

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 12, 2006

Holiday program brings joy to families in need at winter wonderland celebration!

A winter wonderland celebration, with storytelling, holiday caroling, face-painting, food and gifts was enjoyed by more than 30 families residing at the Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center on Tuesday, Dec. 12. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The second annual "Holiday Cheer and Family Fun" holiday program was hosted by District 2 Councilmember Pauline Medrano. Ms. Medrano is passionate about helping people not only in her district but city-wide. She has been a long-time advocate for youth and senior citizens and has dedicated many volunteer hours helping both groups. Her desire to extend a helping hand led to the creation of the "Holiday Cheer and Family Fun" event.

"I am very proud to host for a second time this incredible event," Medrano said. "It is great feeling to know that we are helping the needs of many women and children who are homeless, less fortunate and in transition to self-sufficiency. The goal of the program is to provide an occasion for the families to enjoy a warm, safe, and happy environment."

Many city departments responded to the call to "adopt" families from the Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center to experience the spirit of sharing and brighten the holidays for the families. Gifts were provided by City employees who purchased items on the families' wish list with their own funds.

Financial support provided by AMERIGROUP Community Care and special guest appearance of Ms Brittney Dimes-Miss Texas United Nation 2006.

"AMERIGROUP Community Care is pleased to be involved with the Holiday Cheer and Family Fun event for the second year in a row," said AMERIGROUP Community Care CEO LeAnn Behrens. "Every year, homelessness affects so many people in countless ways. AMERIGROUP appreciates the opportunity to provide a memorable day of enjoyment and excitement for families affected by homelessness,"

Radio One Dallas has also participated in the event for the past two years. "Radio One Dallas is proud to be a part of the 'Holiday Cheer & Family Fun' for the second year in a row," said Shawn Nunn, VP/General Manager Radio One Dallas. "The holidays are all about giving back to the community and this is the least we can do."

According to Dot Brown, Director of programs and operations for the Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center, because of some misfortune, the parents in these families have lost their jobs and their homes. They are unemployed and lacking food, shelter, friends, or any other resources; these families have nowhere to turn. Brown says that is why the Family Gateway Center came into being; to help families help themselves.

"When a family completes the Center's programs they will take with them a new lease on life. Most of the families leave with a job, a place to live, and the personal skills

necessary to survive the challenges of everyday living,” Brown said. When a family has moved back into the mainstream, staff from the Center visits them on a regular basis for the first year in order to provide any necessary follow up help or support and to evaluate their progress during the transition to self-sufficiency.

Additional support for the event was provided by Radio One: 97.9 “The Beat” and 94.5 KSOUL, Church Ministries, World Vision, Dallas District Missionary Society Pepsi, and Smokin’ Chris’ All Occasion Catering. City of Dallas departments including the Mayor and Council Office, Office of Environmental Quality – Keep Dallas Beautiful, Environmental & Health Services Department (Day Resource Center), Dallas Park and Recreation Department and Office of Cultural Affairs.

Entertainment was provided by the Dallas Park and Recreation water safety mascot Lifesaver Duck and Community Against Trash mascot Cool Cat; Dallas Fire Rescue Department 9-1-1/3-1-1 Red E. Fox; Save Dallas Water mascot “Dew;” Dallas Police mascot McGruff the Crime Dog; and Storm Water Management Division, Trinity Trudy.