

EPIPHANY TIDINGS

Volume MMXXII, Issue I
March 2022

Epiphany Ministries of Texas, Inc.
www.texasepiphany.com

Roy's Ramblings:

If you are like me, during this pandemic, you are missing the opportunity to witness, mentor, and enjoy, our Epiphany youth. I know most teams have had prayer meetings and or prayer walks. I spend part of my day everyday praying for many people. In these uncertain times praying for our kids and our ministry is something we can all do most days. Not only is that important, but it may be the most important thing we can do. Please join me in praying for our youth, and our ministry, whenever and wherever you can.

Grace & Peace,

Roy

It's been three weeks since Roy wrote the call to prayer. And for the last three weeks I have struggled with finishing this newsletter. Primarily because I lack the self-control to just sit down and get it done. Having said all that, I'm thinking about how much our world has changed in these three short weeks. I believe the best thing we can do from where we are is pray. I know that Roy would have added the situation and the people who are fighting, suffering, and dying in Ukraine to his call to prayer. So, let us pray like never before, trusting and believing that He will hear our prayers., and answer according to His pure and perfect will. God's peace to each of you, Paula

Inside this issue

- Where are They Now.....2
- PREA Training.....2
- TJJD Reindeer Games.....3
- Epiphany Christmas4-6
- Giddings Thankfulness.....7
- Mart Friendsgiving 2021.....7
- SA-Krier Staying Alive8
- Tanya Rosas Retires.....8
- COVID -19 & TJJD9
- Upcoming Weekends.....9



REFLECTING THE
LOVE OF CHRIST
TO YOUTHFUL
OFFENDERS.

Shop Epiphany @ <https://www.texasepiphany.qbstores.com>



WHERE ARE THEY NOW



Luis G. by Jody Dickinson

Luis G. was a Star on Giddings Epiphany #12 in the Fall of 2008. Luis G. was a young man of very few words while he was at Giddings, trying not to draw attention to himself and was focused on trying to walk the right path to freedom.

I was introduced to Luis G. at the reunions that followed the Summer of 2009, and was drawn to him. Andy Stanley was on a radio program, and he was talking about the lost sheep and asked the question – How deep are you willing to go, how far are you willing to go to find the lost sheep? God had placed Luis G. firmly on my heart and I began to correspond with him, praying that I could walk this path with him, praying, and encouraging him.

When he turned 21 in 2011, Luis G. was sentenced to 40 years and was transferred to the Clemens Unit. From the very start Luis G. was reaching out to others in the unit, going to church, playing in the worship band. He participated in Toastmasters and learned about public speaking. After a few years Luis G. was moved to the Darrington Unit, where he applied to be enrolled in a program that provided a college education in Biblical Studies. He was accepted and completed the program in four years.

Recently I received an email from Joe, a fellow Giddings Epiphany volunteer, that currently serves as a voluntary Chaplain's Assistant at the Polunsky Unit. Joe shared that he was sitting in the Chaplain's office, and began talking to one of the new field ministers, Luis G. He has known Luis G. for a while but had never had the opportunity to talk with

him about his faith walk. He was curious as to his calling and what brought him into field ministry.

Luis G. told his story to Joe about being raised by practical atheists, and then being exposed to Jesus through Epiphany in 2008 when he was incarcerated at TYC Giddings. Luis G. then shared that the person who really planted the seed of his faith was me! He shared that we had corresponded via U.S. mail and JPay over the years and haven't seen each other since the Giddings days.

Joe confirmed that the seed that had been planted has born tremendous fruit. Luis G. has walked and talked into the lives of many men, along with 4 other Field Ministers in the Polunsky Unit (housing approximately 3,000 inmates) and has graced the in-house worship band with his guitar playing.

Luis G. is not the young boy I remember from Giddings but has turned into a powerful man of God. Luis G.'s story is a reminder to us all that God continues to transform our boys long after the music fades on an Epiphany weekend.

Jody Dickinson

Epiphany Volunteer Since 2009.

("Where Are They Now" is a new addition to the quarterly newsletter which requires input from our Epiphany community to continue. Please forward your stories to pjc903@aol.com.)

Online PREA Training...A Must Do!

With hopes of being allowed once again to serve on an Epiphany weekend, please ensure you are current on PREA training, you will not be allowed on campus until this has been completed. You can take this brief course online: Go to: www.tjtd.texas.gov

***Side note, when using Internet Explorer you may have trouble at step #5, but when using Google Chrome, you can go through all the following steps fine. The online Training for Select TJJD Staff or Volunteers is about 3/4 of the way down the page, just keep scrolling down and you will see it.

1. Click Operations in the banner at the top of the page.
2. Click Juvenile Justice Training Academy on the sidebar menu
3. Click the Professional Training tab
4. Select Online Training for Select TJJD Staff or Volunteers
5. Click "Listen" next to the course title ***You only have to complete the PREA training module, not all four***
6. Fill in the registration form - for your job title, type "Volunteer"
7. Please email the Certificate to your facility Volunteer Coordinator once you have completed the training.
(Post Epiphany, email to Cindy Johnson at popnanashae@windstream.net)

ONLINE
TRAINING





Texas Juvenile Justice Department Hosts Annual Reindeer Games

December 27, 2021

Christmas Day is past, but young people at TJJD will be enjoying for quite some time the big prizes they won in the annual Reindeer Games holiday dorm decorating contest.

The first place “Golden Stocking Award” winners – a tie between Ayres Halfway House, in San Antonio, and Courage Dorm B at the Ron Jackson campus, in Brownwood – will be receiving a new gaming system and two board games of their choice.

The “Silver Rudolph Award” goes to Dorm J-3 at the McLennan County campus, in Mart. This dorm will receive a new gaming system and two board games chosen by the boys.

Third place winners of the “Bronze Sleigh Award” – also a tie, between Gainesville State School’s Dorm 17/18 and Mart’s Dorm G-2 – will receive two board games of their choice.

Executive Director Camille Cain announced the winners and offered her congratulations to all, including the many dorms that participated but did not place in the agency-wide decorating contest. All dorms that participated will receive a pizza dinner party (or equivalent substitute dinner of their choice).

TJJD's Youth Experience Leader Elaine Windberg manages the annual contest, which was bigger than ever this year.



RJ's Courage Dorm B shared first prize with Ayres House.



More from RJ's Courage Dorm B, co-winner of the first prize Golden Stocking Award.



Gainesville's Dorm 17/18 shared the Bronze Sleigh Award, with its Grinch theme.



More from Gainesville's Dorm 17/18.



Mart's Dorm J-3 took the Silver Rudolph



Mart's J-3 Dorm, festooned with trees, packages and a cozy fireplace.



More from Mart's J-3 Dorm.



Mart's Dorm G-2 also embraced a Grinch theme, and shared the Bronze



More decor from Mart's J-3 Dorm.

EPIPHANY CHRISTMAS

As Epiphany volunteers one of the opportunities we have to share the love of Christ comes at Christmas. We know that this will be a different Christmas for most of the youth at TJJD facilities who are probably spending their first Christmas away from family and traditions. Through the generosity of the Epiphany Ministries of Texas State Board, each UAC is gifted \$500.00 to use as they choose to bring Christmas Cheer to the youth we serve at TJJD facilities. Following is a glimpse of how each UAC chose to send a little Agape love to the youth.

You may notice that at some facilities Epiphany volunteers were allowed inside to visit with the youth. Giddings Administrative Assistant, Janet Sheelar, shares the following explanation on how visits are being handled, "I also want to clarify about campuses being open for volunteers as I know some of our volunteers go to many of our facilities. TJJD is open to volunteers but the individual Superintendents determine if they are allowed at their campuses. They cannot have an outbreak of Covid and have to have the staff to conduct the events and programs we are wanting to have. For example, if Mr. Parks approves Giddings Volunteers to conduct an Epiphany Retreat, that doesn't mean the Mart facility is open to have an Epiphany retreat. They may not have the staffing. That will be determined by their Superintendent."

GIDDINGS

Epiphany volunteers, accompanied by Santa Claus (!) came to Giddings State School last week to distribute love and cheer and some wonderful gifts to all the youth.

The gifts – cocoa packets, candy canes, pajama pants and socks and hygiene items like body wash – were much appreciated.

The volunteers handed out gifts at each dorm, visited with youth and wrapped up by singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas!" What a wonderful day.

*-Janet Sheelar, Volunteer Services Coordinator,
Giddings State School*



POST



Post Epiphany was truly blessed to be able to supply Christmas gifts to the kids at the center.

The boys received and opened our gifts, along with gifts from the staff, on Christmas Day.

In celebration of the day they were allowed longer phone time with family members.

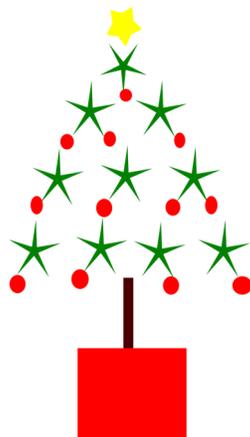
We can't express how much we enjoy working with this great Epiphany team.



EVINS

Volunteers in the Rio Grande Valley provided a classic Christmas meal of tamales, rice, beans and cookies and cake for the young people at the Evins campus.

Volunteers were delighted to serve the meal in person this past weekend, after their long hiatus from campus during the 2020/2021 pandemic. The volunteers delivered the meals to the youths' dorms and also sang carols with the boys during the Christmas parties.



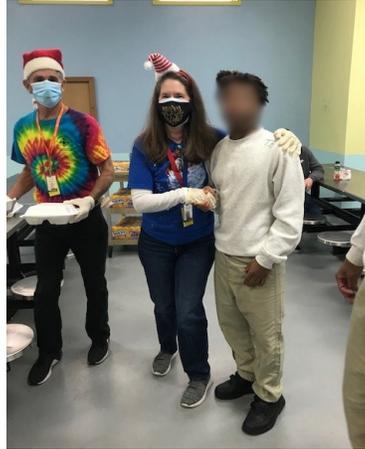
In addition to the council, the groups contributing to the meal and phone call gift cards included: Catholic Dioceses of Brownsville, Our Lady of Sorrows, Christ on the Cross, Epiphany Ministries of Texas, and Apostolados of Mission, Tx.

Photos: Christmas party in a dorm; Epiphany Volunteer, Olga Lozano talking with a youth.

MART

We had a great day on the 23rd serving the youth. The Mart Epiphany team provided BBQ sandwiches, Sausage links, potato salad, chips, drinks and cookies to the youth at the McLennan County facility. The Council graciously paid for the sausage links. The boys and staff came by dorm and it was great seeing their faces and greeting them. Many of them thanked us. We had four Epiphany team volunteers, our two wonderful volunteer coordinators and some staff making and handing out the meals. Michelle Havranek, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Houston came by to help and to see the youth and Santa. They had a BIG case worker as Santa. The boys were all smiles. And appreciated us being there. Actually got to shake their hands, pat their backs, and smile under our masks.... It was a blessing.

- Kate Mellina



SA-KRIER

Our San Antonio [Epiphany SA-Krier](#) family will recognize what's happening in these photos. The gifts for the kids at Krier were wrapped by our amazing Judson Rockets. At first they didn't understand what kid would want soap and dryer sheets for Christmas, but when we explained that these gifts were headed to teens just like them who would be away from their families this Christmas because they were incarcerated juvenile offenders, one of our special needs girls said, "That's so sad. I hope they can be with their family for next Christmas." She was so sincere that it made me tear up just a little. I love our Rockets for their kind, kind hearts.

- Lisa Ortiz



Thankful for Epiphany

The Thanksgiving meal was a huge success. The "Big Dogs" (Admin) went around and served all the youth. The youth were very excited to see Mr. Parks, Ms. Tilley and Ms. Motley serving them their dinner. The youth also went on and on about how great the food tasted, gave them a great sense of a home cooked meal. Thank you all

so much for helping to make this happen. With the help of Barbara Graves from the Recreation Dept., the youth created a "Thankful Tree". The youth and staff were asked to write what they were thankful for on leaves and we grew our tree. Visit the TJJD webpage for more pictures.



Mart Celebrates Friendsgiving 2021

The past couple of years have been difficult for the Mart Epiphany community. They have experienced many health issues and surgeries, and loss. Along with the rest of us they've been dealing with COVID and the inability to go inside the facility and minister to the youth. They were missing the special moments we share when we are able to be together. And they decided it was time to do something about it, so Friendsgiving 2021, happened!

Following are a few comments on the event... "For those of you who were not able to be at the Friendsgiving gathering today, we missed you. And you missed some amazing love and hugs!



Oh what a blessing it was to see everyone after so long being apart! And oh the hugs!



Good conversations, lots of laughter, and oh the hugs! And the food! Thank you, Randy Pitcock and crew! It was delicious! And oh the hugs!!!



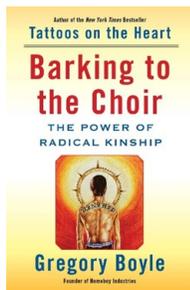
And thank all of you who made Jill feel so welcome and cared about. She needed you today. This is a unique family, and I am so thankful to be a part of it. I love you dearly! AND OH THE HUGS!!! And Phyllis and Jimmy were there! That was a special highlight and blessing! Oh and the hugs!" - *Sandy Kimbro*

"Kerry Kinney did a devotional, and her granddaughter helped... then later she was caught singing with Dennis and Kathy Rejeck's granddaughter. too cute!" - *Kate Mellina*



SA-Krier... Staying Alive...

[Epiphany SA-Krier](#) has started a Book Club (open to anyone) they had their first discussion on the book: *Barking to the Choir*, on Saturday, February 12. If you are interested in joining them in the future -- please private message Lisa Ortiz through the Epiphany SA-Krier Facebook page.



Our [Epiphany SA-Krier](#) team had a White Elephant Gift exchange party. The fellowship was wonderful. Here are a few pictures from our gathering.



We Will Miss You... Congratulations

Tanya Rosas, retired as Mart's Community Relations Coordinator on Jan. 31 after nearly 22 years with TYC/TJJD.



Reflecting on her years at TJJD, Rosas sees a robust corps of volunteers as vital to a healthy juvenile justice operation, enriching the social environment and bringing songs, games, spiritual guidance and sometimes, just an attentive

ear. Rosas says the volunteers provided a nurturing atmosphere that coincidentally mirrors the agency's current focus on trauma-informed care under the Texas Model set of reforms.

Speaking of volunteers, Rosas said, "The kids were a long way from home, and they didn't have a lot of family coming around...They responded warmly to the older volunteers who turned up to mentor them and organize weekend events and spiritual activities. The volunteers were like surrogate grandparents and the kids were eager for the positive attention." Rosas sees a robust corps of volunteers as vital to a healthy juvenile justice operation, enriching the social environment and bringing songs, games, spiritual guidance and sometimes, just an attentive ear...The staff looks forward to it as much as the kids do. I can't tell you how many times our volunteers have prayed

with staff when something was not going well in their life...Volunteers help the agency strengthen ties to the community and show the youth how they can contribute to the wider world."

Epiphany Ministries of Texas volunteer, Kate Mellina, said Tanya did a great job of facilitating their work by keeping in close touch and helping brainstorm activity ideas with them.

"She has been so helpful and appreciative of all her volunteers and mentors," Mellina said. "We have always kept the lines of communication open. We email or call whenever one of us thinks of something we can do for the other, or the youth and staff.

I hope and pray we can get another wonderful volunteer coordinator to fill her big shoes. We will miss her."

TJJD Response to COVID-19

As an agency focused on public safety, the highest priority of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department is to protect the youth in our care and our dedicated employees. TJJD remains in daily contact with the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Texas Department of State Health Services, and the Texas Department of Emergency Management to remain fully informed and respond to events as the situation changes. Additionally, the agency’s leadership team has been meeting throughout each day to ensure services while maintaining safety. The 2,000 employees of TJJD are committed to doing their part to help Texas beat COVID-19.

Positive Youth Cases

Total number of TJJD youth who have tested positive: **693**
 Number of positive youth cases at secure facilities: **654**
 Number of positive youth cases at halfway houses: **39**
 Number of COVID-19 tests administered to TJJD youth: **5,581**

Positive Staff Cases

Total number of TJJD staff members who have tested positive: **974**
 Number of positive staff cases at secure facilities: **889**
 Number of positive staff cases at halfway houses: **85**

Positive Youth Cases by Facility:

Evins Regional Juvenile Center: **64**
 Gainesville State School: **54**
 Giddings State School: **172**
 McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility: **268**
 Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex: **96**
 Halfway Houses: **39**

Positive Staff Cases by Facility:

Evins Regional Juvenile Center: **171**
 Gainesville State School: **109**
 Giddings State School: **173**
 McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility: **222**
 Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex: **214**
 Halfway Houses: **85**

Totals reflect positive tests for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic thru 3/10/22.

Upcoming Epiphany Weekends

Facility	W/E#	Date	LD	ALD	WC	SD	B. Rep
Brownwood	E 40	Delayed	Trish Bull	?	?	?	Roy Bradshaw
Ellis	E 1	Delayed	Neil Atkinson	Joe Lee	Dan Swanson	Steve Wilson	Roy Bradshaw
Evins	E 11	Delayed	Jeff Eaton	Graciano Castaneda	Raul Rodriguez	Hamilton Musser	?
Gainesville	E 41	Summer '22	Steve Tacker	Patty Jackson	Nichole Collingsworth	Steven Miller	?
Giddings	E 35	July 21-24	Andrew Perry	Shirley Perry	Sharon Marks	Mike Jones	?
Krier	E 28	Delayed	Chrissie Smith	?	Mary Helen Silva	?	?
Mart	E 32	Delayed	Mike Mellina	Leeann Radell	?	?	?
Post	E 26	Delayed	Paula Swanson	Larae Greer	Mark Wright	E.C. Harlan	?>

Future State Board Meeting Dates for 2022:

May 21 (possibly F2F), August 27, November 1