all do! I wish you could have seen the sheer pride and happiness we saw on our daughter's face when, for the first time in ten years, she made the A/B Honor Role. As the mother of a special needs child, I cannot express how much I appreciate the dedication and true concern you all show for the children at MLCS. Because of your willingness to work with these special children, they all have a brighter future.

Please call (830)331-4094 for more information or to find out how to enroll a student.

JOYOUS OCCASIONS!

MRS. ESTHER VEXLER
 With Love & Admiration,
 Happy 92nd Birthday!
 Howard & Susan Langan

AL ALWEIL
 Richard & Dee Carduner

STEVE BRAHA
 Richard & Dee Carduner

ART & PAM BURDICK
 Robert Cowan

ART & JANET THOMPSON
 Congratulations on your new grand-
 children Reed & Whitney!
 Janet Martinez & Diana Gonzales

LEONARD DAVIS
 Jeffrey & Deanna Holmes
 Mrs. Jean Davis

DR. MARTHA MEDRANO
 Congrats on your Retirement!
 Bart & Gloria Kelly

MADELINE & KAYLA CARDUNER
 Richard & Dee Carduner

AMY & RON HOWEN
 Richard & Dee Carduner

BART & GLORIA KELLY
 Mike & Nancy Berumen

THE RIORDAN FAMILY
 Richard & Dee Carduner

THE HESTER FAMILY
 Richard & Dee Carduner

THE DAVIS FAMILY
 Richard & Dee Carduner

MARIE GILMORE
 Janis Gilmore

DR. VICTOR SALDIVAR
 Happy Birthday!
 Belinda Slavin

**CHRIS SCHRADER
 & WHITNEY KELLY**
 Jo Ann Locke

AUSTIN WHELESS
 Richard & Dee Carduner