



CENTER FOR HOUSTON'S FUTURE

# FUTURE FOCUS

Summer 2009

## A Letter from Our President: Quality of Life in Our Region



**W**e achieve Quality of Life when social, economic, health, and environmental conditions combine to foster human and community development.

The confluence of these three factors is one of the many things the Center for Houston's Future strives to promote for the Houston region.

A vitally important legacy is being created by Center Graduates through their involvement in a variety of organizations. This issue contains examples of three Graduates who are addressing critical issues facing our region. Charles O'Connell, a 2000 Forum Grad, has become deeply involved in addressing the needs of the homeless; while George Postolos and Philip Franshaw, 2004 Forum Grads, have established a Management Leadership for Tomorrow chapter in Houston, that focuses on minority students still in high school.

In the same manner that our Graduates address these quality of life issues, the Center remains on target updating its Quality of Life Environment Indicator Report, the results of which are due in January 2010. Our work, both direct and indirect, helps ensure that our future is a choice, not a fate.

## Closing the Gap: Where We Want to Be

By Donna Rybiski, Director, Strategic Initiatives & Community Engagement

**T**he Quality of Life Research Unit at the University of Toronto defines quality of life as "the degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life." They address the human dimensions of quality of life, and although their framework is not necessarily the same as that used to judge regional quality of life, it still deserves close examination because they are inexorably linked.

The study developed a conceptual framework with three categories to describe quality of life: *being, belonging and becoming*. "*Being*" addresses who a person is – physical health, nutrition, self-esteem and personal values. "*Belonging*" connects us to our surroundings - home, school, work, neighborhood, family and friends. Lastly, "*becoming*" speaks to our hopes and aspirations of becoming more complete human beings.

The Center recognizes that it is extremely important for individuals to lessen the gap between what their life is and what it can become. It encourages and actively supports its Leadership Graduates to become involved in issues that help people realize their possibilities, including quality education, decent housing, sustainable neighborhoods, and other critically important factors. In so doing, the Center is intimately engaged with improv-

ing the quality of life of our region's citizens.

For its part, the Center is updating three Indicators of our region's environmental health: parks & trails, trees and air quality. Each of these affects not just our region's physical profile, but each individual's quality of life as well.

Trees provide relief from an otherwise flat landscape. A study by the Human-Environment Research Lab found that contact with nature helps reduce aggression and violence. Fewer crimes may occur against people and property.

Studies at the University of Illinois have shown that parks used as common recreational space encourage neighborly interaction. They foster social ties that contribute to healthy individuals and communities.

Who can deny the importance of air quality to our health and well-being? It is a fact that where the air is poor, there is a higher incidence of respiratory diseases and some cancers.

Everything that the Center does is designed to stimulate discussion and action to close the gap between where our region wants to be and where it is. At the same time, we seek to close the gap between where you are, personally, and the boundless possibilities of your life. ■

## Houston's Road Home

By Charles J. O'Connell, 2000 Forum Graduate

I had the privilege of participating in the first Leadership Forum offered by the Center for Houston's Future. In it, we were exposed to accomplished community leaders who challenged us to step forward and tackle Houston's most difficult long-term issues.

In my case, my personal 'Learning Journey' didn't present itself until I retired several years later. It was then that another 2000 Forum Grad, Central Houston President, Bob Eury, alerted me to an opportunity to help make the region more effective at preventing and ending homelessness. That is how I joined him as Board member of the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County; I now serve as its Board Chair.

Despite the considerable efforts to help avoid homelessness, each year approximately 30,000 men, women and children lose their homes in Harris County. On any given night, there are more than 5,000 adults and children sleeping in emergency shelters or in the street. Obviously, natural disasters like Hurricane Ike, compounded by the bleak unemployment statistics, have inflated this number.



While poverty is common among homeless cases, financial crises are not the only situations that push people over the edge into homelessness. Indeed, the bus to homelessness often makes many stops. Examples include women and child-

ren forced to flee domestic violence; individuals with chronic physical and mental illnesses; and persons with alcohol and drug dependencies. There are also those discharged into homelessness from prisons, hospitals and foster care who lack housing, medical, or employment support to make it on their own; of particular concern are our armed forces veterans, a group disproportionately represented

among the homeless in Houston.

Homeless individuals and families in our community need a better "road home." They need to be rapidly re-housed and given help to generate the income needed to maintain their housing. Chronically homeless individuals require specialized housing with supportive services to stabilize their lives, regain hope, and help them with their physical and mental health afflictions.



Courtesy KHOU-TV

The Coalition for the Homeless addresses these needs by working with public and private funders, service providers, and policy makers, to develop strategies to prevent and end homelessness.

The Coalition is drawing heavily from Center graduates to assist in making a better "road home" a reality in our community. We have only to look at what other Forum Graduates have accomplished to develop the inspiration and confidence to press forward with this challenge. An important contribution can be made to the Center's vision of making the Houston region a top global community by helping the most vulnerable in our community avoid homelessness. ■

*Charles O'Connell currently serves on the Boards of the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County Board, and Central Houston, Inc.*

### Graduates Add Houston Flavor to MLT

*By Sandra Wegmann, based on interviews with George Postolos and Phillip Franshaw, 2004 Forum graduates*

This was a heck of a learning journey. On the eve of the 2004 Business/Civic Leadership Forum, Phillip Franshaw and George Postolos, the latter who was at that time President and CEO of the Houston Rockets, shared a late night conversation about leadership, race relations and the economy. The conversation inspired them to undertake a Learning Journey on business/minority leadership. “We talked about the importance of cultivating leadership in young people. We spend so much time talking about attracting talent from other communities. We need to identify and retain talent here at home,” said Franshaw.

The project undertaken by George Postolos and Phillip Franshaw, resulted in the creation of the Houston-based Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT).

“We spend so much time talking about attracting talent from other communities. We need to identify and retain talent here at home.”

*Phillip Franshaw*

At that time, the national nonprofit Management Leadership for Tomorrow recruited the best and the brightest minority students to their programs, with the goal of increasing the presence of minorities in fast track entry-level jobs and major graduate business schools, and as preparation for leadership positions. Classmates Postolos and Franshaw wanted to build an MLT program locally, designed for Houston’s needs. Specifically, they wanted to recruit youth during their high school years, instead of waiting until college. “We want these kids to stay in Houston and give back to the community as business leaders,” said Postolos. They sought a high touch program that would catch youth early in the pipeline. MLT recruited successful minority students, and used their resources to take them to the next level of opportunities.

After convening the education powerhouses of the day to investigate the feasibility of creating an MLT Program in Houston, the group presented their

Learning Journey results at the Center’s forum. “The leadership forum worked the way it was supposed to work. The Center succeeded in getting the right people in the room,” said Postolos.

The following summer, the Center grads launched the first MLT class of high school students, with a shoe string office at the Center, and no major funding. This Spring, the nonprofit is welcoming its 5<sup>th</sup> class of students, who will finish in the year 2010. Center grad Barbara Paige recently took over as the MLT Executive Director.



The Houston MLT program is intentionally modeled after the Center’s Business/Civic Leadership Forum. Students undertake “Learning Journeys” under the supervision of experts and participate in “fishbowl” seminars to learn about business and civic leadership. With more than 300 Career Prep alumni and 500 MBA Prep alumni to date, MLT is creating a generation of business and community leaders that will have the skills, relationships, and commitment needed to make a difference in their communities.

“It’s not about getting smarter. It’s about action. ”

*George Postolos*

From the beginning, MLT Houston prioritized civic leadership alongside with career development. According to Postolos, the Center for Houston’s Future Business/Civic Leadership Forum created a space that generated a high level of commitment. “It’s not about getting smarter. It’s about action.” ■

*\*George Postolos is CEO of The Postolos Group; Philip Franshaw is Director of Alternative Investment and Real Estate for Cockrell Interests, Inc.*

### Center Annual Luncheon

Special thanks to Luncheon Chair, **Linda Addison** for her leadership of a fantastic event. Nearly 600 people were present as Keynote Speaker Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell challenged businesses to help “repair” our public school system, and we honored our own Advisory Council Member, **Ned Holmes**, with the Eugene H. Vaughan Civic Leadership Award. The financial success of the luncheon has provided us with a great start to what we know will be a challenging year. ■

### Spring 2009 Leadership Forum

Session II of the Spring 2009 Business/Civic Leadership Forum took place on April 16 and 17. The Learning Journey topics that emerged were: High Tech/Commercialization; Transportation and Urban Development; Quality Access to Healthcare/Prevention & Wellness; Access to Capital to Transform Houston into a Recognizable World-Class City/Region; Education (Reform Best Practices, Pre-school, and Superintendent Search).

The Leadership Committee is busy reviewing nominees for the Fall 2009 Business/ Civic Leadership Forum. Our Forums provide the premier opportunity to groom your key employees for greater effectiveness in their professions and in the community. To nominate someone for the Fall Forum in October, please click contact the Center at 713-844-9323. ■

### Graduate Watch Party

A ‘Watch Party’ for Center Grads was held during the airing of our live televised forum *Houston Have Your Say on the Economy* on May 7, at the home of Center Grad Judge **Caroline Baker**, who graciously opened her doors to fellow graduates. An enthusiastic discussion of the show followed, facilitated by Grad **Neena Newberry**, who posed some questions to the group.

For the rest of the scoop on *Houston Have Your Say on the Economy*, please turn to page 5. ■

### Mayoral Candidates Breakfast

Many accepted the challenge to be a part of the next era of Houston’s future as they participated in a

dialogue with the Houston mayoral candidates at a breakfast held at the Four Seasons Hotel on June 12. Prior to the forum, coffee with the candidates was available with the purchase of VIP tickets.

The Candidates’ Forum was co-sponsored by the Center and City Hall Fellows, American Leadership Forum, Leadership Houston, and the United Way of Greater Houston’s Project Blueprint, along with media partner Houston Community Newspapers. ■

### Scenario Planning Graduate Workshop

This year, the Center has embarked on a significant scenario planning project critical to the future of the region. The results will inform policy makers and engage a representative section of our community in an exploration of the dynamic forces shaping our region’s future in thirty to fifty years.

The proven methodologies of scenario planning will enable us to focus on the “big picture”, and clarify the critical choices we must make today to ensure the health and prosperity of our region tomorrow

In keeping with this objective, the Center held an exclusive time for Center Grads on May 26 to take part in a Scenario Planning Workshop with our London-based, internationally-known consultant, Dr. Barbara Heinzen. Almost 40 Forum Grads attended the workshop where they helped to analyze data collected from more than 50 individual interviews and four focus groups.

The results of the Graduate Workshop fed directly into the work of the Scenario Building Team, which worked intensely during a retreat later in the week. ■

### Scenario Building Team Retreat

A Scenario Building Team Strategic Retreat was held from May 28-30 at Camp Allen, during which the Team analyzed more than 70 interviews. This team was selected from a diverse demographic group of volunteers from all parts of our region who will help to flesh out plausible scenarios.

Similar strategic retreats will follow during the next 18 months as data continues to be analyzed, research is compiled, and the scenarios of the greater Houston region’s future become more distinct. ■

### Houston Have Your Say on the Economy Speaks Directly to Public

The Center co-sponsored with HoustonPBS and Houston Community Newspapers an hour-long televised community forum to provide information on how the economic downturn is affecting the Houston region. Professionals, such as Joel Wagher of Workforce Solutions, and Sydney Staley, co-owner of Houston City Personnel, talked about which industries to target for jobs, strategies for landing jobs, and their views on the downturn.

During the show, HoustonPBS moderator Patricia Gras painted a picture of how the region has been hurt by the recession, and in return received both optimistic and solemn responses. Walter Ulrich, President and CEO of Houston Technology Center, presented a bright future with opportunities in nano, bio, and other technologies. Economist Barton Smith noted that it took Houston a while to get into the recession, and the region may wait a while to get out. Long-time developer E.D. Wulfe defended the "Houston Factor," an argument that the region's unique mix of gusto and business would help us to bounce back quickly. In contrast, Bob Sanborn, CEO of Children at Risk, warned that nearly half of HISD students are not finishing high school. United Way CEO Anna Babbini said that the number of families calling their telephone help lines in need of food has increased.

This Economy Segment of 'Houston Have Your Say' follows two previous forums on immigration and regional growth. Houston Community Newspapers and Houston Public Radio partner with the Center for Houston's Future and HoustonPBS to produce the series.

To access the online resource library on jobs, training, education and statistics that was compiled, visit <http://www.houstonpbs.org/haveyoursay/>. The next public forum is planned for fall 2009. ■

### Univision Radio Interviews Rick Jaramillo

May was a busy media month for the Center. Board Member **Rick Jaramillo** was interviewed by Univision Radio's host Renzo Heredia. They talked about the Center's role in the well-being and future of the Houston region. If you would like to listen to the interview, please visit the media section at <http://www.centerforhoustonfuture.org/>. ■

### Congratulations to:

Grad **Barbara Paige**, who was recently hired by the Houston branch of Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) as its new Executive Director.



Grad and Board Member **Rick Jaramillo** who was named the Central Region Executive for Global Community Impact at the Bank of America. In this role, he will oversee strategic market planning, community

development, and maximizing business development opportunities, among other important functions.

Grad **Andrew Bland III**, who retired last month from the Federal Bureau of Investigation after 23 years of service.



Board Member **Dan Bellow**, who is the newest inductee into the Heavy Hitters Hall of Fame, a distinction conferred by a committee of commercial real estate professionals under the direction of the Houston Association of Realtors. Mr. Bellow is president of the Houston operation of Jones Lang LaSalle, Inc., a global real estate services firm.

Grad **David Ruiz**, who has been named Senior VP for market development at Bank of America.

Grad and Board Member **Linda Addison**, for being the recipient of the prestigious 2009 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, which recognizes the accomplishments of lawyers who have achieved professional excellence and paved the way to success for other women lawyers. Ms. Addison was also named the Partner-in-charge of Fulbright & Jaworski's office in New York.

Grad and Board Member **Ed Wulfe**, who is being honored by Blueprint Houston for tirelessly advocating for an improved quality of life and place in the City of Houston.

Grad **Frances Vallejo**, who is now the Vice President and Treasurer at ConocoPhillips.

Grad **Carla Wyatt, PhD**, who was named to the Advisory Board of the Bayou Preservation Association. ■



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