

# What's Happening In My Region?

**1** On September 21, two of our youth went to our Statewide Youth Leadership Council meeting in Dallas, TX where they shared with one another about their gifts of Hand, Head, and Hearts. We had our first Youth Leadership Council meeting in Amarillo, TX on October 17, 2013. Our mission is to build a sturdy foundation as a youth committee to help one another throughout the aging out process and to become successful adults! If you are interested in becoming part of the statewide or regional YLC, please contact Crystal Surace, the new Region 1 Youth Specialist, at 806-570-6589 or 806-677-1361

**2** Rita A. from Region 2 won the female Foster Youth of the Year Award sponsored by the Child Welfare Boards of Texas. Rita accepted her award in Austin, TX in September. We are getting ready for Texas A&M Commerce college weekend. We look forward to the coming months! Courtney Valdez, PAL Staff 940-235-1938

**3** Region 3's Youth Leadership Council, Change for Today and Tomorrow (C4t2), has been focusing on bringing awareness and recruiting more members for 2014. Several youth in Region 3 were able to tour the University of North Texas and learn about their programs, including P.U.S.H (Preserve Until Success Happens), a program that supports foster care alumni. The members of C4t2 are planning exciting events, activities, fundraisers, community service projects, etc. for the upcoming year. If you want to be a part of it all, be sure to contact me. Krystal Saldivar, Youth Specialist 214-331-7794

**4** Some Region 4 youth participated in a Frisbee Disc Golf Tournament to help raise money for the YLC. PAL is planning upcoming college tours and will be attending the TAMU Commerce College conference in November. Julie Shrode, PAL Staff 903-589-6613

**5** Two representatives attended the Statewide Youth Leadership Council Meeting in Dallas, TX this past September. We also have our young adults preparing for the TAMU-Commerce College Conference this November, where they will get a feel for being in a college class, as well as learn about transitional benefits and have lots of fun! The holiday seasons are right around the corner and we are gearing up for the cold weather and spreading holiday cheer to the seniors in our community with our SOCS Campaign. Stay Tuned! Shaneka Guidry, Youth Specialist 409-951-3368

**6** Got jobs? We do! This year we've had the greatest number of participants, with approximately 90 young adults in our employment internship program as well as various employers on board. To celebrate the success of our interns, we honored all at our luncheon, where both participants and employers were recognized for their outstanding partnerships. Thanks to our very own Sherri Lee, HAY's employment coordinator! If you are in need of assistance in landing that job, please give her a call at 713-250-7026. Gaby Valladares, Youth Specialist 713-884-3300

**7** Region 7 has updated the Calendar of Events. Be on the lookout for all of our camps, tours and conferences this upcoming year! PAL wrapped up one round of National Youth in Transition Database surveys and another one is kicking off. We are working hard to gain knowledge and information about our young people! Youth interested in Gary Job Corps will have the opportunity to view the facilities and find out more information about the program in an upcoming tour, contact your PAL Coordinator for more details. Information will be coming out soon as we are looking forward to our upcoming annual holiday party in cooperation with Partnerships for Children coming up in December held at Austin Park and Pizza. Meagan LeLeux, PAL Staff 512-834-3813

**8** I want to give a huge thanks to Region 8's YAIA and all those who participated with Habitat for Humanity, in making a difference in the lives of families within our community. We participated in a four month project with YLIA and now we are switching gears to the Food Bank. October 26th is Make a Difference Day and Kerrville's young adults have volunteered to help the Salvation Army with their Fall Festival. They are also participating in the Salvation Army's 5k run. Way to go Region 8, keep up the great work! Jennifer Elizalde, Youth Specialist 210-216-1135

**9** Region 9 has been busy with Aging out seminars, the Statewide YLC and other local activities!! The next local YLC meeting will be December 8th in Midland. Of course, College Weekend at Texas A&M in Commerce will be November 7th and 8th. If you would like to attend PEAKS Camp or the Teen Conference next year, please call me. Daniela Ontiveroz, Youth Specialist 432-260-8719

**10** Region 10's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members voted that the summer community project will take place at an animal shelter! We've been working on developing a program and skit for our annual CARE conference this fall, which will aim to educate foster parents and professionals on topics of permanency, stability, gangs, and children's rights. Come out and be a part of this growing revolution towards getting involved in your community, and having your voices heard. Molly Wegner, PAL Staff 915-521-3950

**11** The Teens Advocating for Change Organization from Region 11 has had the opportunity to participate in some very fun activities this summer. The Youth Leadership Council groups from the Laredo and Corpus areas each took a day trip to Six Flags, Fiesta TX. The Youth Leadership Council in the Rio Grande Valley area held a Back-to-School Bowling Party where we honored our very first Case Worker of the Month with a framed certificate and her very own TACO group t-shirt! TACO plans to honor three case workers a month with a certificate and a t-shirt, from the Corpus, Laredo, and Valley areas. We are also going to be honoring our CPS bosses for Boss's Day with cupcakes and certificates! Kassandra Villarreal, Youth Specialist 361-878-7571

# Tips for the holidays



**Stay connected.** Purchase or make cards to send out to family and friends during the holidays. Check with your caseworker or foster parent, to see if it's OK to put the return address on the envelope or if you should use an alternative.

**Healthy Eating Tips.** Eat until you are satisfied, not stuffed. Savor your favorite holiday treats while eating small portions. Plan time for exercise. Exercise helps relieve holiday stress and prevents weight gain.



**Speak up for visits.** If you want to visit with your family or friends, let your foster parent and caseworker know how important visits are to you during the holidays. Don't be afraid to remind them!

**Lend a hand.** Volunteering can unite people with similar values. You can offer to help the Salvation Army with their holiday events, hold reading sessions for kids at your local library, or any other community building activities.

**Connect with your peers.** Visit FosterClub.com and talk with those who may be feeling the winter blues or struggling with the holidays.

## Benefits of Sports

Sports have been a staple in American culture since our country's beginning. From toddlers to the NFL, sports are celebrated and supported because of the fun and variety of benefits that they offer to people

### 1. Physical Health

One of the most noticeable benefits of playing sports is the direct impact it has on an individual's health. With obesity constantly rising, it is of the utmost importance that we take care of our bodies, so we can live long happy lives

### 2. Self Esteem

Not only can you improve your body, but you can improve your mind as well. Organized sports introduce concepts of teamwork, motivation, self-esteem and accountability at an early age.

### 3. Work with Others

The bonds you make in sports will help you grow. You will learn how to solve problems, put the needs of others before your wants, and work as a team.

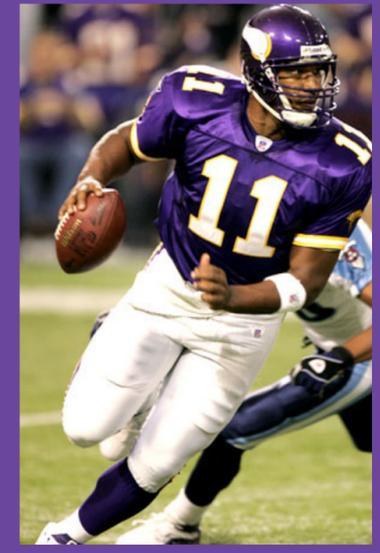
## Daunte Culpepper

It's November and nothing says November like turkey and football! When thinking of football, many great players come to mind, like Daunte Culpepper.

Daunte Culpepper is the 6 '4 265 lbs former quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings. Known for his size, speed, and intelligence in high-pressure situations, Daunte Culpepper was a great quarterback and also a *foster care alumni!*

Just six weeks after he was born, Daunte entered into the foster care system. He credits his success to his foster mother Emma Culpepper, who also fostered 14 others before him. While in the care of Emma, Duante developed a relationship with his biological mother that has grown over time.

From humble beginnings to greatness Daunte Culpepper stands as a role model for foster youth everywhere.



# My PALs



My name is **Jessica** and I'm 16 years old. I am from Eddy, Texas. I love to play sports and my favorite is basketball and my swim team. I want a pen pal because I would like someone to talk to about things and meet a new friend.

## Do You Want a Pen Pal?

Send your responses or new letters to:

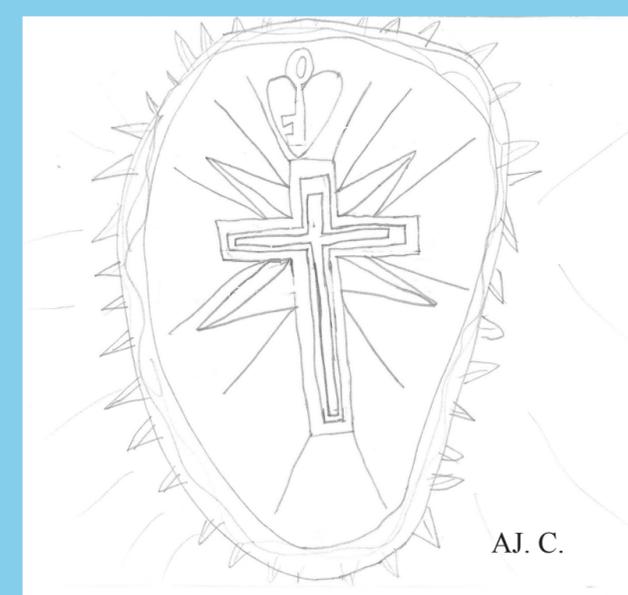
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Don't forget to write your name and address on all materials you send!

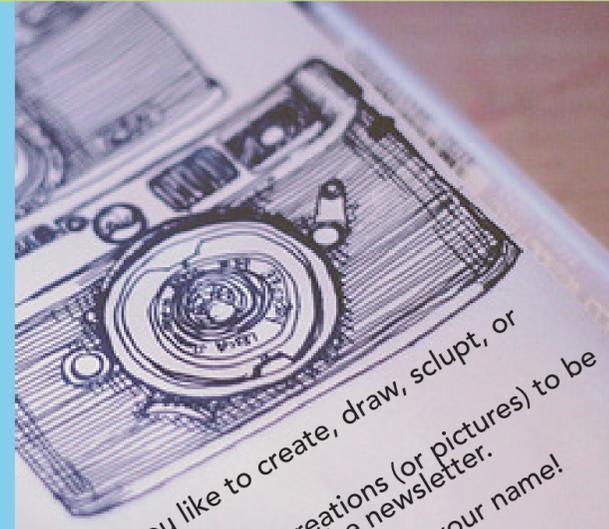
Hi my name is **AJ** and I'm 17. I am a Christian. I like to read, play outside, and play video games. I like to listen to rock, heavy metal, R&B, and hip hop. I was born in New Braunfels, raised in San Antonio, and now live in New Waverly, TX. I would like a Pen Pal.

Hey! I am **S. Allen**, and I am looking for a Pen Pal. I like to play guitar, softball, and am involved in FFA. I am also a very strong believer in God. Thank you!

My name is **Kane**. I am 17 years of age and mexican. I have black hair naturally but have brownish red tips on my fauxhawk. My hobbies are drawing, singing, skateboarding, and basketball. My favorite artists are Bruno Mars, Drake, Greenday, and Eminem. I like to weightlift everyother day if I can, but if I cant I just do total body exercises. I like video games and I want to grow up to either be a tattoo artist or a graphic designer. Im from San Antonio, Texas and I am in 11th grade.



AJ. C.



Do you like to create, draw, sculpt, or paint?  
Send us your creations (or pictures) to be published in the newsletter.  
Dont forget your name!

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**C. Ed Davis PAL Scholarship** - This scholarship is for basic non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. This scholarship was named in honor of C. Ed Davis who, in April 2004, retired as Deputy Director, Legal Services. This scholarship is designed for young adults who, based on certain criteria are interested in entering the field of law.

For more information visit <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/scholarships.asp>

Great Opportunities

If you would like to attend **PEAKS camp 2014** please contact your Region PAL Staff and visit [www.tnoys.org/youth-engagement/peaks-camp/](http://www.tnoys.org/youth-engagement/peaks-camp/) for more information on the program.

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# News For Us

## Texas A&M University Commerce College Conference 2013

The annual Texas A&M University-Commerce Conference was held on November 7th & 8th in Commerce, Texas. Around 70 youth attended the two-day event and were eager to learn everything there is to know about college. The first day included a booth fair, where college students from different student-life organizations shared information about their groups and campus life. Academic department representatives were also present and shared helpful information about choosing a college major.

After the booth fair, youth toured the beautiful campus and learned what each building housed, what places are good for studying, and the best places to have fun. Once the tour was completed, everyone got down to business during the information-packed workshops over financial aid and what a college class actually looks like. These two sessions gave the conference attendees a wealth of knowledge and, to no surprise, an appetite!

A banquet-style dinner was served, featuring fajitas, rice, beans, guacamole, and cheesecake. In addition to the delicious food, two student-led dance groups provided evening entertainment and performed various dance routines for the audience. The conference also featured a panel discussion with Youth Specialists—which are former foster youth that work along others in the foster care system—to share their insights, successes, and struggles with going to college after aging-out of foster care. The Youth Specialists made it clear that going to college, and being successful, is not an easy task; however, they proved that doing it is possible.

The remainder of the first night was left for fun activities. Youth viewed a fantastic planetarium show before heading back to the student activities center, where they had snacks, played pool & other games, and danced to music. Some youth and staff even had the courage to stand in front of a packed room and sing karaoke!

The second day started with a large breakfast before heading out to more workshops. One workshop covered career planning & college major selection. The other session involved college admissions & student life. In both sessions, youth had the opportunity to learn from college staff on how to pursue their academic interests by selecting the best major. The final workshop for the day was about learning what financial resources exist for foster youth. The participants learned all about the Education & Training Voucher (ETV) Program—from how to apply, to what expenses are covered.

The final activity for the conference was a pizza luncheon and presentation of success awards. Youth from each region nominated a peer for a success award during breakfast and voted for the person they believed demonstrated leadership qualities during the conference. People from different regions were very supportive when the youth's names were called to receive their award and prize. The pizza was delicious and plentiful. Once the youth had eaten their fill, everyone said their goodbyes. The conference was a great experience and proved to be very informative and inspirational for many youth.



Karaoke and dancing during the evening activity

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