

Panhandle Promise Project

Case for Support



Mission

Empowering children in the Texas Panhandle to overcome the challenges of parental incarceration

Kimberli S. Phillips, LMSW- Executive Director

1601 S. Georgia

Amarillo, Texas 79102

panhandlepromiseproject@gmail.com

Introduction

The mission of the Panhandle Promise Project is empowering children in the Texas Panhandle to overcome the challenges of parental incarceration. Any child who has a family member on probation, parole, or incarcerated is eligible for services through the organization. The program offers a summer camp, year round, school-based mentoring, and monthly activities as well as assistance for the families in accessing other services available to them in the region.

History

Panhandle Promise Project started as Promise Camp, a one week camp run by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas for children with incarcerated parents. Important as that experience was for the children involved, it was clearly insufficient to break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration, so it was decided to create a separate organization to serve that greater mission. Panhandle Promise Project was incorporated in 2012, and received its 501(c)(3) tax exempt status in 2014.

Panhandle Promise Project is currently working with 30-35 children and their families. The goal is to replicate this model and create other groups of about the same size, since this is a size group that can bond well and be supported by a single staff person with volunteer assistance.

Problem/Needs Statement

The United States has the highest incarceration rates in the world, and one of the largest populations of incarcerated parents (Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2015). According to the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were 1,574,700 people in state and federal U.S. prisons in 2013. 168,280 are in Texas state and federal prisons. Pertaining to the Texas inmates, 154,450 are males and 13,830 are females. In addition to the incarceration statistics, 512,400 are on probation and/or parole, and are required to adhere to community supervision in Texas (Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012). It is estimated that nationally, 1,706,200 minor children have at least one parent in a state or federal prison (Laakso & Nygaard, 2012).

In the Texas Panhandle, it is estimated that 1495 incarcerated parents, with 3588 children that are affected. Specifically, in Potter and Randall counties, the number of incarcerated parents is 1136, with 2726 children affected (Department of Justice, 2014). These

estimates are low as there is a stigma associated with parental incarceration, therefore families are not as willing to self identify and report incarceration rates.

Research suggests that parental incarceration can be more detrimental for their children than divorce (Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Schoicher, & Mincy, 2011). Parental incarceration is known to be a strong risk factor, if not a strong predictor of the likelihood that their children will become part of the juvenile or adult justice system. Other likely outcomes include antisocial behavior, mental health disorders, and drug use. These children have a high probability of failing or dropping out of school. (Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2015)

Vision

Panhandle Promise Project's vision is to create a community where children of incarcerated parents have the tools and resources to achieve their dreams and become contributing members of society. By doing this, it will be possible to break the intergenerational cycle and combat the stigma of incarceration. The program strives to create a nurturing environment that honors and empowers children, and families through education, developing positive relationships, and providing activities that incorporate the children into the community.

Objectives

Panhandle Promise Project provides a year round program where positive adult role models assist the social and personal development of each child and foster the ability of the child to make ethical and moral decisions. The program aims to provide children with the tools they need in order to make better life choices and become contributing members of society. Community activities, team building exercises, self-awareness, and life skills education augment the mentorship program and help the children realize that they are not alone in their struggles. Through these activities they learn positive social interaction and self-expression, essential components of becoming contributing, influential, and effective members of society.

Ethical Guidelines

The Panhandle Promise Project:

- Understands that labels can be both stigmatizing and beneficial, and so we value and celebrate the strengths each child brings to our culture and community

- Believes that youth have the right to discover and experience healthy and positive role models
- Recognizes each child goes through their own life journey of self-discovery with unique interests and beliefs
- Proactively works toward fostering environments and opportunities that empower youth to develop pride and self-esteem
- Works with youth to encourage interests and strengths in developing a bonding relationship with a mentor; therefore, fostering socially acceptable behavior
- Works to educate the community to understand and support the needs of the youth
- Values the participation, suggestions, and innovations of each member, and the practice of candid communication

The Panhandle Promise Project is committed to effective conflict resolutions which will promote organizational development. It will also strive to operate ethically, earnestly, and be accountable in every aspect of the Panhandle Promise Project.

Community Outreach & Partnerships

Panhandle Promise Project collaborates with various agencies in the local community and understands the importance of working with these agencies to effectively serve the children of the Texas Panhandle. Collaboration between local businesses and the Panhandle Promise Project include:

- 211-United Way
- 7 Bar and Grill
- Amarillo Advertisement
- Amarillo Area Foundation
- Amarillo ISD
- AMBUCS
- Aspen Creek
- Ben E. Keith
- Chef Bud
- Chili's
- Document Secure Shredding
- Donut Stop

- Dr. Brian Weis
- Dr. Liana Proffer
- Gilliland Foundation
- Haven Health Clinic
- Hillside Christian Church
- Life Star
- Local Church Groups
- Mr. Gatti's Pizza
- Oeschger Family
- Papa John's
- Potter County Volunteer Fire Department
- RSVP
- Southwest Church of Christ
- Sparky Storage
- St. Andrews Episcopal Church
- STAR Program with TPC
- Street Toyota
- Taco Villa
- Tarleton State University
- Texas Panhandle Centers
- Maverick Boys and Girls Club
- United Supermarkets
- University of Texas at Arlington
- Wal-Mart
- Welcome Pardner
- West Texas A&M University

Programs & Services

1. The program kicks off with a five-day summer camp that provides the kids with an escape from everyday life and a week of educational experiences. The camp program is full of team building exercises, outdoor activities, and leadership training. For many of the children it is the highlight of their year.
2. The school-based mentoring program was developed as a way to maintain a close relationship with the children by providing a nurturing environment and on-going friendships in a judgement free atmosphere. Children are matched with preselected mentors who meet with the kids a minimum of 2 times per

- month in a school atmosphere. The mentors are required to make contact with the kids, eat breakfast or lunch with them at school, and provide a positive influence while creating a secure bond.
3. Monthly activities provide an opportunity for the family and friends of the Panhandle Promise Project to engage in activities, such as skating parties, rock climbing, painting, and movie night, that strengthen the bonds within the family unit. The monthly activities also incorporate life skills classes such as healthy cooking, leadership skills, and money management.
 4. When a parent/guardian is incarcerated and absent from the home, the dynamics of the home change, thus resources tend to be scarce. The Panhandle Promise Project connects the families that qualify for the program to local community resources.

Outcomes

The long term effects of the Panhandle Promise Project are not known at this time as the program is still in its infancy. However, recent statistics show that the program has been effective. This is evidenced by the fact that the program saw its first high school graduate May of 2016. Other indicators of success include the results of the surveys from the summer camp as well as the observation of behaviors exhibited by the children of the program.

The Panhandle Promise Project was developed with evidence based practice, including a comprehensive literature review of the current research about the benefits of mentoring children of incarcerated parents. This information was obtained through the American Institutes for Research as well as multiple other peer reviewed research articles. Currently evaluation tools are being developed in order to track the outcomes of the program. This will be an ongoing process so that the program can be evaluated in order to determine the effects of parental incarceration.

Facilities

Our office is located at 1601 S. Georgia Street in Amarillo Texas. Office work is completed in that location, however developing community partnerships and awareness is vital to the success of the program, therefore, most of the work that is done is out of the office. Training opportunities are provided for the board members, executive director, and the volunteers of the Panhandle Promise Project on a regular basis to maintain the integrity of the program. The Promise camp is located at High Plains Retreat Center in

Amarillo, Texas. This location provides dorm like cabins, a dining hall, arts and craft facility, as well as recreational activities, including a swimming pool, ropes course, large swing, basketball court, playground, volleyball court, archery range, campfire facilities, and a horseshoe pit. In addition to these activities, they are currently building a zip line.

Staffing

The Panhandle Promise Project staff includes an Executive Director who holds an LMSW (licensed master social worker), a board of directors, Social Work interns from West Texas A&M University and the University of Texas in Arlington, as well as multiple volunteers.

The Executive Director is Kimberli Phillips. She received her undergraduate degrees in Social Work from West Texas A&M University in 2002. After graduating with her bachelor's degree, she worked as a medical social worker until entering a graduate program through the University of Texas in Arlington. She successfully completed her Master of Social Work degree 2009. She is currently taking classes at Capella University and is scheduled to complete her PhD in Human Behavior/Counseling in 2018. Kimberli worked as a medical social worker and in academia as an instructor of social work.

Current interns of Panhandle Promise Project program include both undergraduate and graduate level Social Work students. Each intern is provided a holistic experience in developing his or her competencies in the social work field. Administrative and direct practice responsibilities are delineated for each intern; the student is charged with producing effective policies while under supervision of the Executive Director.

Volunteers are an essential component for the success of the Panhandle Promise Project. Each of the volunteers undergoes a criminal background check at the local, state, and national level. Panhandle Promise Project staff interviews every volunteer and uses the best-fit method when matching the volunteer with the mentees. Mentors are provided with training in accordance with evidence-based research on at-risk youth. They are also monitored and are required to report monthly to the Executive Director. Mentors are required to participate in quarterly continuing education training.

Governance

A board of directors oversees the Panhandle Promise Project. The board is made up of diverse community members that have committed to volunteering their time and

expertise to guide the project. The current board for the Panhandle Promise Project consists of the following:

President - Jim Chen, CPA

Executive Director – Kimberli Phillips, LMSW

Vice President – Todd Baxley

Secretary - Mary Emeny

Treasurer – Andrea Morehead

Board Members:

-John Phillips

-Ed Drain

-Andy Cash

-Seth Lujan

-Margaret Jenkins

-Mariah Strong-Woods

Planning and Evaluation

The Panhandle Promise Project currently evaluates its effectiveness and efficiency utilizing biannual surveys. For these evaluations to be reliable, the need for more than one source is required. Each child fills out a survey during summer camp and again after the first of the year, typically in February. The second source of information is obtained from the child’s guardian. Both results are then evaluated for changes in the child's behavior throughout the year. In addition, satisfaction surveys are completed by volunteers in order to monitor volunteer effectiveness and to promote retention. In the future, new evidence based evaluation tools will be developed and utilized in order to track the effect of parental incarceration.

Funding

Funding for the Panhandle Promise Project is obtained through generous community and individual donations. Past funding sources have included private grants, community fundraising events, church donations, community businesses, individual donations, or have been solicited through word of mouth and mailings. An annual music festival was implemented in 2017 to help raise funds for the program as well. Various other fundraising activities are being contemplated by the board.

2016 Budget

EXPENSES	FY 2015 PRIOR YEAR	FY 2016 PROPOSED
Program Salaries	20,000.00	20,000.00
Administration Salaries	5,000.00	5,000.00
Administration	450.00	6,600.00
Mentoring, monthly activities, educational programs	765.92	6,500.00
Grant Writer/Fundraisers	0.00	3,000.00
Marketing/advertising/mail outs	1,075.00	2,000.00
Web fees (website, meeting space, etc.)	62.81	250.00
Camp	18,146.96	14,000.00
Supplies (shirts, totes, bedrolls, crafts)	1,110.60	1,650.00
Office Expenses	393.00	1,000.00
TOTALS	\$47,004.29	\$60,000.00

Ways to Give

Friend of the Promise Project	\$50
Believer of the Promise Project	\$100
Crusader for the Promise Project	\$250
Sponsorship of a camp meal	\$350
Sponsorship of a monthly group activity	\$550
Camp sponsorship	\$1,000
Year round sponsorship of a child	\$2,000
Bronze level sponsorship	\$2,500
Silver level sponsorship	\$5,000
Gold level sponsorship	\$10,000
Platinum level sponsorship	\$20,000

Sponsorships listed are just some examples of how gifts of donations can be used for the Panhandle Promise Project. Any size donation is greatly appreciated and will help the youth of Promise Project.

Acknowledgement of Support

The Panhandle Promise Project acknowledges support in many ways. In the past thank you letters signed by the executive director as well as the board members were sent out along with charitable donation receipts. In addition, we now acknowledge sponsorships on our website and in our newsletter and distribute photographs of the camp and monthly activities to our sponsors. This is one small way we can include our sponsors in the youths, families, and programs growth.

Future Goals

Panhandle Promise Project piloted its program in 2012 with a summer camp. The project expanded in 2013 by including volunteer based mentoring and monthly activities. During this time the Panhandle Promise Project was able to serve 25 children. As the community awareness of the program and the identification of additional community needs increased, the program was able to provide services to an additional 10 children in 2015.

The long term goal of the program is to provide additional mentoring services within the Amarillo and Canyon school districts as well as duplicating the services in other locations within the state. *This is currently being implemented as Amarillo Independent School District has agreed to implement our mentorship program starting August of 2017. We will be starting in 2 elementary schools, in addition to working with the community through the free healthcare clinic, Heal the City.* The quality of the program depends on keeping the ratio of mentors and mentees small so that the children are provided with positive relationships. These relationships are the key to their success.