

WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE THEN...

By Toni Garrard Clay

This is a special issue for us at Fly the Flag, Texas. It marks our one-year anniversary. The reception we have enjoyed from readers and advertisers in Henderson County has been nothing less than remarkable. This writer hardly goes a day without hearing a kind or encouraging word from someone about the magazine. Thank you, sincerely, for your graciousness. In recognition of the occasion, we are revisiting some of the organizations we spotlighted throughout 2012 as "Flying Our Flag" features and seeing what's happened since then.

Hope Springs Water

In our very first issue, we shared the story of the non-profit bottled water company that had already funded the drilling of three wells in Nicaragua, drilled a well in Uganda and contributed to the drilling of a well in Mexico. Since that story, Hope Springs Water has funded more wells in Nicaragua, Mexico and Belize and has committed to drilling another two or three wells in Belize, one in Nicaragua, one in Mexico and one in Ethiopia.



"We don't want to just poke holes in the ground; we also want to educate people about sanitation and hygiene in the villages where we've dug wells," said company founder Dr. Ted Mettetal. "We're looking at getting grant money so we can pay people to be on the ground there to educate people."

Red Dot 100X

Red Dot Steel Building's charitable program, 100X, continued to give at home and abroad in 2012. A Thanksgiving Food Drive Corporate Challenge with Future Matrix led to 5,279 food items given to the Henderson County Food Pantry. 100X gave \$1,000 to the Athens Soup Kitchen and adopted 20 families for Christmas. Among other things, the 100X Christmas Outreach program also purchased gifts for about 120 school children in the village of San Martin, Mexico.

Athens Thrift Store

The thrift store, located on E. Tyler Street near Whataburger, gives 100 percent of its profits from the sale of donated goods to non-profit groups in Henderson County. At the time of the story in April, Athens Thrift Store had gifted \$30,000 among 11 organizations. Since then, the thrift store has given away another \$10,000 to

nine non-profit organizations. More donations, shoppers and volunteers are always needed.

"I think many people still don't realize that everything we make after paying the bills and wages stays in the county to help people," said Athens Thrift Store founder Drew Douglas. "Everything goes to charity."



Disciples Clinic

In May we featured the Disciples Clinic in Athens, which reported serving as the medical home for some 800 people. The clinic treats Henderson County residents between the ages of 19 and 64 who work at least 20 hours a week, live in a household with a total income of less than twice the poverty level and have no form of health insurance. The patient roster at Disciples Clinic now numbers approximately 1,000 people.

"January 5 marked our third year of operations," said Chief Medical Officer Gary Williamson, M.D. "We operate with a unique bunch of people who are proud of what we're doing. We hope that people will continue to support us with time and money."

The Family Peace Project

The Family Peace Project provides a place of refuge and resources to victims of family violence. "The Family Peace Project absolutely saved my life," a victim of domestic violence told us in June.

In 2012, the organization provided services for 282 adults and 437 children. They have a new website — familypeaceproject.org — online and would love to communicate with more people on their Facebook page. The Family Peace Emporium, a boutique-style resale shop on the back side of the main office on East Corsicana Street in Athens, is closed in order to update the merchandise and will reopen in late February or early March.



The Chapman House

In July we shared the story of Kevin Chapman, who journeyed from addiction and homelessness to recovery and renewed prosperity. He and his wife purchased a building in Eustace, began to remodel it and opened The Chapman House. The non-profit transitional living facility/halfway house utilizes a 12-step recovery program to help men with alcohol and drug addictions. According to Chapman, initial talks have begun with the state's parole department to explore opening more facilities across Northeast Texas. "We keep track of the men who go through our program, and they're staying sober," said Chapman. "We're thrilled about it." At this writing, there were 23 men in the Chapman House.



Ruby's Safe Haven

Ruby's Safe Haven provides a temporary home for women, or women with their children, who need a place to regroup. "My job is to bring them in, get 'em safe and give

them time to find a solution or at least a next step," said Judy Seaton, who operates Ruby's Safe Haven. When we visited in September, a farmhouse was being built to provide a much-needed expansion in housing accommodations, and the search was on for house parents.

"The farmhouse opened just before Thanksgiving. It's so awesome," said Seaton. "We've had eight people flow through there so far." And, she reported, a "house mom" was found about the same time the farmhouse opened.



Henderson County United Way & Henderson County Food Pantry

The United Way set out at the end of 2012 to raise \$175,000 to distribute to non-profit organizations in the county. Mary Waddell, executive secretary for the United Way, reported that commitments have been made totaling about \$144,000. "I'm almost positive that we'll meet our goal by the end of this year," she said.

We also wrote about the Henderson County Food Pantry. Many of the volunteers said the number of people receiving food would increase during the holiday season, and it did indeed. According to volunteer Margaret Austin, the food pantry served a total of 1,027 families in November and December. Donations are always needed to keep the shelves stocked.

There are so many worthwhile organizations across Henderson County that are continuously seeking volunteers. To get connected with the one (or more) that best suits your interests and strengths — or to register an organization to reach prospective volunteers — visit www.texasvolunteers.net. 🇺🇸