



*HISPANIC AUSTIN LEADERSHIP*

Civic Engagement Team 2012 – 2013

Meredith McClure

Shayna Molinar

Albert Pomales

Marisela Rios

Jon Salinas

Liliana Valenzuela



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## Executive Summary

According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, the *student dropout rate*, which represents the percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED certificate) is unfavorable to the Hispanic population. In 2010, the following dropout rates were reported:

- White: 5.1%
- Black: 8.0%
- Hispanic: 15.1%

In addition, the Hispanic population in Central Texas has been growing rapidly. Between 2000 and 2009, there was a significant jump of 62 percent. Over the same period, the total population in the Greater Austin area grew by 35 percent. Austin is home to more than 112,000 Latino children under the age of 10. These children represent 43 percent of all youth in that age demographic in the Greater Austin Metropolitan Area.

Hispanics account for 35 percent of all children up to the age of 17; 33 percent of young adults 18 to 24 years of age; and nearly 40 percent of those ages 25 to 34. Hispanic students represent over 60 percent of the Austin Independent School District (AISD) student population. Nearly 30 percent of AISD students are considered Limited English Proficiency students.

In the Nation, Texas ranks 15<sup>th</sup> for teens dropping out of school and not completing their education. According to latest AISD data, seven out of the nine failing public schools are found East of IH 35.

The City of Austin 2011 report card among disadvantaged students stated that:

- 25% are more likely to drop out of school
- 40% are more likely become teen parents
- 60% are more likely to never attend college or vocational training
- 70% are more likely to commit a violent crime

The task of the Civic Engagement (CE) team was to develop a project that would address these disparaging statistics impacting our Austin youth. The project would help to empower and educate Austin's young future leaders to make a positive impact in their communities – be it at home, at school, on a team, in their neighborhood and beyond.

From this desire to serve our youth, **SWAG: Students Working to Achieve Greatness**, was established at John H. Reagan Early College High School in Northeast Austin.

**Mission Statement:** Leadership discovery through civic engagement and participation.

**Vision:** To prepare our youth to be the confident leaders Austin's growing community demands.



## Project Design

**Summary:** SWAG is a leadership program developed to educate and empower the youth of Reagan High School through business, community and civic awareness. SWAG seeks to inspire and encourage the students in the program to explore concepts of leadership, business and financial development and explore the opportunities for civic engagement.

Through these programs, SWAG is determined to not only educate our youth but to make them aware that they have the same opportunities for success as everyone else. Success is not reserved for certain people, it is instead available to all who are determined, motivated and committed regardless of the person's background or walk of life.



**Participants:** With help from Coach Keith Carey and a dedicated team of educators at Reagan High School, a Title I institution, over forty students were nominated for the SWAG program. Nineteen of the nominated students made the decision to participate in the program. Some of these students overcame numerous overwhelming challenges to make the 7:30 am session start time. These challenges included riding public buses early in the morning to get to the school on time to finding a babysitter for a young child. Seventeen of the nineteen students attended classes on a consistent basis, contributing to a 94 percent success rate in attendance. In the concluding survey, all the students stated they could now achieve what they once perceived as impossible and that they would recommend SWAG to everyone.

**Spring Program:** The SWAG program consisted of four unique sections. These included an introductory meeting, five structured classroom sessions, a company tour and a program graduation:

- Meet and Greet: Civic Engagement Team, February 25, 2013
- Character Development: Gentry Anderson, AXA Advisors, February 26, 2013
- Civic Participation: Mary González, State of Texas, February 27, 2013
- Education: David Contreras, LaunchPad, March 5, 2013
- Business SWAG: Rodrigo Castilleja, Farmers Insurance, March 6, 2013
- Finance: Emmy Hill and Armando Garcia, University Federal Credit Union, March 19, 2013
- Company Tour: Google Austin Campus, March 20, 2013
- Student Graduation: Civic Engagement Team, March 26, 2013





## Sessions

### Meet and Greet

Facilitator: Jon Salinas  
John H. Reagan High School  
Monday, February 25, 2013

"It is our goal not to speak at you, but WITH you. Here, we are EQUALS. Here, we ALL grow as leaders."

It begins with "WHY" - To be the leaders this diverse, growing community demands.

This was the first day that we met the 18 students that would work with us for the next month. We got acquainted over pizza and drinks while introducing ourselves, the program topics, guidelines and expectations, incentives and our unified goals for the SWAG program. In addition to the students, there were other attendees including some teachers and one parent. The students completed their first leadership exercise by standing in front of their peers and introducing themselves.



Using education data and Austin demographic trends from City Demographer Ryan Robinson, the students' eyes were opened to the current statistics of the Hispanic and African American communities. This information piqued their interest and desire to learn more. Students were informed about how demographic factors affect wealth distribution in the

Austin area and how it in turn affects their education and prospects. The students were encouraged to become agents of the change they wish to see in their communities and to serve as role models.

It was important that the students believed in our commitment to them and the program. Both the students and the Civic Engagement team signed letters of commitment to the success of the SWAG program, but more importantly, to the success of the students participating in the program. Coach Carey, the driving force behind our initiative at Reagan, gave a few words of encouragement and support to the leaders in-training. The students were then divided into five groups and assigned a color and a facilitator from the CE team. The students were reminded that the sessions would begin with a 7:30 a.m. breakfast and a structured session from 8:00 - 8:45 a.m.





## Session # 1 – Character Development

Facilitator: Albert Pomales

John H. Reagan High School

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Gentry Anderson from AXA Advisors gave a presentation about the qualities that have helped him succeed in life. Raised by a single mom who instilled in him the value of an education, he studied hard and put himself through college.

### *Student activity:*

Two student volunteers were given minimal instructions, except to simply “get there” and make a decision when they got to a line drawn on the floor. Getting to the finish line quickly is great, but what about the prize? Students were left with the task to decide for themselves if it is more important to acquire quick riches (a lottery ticket) or gain the knowledge (*The Richest Man in Babylon*) required for their future successes.

The students were asked to write down their goals for their futures and raise their GPA – “Goals, Purpose, Attitude”. At the end of the session, the students realized the importance of knowledge – it is something that can never be taken away from them.



## Session # 2 – Civic Participation

Facilitator: Liliana Valenzuela

John H. Reagan High School

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

State Representative for House District 75, Mary E. González, conducted an interactive session with students about the value of getting involved in the community and in politics. She emphasized the importance and value of voting and civic participation.

“Start early and vote often and it will become a habit. You’ll vote for the rest of your life.”

The students knew that changes were being made to the education system, but in hearing from the State Representative, they were able to grasp how these changes impact them. They were very engaged in the topics presented and asked numerous questions. The CE team leaders gave each of the student groups an assignment to research who were their local leaders.



### Session #3 – Education

Facilitator: Meredith McClure  
John H. Reagan High School  
Tuesday, March 5, 2013

David Contreras, the founder of LaunchPad, the Center for Hope and Building Dreams, gave a thought-provoking presentation on the value of having an education in order to ensure a better future. He encouraged them to think beyond a high school diploma. He shared the struggles he and other kids in his neighborhood went through growing up in East Austin.

#### *Student activity:*

Different scenarios were passed around the class on note cards and the students were asked to stand up individually and respond to the situations.

“Your parents need you to drop out of school to help provide for your little siblings, but you’re still one year away from graduating.”

“You got a scholarship to attend Harvard! But your family doesn’t want you so far from home.”

“Congratulations – you’re expecting twins!”

Such examples are real for several of the students participating in SWAG. Their verbal acknowledgements and positive adult encouragement ensured them that even when facing tough decisions, they can overcome!



## Session # 4 – Business SWAG

Facilitator: Marisela Rios

John H. Reagan High School

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Rodrigo Castilleja of Farmers Insurance gave an informative presentation about the importance of business etiquette and personal presentation. This session was meant to not only prepare them for their current high school careers, but about future interviews and business encounters.

### *Student Activity:*

Several student volunteers practiced shaking hands, confidently looking people in the eye and presenting themselves in a professional manner. These students were provided with constructive feedback on how they performed.

The facilitators practiced running mock interviews with their teams, focusing on the aspects they had just learned. The students listened intently as others responded, and encouraged one another through each round. In the end, the students gained confidence in presenting themselves and putting their best foot forward.





## Session # 5 – Finance

Facilitator: Shayna Molinar  
John H. Reagan High School  
Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Emmy Hill and Armando Garcia of University Federal Credit Union instructed students on the basics of financial literacy. They both gave real-life examples of how finances were handled in their own households growing up, as well as how they handled them as young adults, including the mistakes they made.

They encouraged them to not fall into the “off-to-college t-shirt trap” as a credit line starting point and then further explained credit scores and how they are calculated. They advised them to have one main credit card and to hold onto older cards for as long as possible to help provide proof of credit history. The students were reminded about the importance of paying bills and cards on time, in full whenever possible or at the minimum pay more than the minimum payment.

The students engaged with the presenters to better grasp financial terminology and real-life situations. By the end of the session, they were not only thinking about their current monetary responsibilities, but also about their long-term financial goals, such as paying for college, buying a car, and one day even buying a house.





## Field Trip to Google

Facilitator: Gerardo Interiano

Google – Austin Campus

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

Students were given the opportunity to visit the Austin campus of IT giant Google in North Austin. Engineers spoke with them about careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and the great demand that companies like Google have for technical majors. They also discussed current high tech trends and encouraged students to imagine what their role could be in contributing to future innovations.



Students toured the facilities, which included brightly colored cubicles, play areas filled with video games and shuffleboard, a massage chair, a photo booth and multiple music listening rooms for CDs, tapes and even 8-tracks. At the conclusion of the tour, student conversations about STEM majors were buzzing in the air.



## SWAG Graduation

John H. Reagan High School

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

Students, parents and siblings attended the SWAG graduation ceremony at the Reagan High School Library. During the dinner, the students were proudly presented with their certificates of achievement and official SWAG wear. An emotional slide show was shared, a raffle was held for donated prizes, including the main prize, a Nexus tablet donated by Google.



Throughout the program, students had been rewarded with raffle tickets for class attendance, participation and the collection of business cards. The business cards were collected from SWAG organizers, guests and speakers as well as other business people in the community. Part of this activity of business card collection was to help the students build their resource list of people who may be able to help them with a recommendation, job leads or advice in the future as well as to build on their business etiquette development.



The GAHCC (Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce) CEO Andy Martínez and GAHCC Foundation Director Stefan Molina offered words of congratulations and encouragement to the students on this momentous occasion. Melissa Sustaita Ochoa, Behavioral Health Specialist at AISD, shared additional words of advice and encouragement to the graduating students. Coach Carey thanked both the students and the SWAG organizers for their hard work and dedication.





One dad spoke about the value of the program and how touched he was by the impact this program has had on his son, the other leaders in the class and the school community as a whole. He discussed his desire for there to be access to more leadership programs like SWAG in the community, as they are vital for young people in the area. Students also spoke about their experiences with SWAG and how it impacted their lives.



The SWAG organizers also shared their thoughts, experiences and emotions that were encountered throughout the program development and implementation. A token of appreciation was presented to Coach and Mrs. Carey for their constant support of the program. The SWAG team was given Reagan High scarves and Thank You letters from the students.



In conclusion of the program, students receive participant binders with information about the speakers, SWAG organizers and relevant information on each of the topics so they can keep as future reference and resource.

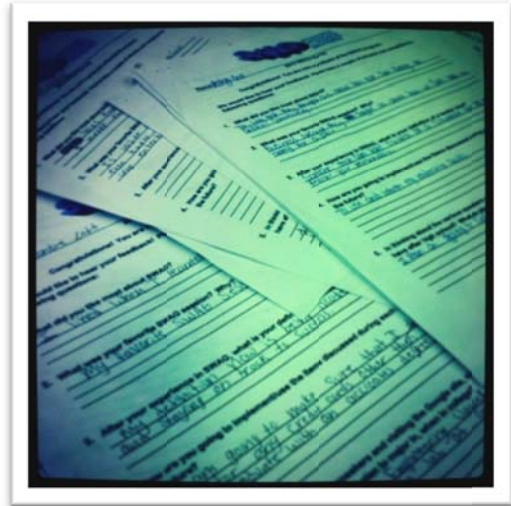
SWAG graduation was a night to remember!





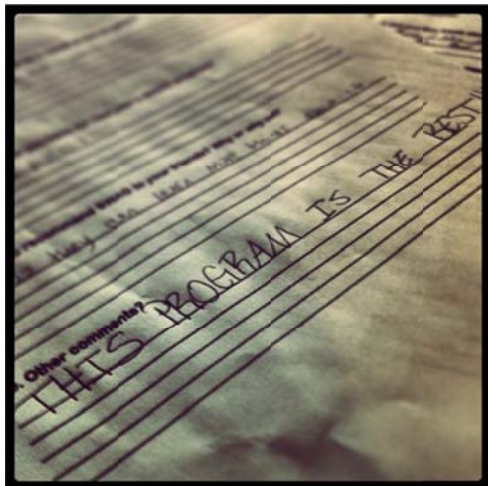
## Program Feedback

"A Leader is someone who never quits, looks ahead and never back." Gabriella S.



"Keep this program going." Amado A.

"I would like for there to be another session next year." Jaime S.



"This program is the best!" Desmond R.

## Sustainability

The goal of the SWAG team is that the program remains alive and continues to evolve at Reagan High School for years to come. As a team, we realize that similar to Reagan, other high schools need leadership programs like SWAG. These types of leadership programs equip students with the tools, resources and opportunities necessary to make powerful impacts and in turn inspire other leaders in their communities to do the same for future generations. SWAG is seeking strategic partners in order to realize this goal, whether it be at AISD, other surrounding school districts or organizations that are equally committed to providing the same level of education that the founders of SWAG have intended since the program's inception.



## Team Structure



Team Member	Role	Task
Jon Salinas Salinas Architecture, LLC	Project Manager	Led team Set up meetings with community leaders & Reagan Faculty Organized project Outline Scheduled team meetings Kept project on track Followed up on tasks and deliverables Facilitated development of project logo Facilitated the Meet and Greet and the Graduation
Meredith McClure AXA Advisors	Project Administrator	Scheduled team meetings Recorded meeting minutes Kept project on track Reached out to Google to secure student field trip and donation of Nexus 7 tablet Facilitated the Education Session
Albert Pomaes ETMG, LLC	Marketing	Made initial contact with Coach Carey Facilitated participation of Reagan High Helped determine the project budget Facilitated the Character Development Session Co-facilitated Graduation
Shayna Molinar YMCA of Austin	Finance Officer	Determined and maintained the budget Provided assistance with planning and logistics Photo documentation of each session Gathered data regarding T-shirt design, costs and delivery Facilitated the Financial Stability Session
Marisela Rios Applied Materials	Research	Gathered data on Reagan High School and other organizations within it Led and hosted the SWAG binder build Photo documentation of each session Facilitated the Business Etiquette Session
Liliana Valenzuela Ahora Si	Research	Gathered data and performed research about civic engagement organizations and the local voting process Photo documentation of each session Facilitated the Civic Engagement Session

## Financial Summary

Without the generous support of various individuals and companies, the SWAG program would not have been successful. The cost of the program accounts for 18 students participating from the Meet and Greet, the five structured sessions and the graduation. The costs are broken down between expense costs for goods, In-Kind services and donations. For the Spring 2013 SWAG session, the total budget for the program was \$4,918.00.

### SWAG Program Costs (Spring 2013 - 18 Students)

Goods	Description	Cost
Food	Food for Meet & Greet and sessions	\$684.00
Supplies	Supplies needed for sessions (binders, food supplies)	\$192.00
Merchandising	SWAG T-shirts for students	\$360.00
Graduation	Cost to conduct graduation (Certificates, Food, Decorations, Marketing)	\$462.00
Total		\$1,698.00

In-Kind Services and Donations	Furnished by	Total
Logo/Branding	dmDesign	\$1,200.00
Nexus 7 Tablet	Google	\$ 220.00
Copies for Sessions	Applied Materials	\$ 300.00
Facilities	Applied Materials, AXA Advisors, ETMG, Salinas Arch, YMCA of Austin	\$1,500.00
Total		\$3,220.00

<b>Total Goods Cost and In-Kind Services and Donations</b>	<b>\$4,918.00</b>
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## References

1. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012* (NCES 2012-045), Indicator 33
2. 2009 Geoscape International, American Marketscape DataStream
3. Nielsen Media Research - NSI, Jan, 2010
4. Launchpadthecenter.org
5. Ryan Robinson – City of Austin City Demographer



## Acknowledgements

### **Speakers**

Character Development: Mr. Gentry Anderson, Financial Professional at AXA Advisors, LLC.

Civic Participation: Ms. Mary Mary González, State Representative, House District 75

Education: Mr. David Contreras, Founder, LaunchPad The Center

Business Etiquette: Mr. Rodrigo Castilleja, Owner, Farmers Insurance-Castilleja Agency

Finance: Ms. Emmy Alcocer-Hill, Financial Center Manager, University Federal Credit Union; Mr. Armando Garcia, Financial Service Representative III, University Federal Credit Union

### **Sponsors**

Cisco's Bakery – Breakfast

dm Design – SWAG Logo

Google – Tablet, Company tour

Applied Materials – Breakfast

Albert Pomales – Breakfast, Graduation

PostNet – Graduation certificates, Posterboard

John H. Reagan High School - Facilities

University Federal Credit Union – Meet and Great

Liliana Valenzuela - Breakfast

YMCA of Austin - Breakfast

### **Support**

Keith Carey, Athletic Director, Reagan High School

Lindsay Carey, AVID Teacher, Reagan High School

Anabel Garza, Principal, Reagan High School

Crystal Wilcox, HAL mentor

Emmy Hill, HAL mentor

Civic Engagement Team Family and Friends

## Company Sponsorship - Civic Engagement Team

Ahora Si – Liliana Valenzuela

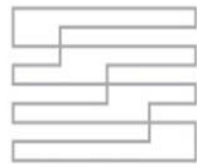
Applied Materials – Marisela Rios

AXA Advisors – Meredith McClure

ETMG, LLC – Albert Pomales

Salinas Architecture, LLC – Jon Salinas

YMCA of Austin – Shayna Molinar



## Appendix

### Letter of Commitment



Civic Engagement Team  
Letter of Commitment  
Reagan High School  
Spring 2013

We all face challenges as we go through our daily lives that help develop who we become. As we grew up we had people that supported us through our daily encounters. They were our parents, our siblings, our friends, our teachers and other supportive people in our lives. It was their commitment to us that helped us meet those challenges head on and overcome them.

As we begin the Spring 2013 session of SWAG (Students Working to Achieve Greatness) at Reagan High School, we must challenge and hold ourselves accountable to support the program. Our commitment to the students involved in the program is critical to their success. Just as we had support, we must and will support all the students involved in SWAG.

Therefore, I commit my time, passion and hard work to the success of SWAG and of the students involved in the program at Reagan High School. I understand that my commitment to this program develops both the students and myself to become stronger leaders. There is no better thing than service to others.

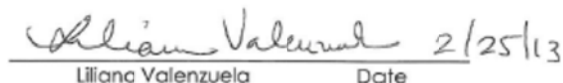
  
Jon Salinas      2/25/13  
Date

  
Albert Pomales      2/25/13  
Date

  
Meredith McClure      2/25/13  
Date

  
Marisela Rios      2/25/13  
Date

  
Shayna Molinar      2/25/13  
Date

  
Liliana Valenzuela      2/25/13  
Date

## SWAG Application

**SWAG**  
 (Students Working to Achieve Greatness)

Welcome to SWAG!

SWAG (Students Working to Achieve Greatness) is a leadership program developed to expand and empower the youth of Reagan High School through business, community and civic awareness.

**Our Mission Statement:** Leadership discovery through civic engagement and participation.

SWAG's goal is to prepare youth to be the confident leaders Austin's growing community demands.

**Session Topics include:** Character Development, Civic Awareness, Education, Financial Development, & Business Etiquette

We want to know more about you!

First Name:	Last Name:
Email Address:	Phone Number:

1. What does the word "Leadership" mean to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who do you consider is a great leader and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What do you hope to gain from the SWAG Leadership Program?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are your plans after high school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you like to do for fun?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SWAG Survey



### 2013 SWAG Survey

Congratulations! You are now a graduate of the SWAG program.

We would like to hear your feedback! Please take a couple of minutes and complete the following questions:

1. What did you like most about SWAG?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was your favorite SWAG session? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Would you recommend SWAG to your friends? Why or Why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you could describe the SWAG program in one word, what would it be?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How are you going to implement/use the items discussed during each SWAG course in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Character Development

### Students Working to Achieve Greatness - SWAG

#### My Personal Action Plan

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Write the priorities/steps that you are committing to starting now and who/what will keep you accountable. (i.e. books, programs, habits to start, changes). Keep this for you when the road ahead is challenging.

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#### Interview Questions

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your goal after graduating from high school?  
a. Have you researched what it will take to reach that goal?
2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult situation with a co-worker/classmate.  
a. How did you resolve it?
3. How would you describe your leadership style?  
a. Why?

Did the student have eye contact when they introduced themselves? Y / N

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the student have a firm handshake when they introduced themselves? Y / N

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the student clearly and confidently introduce themselves? Y / N

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the student maintain eye contact while interviewing? Y / N

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the student thank you for your time at the end of "interview"? Y / N

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_







## Sign In Sheet

Day and Date of Session  
Name of Session



**SWAG** STUDENTS  
WORKING  
TO ACHIEVE  
GREATNESS

Last Name	First Name	Group	Group Leader	Sign In	Date
Aguilar	Amado	Green	Shayna		
Butler	Brendan	Yellow	Meredith		
Campuzano-Morales	Bertin	Pink	Mariela		
Cor	Mulugh	Blue	Albert		
Chut	Yulissa	Blue	Albert		
Chut	Rodriga	Orange	Jon		
Garcia	Luis	Yellow	Meredith		
Hernandez	Alfredo	Pink	Mariela		
Higgins	Johnathon	Orange	Jon		
Jacobi	David	Blue	Albert		
Lott	Deondre	Green	Shayna		
Mendez	Tergio	Orange	Jon		
Mendoza	Isuana	Pink	Mariela		
Rayboso	Raquel	Green	Shayna		
Roberson	Daemond	Blue	Albert		
Sanchez	Gabriela	Yellow	Meredith		
Smith	Josh	Yellow	Meredith		
Smith	Jamie	Pink	Mariela		
Ware	Anica	Orange	Jon		

## Raffle Tickets



## Thank You Cards from Students



## Certificate of Achievement



# Speaker Biographies



## Gentry Anderson

Gentry Anderson, a financial professional at AXA Advisors, LLC, serves corporate and individual clients through a proven process of comprehensive planning. He is a graduate of Risk University and has served Texas in the financial services industry since 2004.



Our financial practice partners with business professionals and families to build a path to financial security. The team employs specialists and experts to provide solutions and strategies to accomplish long-term financial success for clients. We provide a personalized approach to solving complex issues in a fair, favorable manner. Our broad array of services helps business owners maximize the benefits of ownership and optimize their financial resources to attract and retain quality personnel.

We also serve the special needs community by empowering families and professionals who serve those impacted by the challenges of having a loved one with special needs. Gentry, a father of a child with special needs, understands the challenges of getting "beyond one day at a time."

Gentry has served as a seminar speaker to multiple school districts throughout Texas, Civic Service and Support Groups, as well as Professional Associations.

Financial practice areas of concentration include but are not limited to:

- Personal Needs Analysis (Retirement, Investments, Insurance)
- Business Planning (Succession, Executive Benefits, Group Retirement & Benefits, Buy-Sell Funding)
- Special Needs Planning (Planning for Loved ones with Disabilities)
- Estate Planning (Wealth Preservation, Estate Protection & Distribution)
- Seminar Speaker (Educational)



## Mary Gonzalez

Mary E. Gonzalez was born and raised in Clint, Texas. Early on she demonstrated a love and commitment to El Paso. Her local roots include serving as 4th Club President to founding the Far East El Paso County Partnership to empower young leaders in colonial.



Mary has dedicated her life to promoting social change through her community engagement, professional experiential academic background. Mary received her Bachelor's Degree in History and Mexican American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. In 2007 she received her Master of Liberal Arts with a concentration in Social Justice from St. Edward's University. Currently, she is pursuing her Doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction: Cultural Studies in Education at the University of Texas at Austin.

During the early stages of Mary's professional career she worked for Texas State Representative Paul Moreno and Richard Raymond previously. She served as Assistant Director in the Office of Research and Demonstration at the National Hispanic Institute, as Program Coordinator in the Multicultural Engagement Center at the University of Texas at Austin and was the Assistant Dean for Student Multicultural Affairs at Southwestern University. Most recently, Mary was a visiting instructor at Southwestern University, as well as a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Texas at Austin, where she developed curriculum for the UT Outreach Centers in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley. She is also forming her own consulting company, I&I Consulting.

Community Engagement is at the heart of her activism. As National President for the Latin@ Leaders, service sorority Kappa Delta Chi she gives direction and leadership toward the achievement of the sorority's mission, vision, strategy and annual goals. She works with thousands of women to serve the community. Mary is also Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for alpha, Texas state-wide Queer People of Color organization and is currently leading their social development and organization assessment effort.

Due to her vibrant passion and continued support for social change, Mary has become a national presenter on issues of race, gender, sexual identity and coalition building presenting at conferences including the National Council of La Raza, The National Lesbian and Gay Task Force: Creating Change Conference and the Latino Leadership Summit.

She has been recognized by mylatinovoice.com as the "Hot 25 under 25" most influential young Latinos in the country and in Latino Leaders Magazine for her leadership in education. Recently, the National Association of Latino Professional Organizations awarded her 2010 Rising Professional and 2011 Organizational Leadership Excellence.



**Armando Garcia**  
Financial Service Representative III  
University Federal Credit Union  
[agarcia@ufcu.org](mailto:agarcia@ufcu.org)  
512-467-8080 ext. 21804  
[www.ufcu.org](http://www.ufcu.org)

Armando is a graduate of Lamar high school and played football during his time there. He was also named homecoming king his senior year.

Armando has been with UFCU for 6 years. He started working for UFCU as a part-time teller when he was 19 while attending the University of Texas at Austin. Armando was very successful as a teller and moved up quickly to Financial Service Representative III. He is now in the Financial Advisor license program where he will receive his series 7.

Armando teaches a financial literacy class at Goddard every Tuesday and enjoys assisting his members succeed financially.

Armando married a high school sweetheart Beverly in October 2012. They enjoy Austin events such as SXSW, Fun Fun Fun Fest, and the Kite Festival.



**Emmy Alcocer-Hill**  
Financial Center Manager  
University Federal Credit Union  
[emmy@ufcu.org](mailto:emmy@ufcu.org)  
512-467-8080 ext. 21801  
[www.ufcu.org](http://www.ufcu.org)

Emmy Alcocer-Hill has been in the banking industry for the past 7 years with specific expertise in Retail Banking and Financial Literacy. Emmy works for University Federal Credit Union and manages the Downtown Branch which has been opened since 1984. She is highly involved in community outreach programs at UFCU.

Emmy is involved in Hispanic Austin Leadership and the Austin Young Chamber of Commerce. She is involved in the community that she loves and wants nothing more than to make this great city even greater.

Emmy received a Bachelor of Communication from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 2003. During her time at New Mexico State University she was involved in the American Marketing Association organization and volunteered with the Candle Lighters of El Paso non-profit organization as well as Project Warm Baby non-profit.

Emmy enjoys spending time with her cats and seeing all the music festivals that Austin has to offer.



## David Contreras

Contreras faced life as a young boy with fear, anger, and anxiety after his father was killed in an accident when David was five. Without any positive male role models in David's life or models of accountability and responsibility, David eventually found himself in a desperate search for approval and identity. Always drawn to the underachievers, it was easy to take the path of least resistance and mediocrity. That path led him to a dead end and street of drug abuse, alcohol, and a life of violence. On the same course in life with his young friends, David was certain to join their ranks in prison or an early death. But a defining and transforming moment took place in his life as a young adult that led him to turn in, Go and set him on a positive course for his personal transformation.



Over two decades have passed since David has been committed and driven to help educate, equip and empower the next generation of young people. David started his work as a community activist over 20 years ago working with a faith-based inner-city outreach program in East Austin. Through that work, David served to impact at-risk teens and provided East Austin gang with an alternative way of settling their differences. David worked closely with the Austin Police Department and in the Austin area high schools to subvert a positive message and combat issues such as gangs, alcohol and drugs use.

David is committed to be a part of the solution through community empowerment. He is currently the Co-Founder and Executive Director of LaunchPad: The Center for Hope and Building Dreams. LaunchPad focuses on reaching, equipping and empowering disadvantaged youth and serving the inner city community in Austin, Texas. David and his wife Rebecca founded LaunchPad, a 501(c)(3) organization in the Spring of 2006. In 2009 and 2011, LaunchPad was recognized by the Austin Independent School District as "Partner in Education" and "Partner of the Year Award" for excellence in service for the Dade Community of target. Prior to starting LaunchPad, David served as the Texas Director for the Council on Faith in Action (CNFA). CNFA was founded as a non-profit organization with a mission to strengthen the moral, civic and social foundations of our nation.

In January 2005, David moved back to the Austin Texas area after serving four years in Washington DC in the President's Administration. While in DC he served as the Deputy Director of the President's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The central mission of the HUD Center is to provide training and information to Faith-Based and Community Organizations (FBOs) on the President's initiative and help to identify funding opportunities, resources, support, and partners in partnership with the White House. The Center served to fulfill the President's vision of mobilizing the armies of compassion to

strengthen America's communities. As Deputy Director, he was the primary manager of the Office in managing the day-to-day functions of the Center's staff. David represented the Faith-Based Initiative and addressed national audiences and key constituencies to provide key accomplishments of the President's initiative. He was also responsible for managing the Faith-Based Component of the President's Management Agenda, a results-oriented government-wide agenda.

Prior to his position of HUD, David served at the U.S. Small Business Administration in the position of External Affairs Coordinator for the Office of Communication and Public Liaison. In that role, he was the primary liaison to targeted trade organizations and associations to disseminate information regarding SBA loans and programs to keep them informed of the Administration's initiatives relating to their constituency. In addition, he provided management support to the Director and Deputy Director. Prior to moving from Texas to Washington DC, David spent ten years in the high tech industry working for IBMATCH, a semi-conductor company and Applied Materials in Austin, Texas where he served as an instructor.

David and his wife Rebecca have two children, a married daughter age 23 and a son 18 who is attending college in Austin. David has now committed his life full-time to serving Tarrant County through the work of LaunchPad. David firmly believes that some of the students he and his team work with are "diamonds in the rough" with the right tools, instruction, education and hard work, they can accomplish whatever they set their minds to do. David is also a motivational speaker and shares his personal journey and insights learned along the way to various groups across the County.



# Civic Engagement Team Biographies



## Jon A. Salinas

Born: April 2nd 1975  
City: Humble, TX



### Education:

- Texas A&M University - Class of 1998
- Bachelor of Environmental Design
- Interned - Castillon Karamita, May 1998
- Universidad de La Salle - Mexico D.F., Summer/Fall 1998

### Occupation:

- Licensed Architect (Texas)
- Principal of Salinas Architecture LLC

### Community Involvement:

- Volunteer:
  - AIDS Memorial 1999
  - YMCA Youth & Government
  - Miss for Mexico
  - Faria Arts Appender
  - River City Youth Foundation
  - Shous Institute for Civic Life

### What do you like to do in your spare time:

- Hiking with my dogs (Paco & JJ Dog)
- Dinner with good friends
- Working on my house, moving will have time to fix it.
- Travel
- Learn to play my guitar (this time I am serious)
- Run/ work out (very serious)

### Who inspires you?

- My brother inspires me the most of anyone I have ever met. He has overcome much adversity in his life and has utilized his experiences & life to be the amazing person and educator he is today.



## Shayna Molinar

Birthday: September 24th  
Residence: Round Rock, Texas  
Born: Mayaguez, Puerto Rico



### Education:

- Comstock University of Austin
- Degree: Bachelor of Arts
- Major: Social Sciences
- Minor: Education-ED-4th

### Occupation:

- Business Director
- YMCA of Austin

### Volunteering/Community Involvement:

- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Miss for Mexico City of Service
- YMCA Youth and Government
- Shous Institute for Civic Life
- YMCA Baseball Life League coach
- T of the Park, Camp Play Day and Bike Ride

### What you like to do in your spare time:

- Spend time with my family
- Dance - love dancing!
- Playing sports like basketball, softball and anything recreational
- Reading Magazines
- Likes to model
- Love the outdoors
- Like to mountain bike
- Love to shop!

### Who inspires you:

- God
- My mother and grandmother - They have taught me so much throughout the years. My grandmother would always tell me to be true to myself and to never sacrifice who I am to anyone.



## Meredith D. McClure

Birthday: April 19th  
Hometown: Denton, TX



### Education:

- University of Texas at Austin
- Major: Spanish and Portuguese
- Minor: French
- International Business Foundations

### Occupation:

- Financial Professional
- AIA Advisor, LLC

### Awards & Accomplishments:

- Numerous awards of AIA Advisor, including Rookie of the Year
- AIA Advisor Leadership Development School
- Hispanic Austin Leadership Program (HALP)
- Latin dance instructor at the University of Texas

### Volunteering/Community Involvement:

- AIA Foundation City of Service
- Faria Arts Appender
- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Launched the Center
- Miss for Mexico
- Shous Institute for Civic Life
- SWAG
- YMCA Youth & Government

### What you like to do in your spare time:

- Dance - I used to teach salsa, merengue, bachata, and cumbia now I just do it for fun
- Learn new languages - I'm fluent in Spanish and Portuguese and am conversational in French
- Travel - Love experiencing new places and cultures
- Work-out - Camp Gladiator Boot Camp (fun)
- Run - Have two half-marathons under my belt
- Volunteer/Community Involvement
- Enjoy the company of my family and friends

### Who inspires you?

- God
- My mom - there are really too many reasons to write how proud and inspired by her I am
- My dad - for being a great role model



## Albert Pomales

Born: July 4th 1982  
City: Washington, DC



### Education:

- DePaul High School
- Stanford Junior College
- University of Texas at Arlington

### Awards & Accomplishments:

- All District Defensive Player of the Year 1998
- All District player of the Year in 1999 and 2000
- IUCAA Freshman of the Year - 2000
- First Team Producer for AFAC in Texas
- Ranked as Executive Director for the Austin Association of Health Underwriters
- Named one of the five Men of the Year for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
- Recently named as Vice President of ETMO, LLC

### Occupation:

- VP of ETMO, LLC
- Licensed Life and Health Insurance Broker

### Community Involvement:

- Youth Baseball league through the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Mexican Night Soccer Club
- Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
- L.A.A.G.
- Austin Nike and Nike Cleanup
- Rodriguez Cemetery

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

- I like to spend time with my wife watching ridiculous amounts of movies and eating at amazing restaurant places. I also enjoy cooking quite a bit. I enjoy all sports, and currently play in a basketball and flag football league. Being from Dallas, my favorite teams are the Dallas Mavericks/Cowboys and the Texas Rangers (although on hiatus). I have a close group of friends, my wife and I.

spend a lot of time with them and their wives. My favorite thing to do though is to wake up on Sundays and do nothing but cook, eat, and watch movies with my wife all day. It is a day of rest and I highly recommend it. Oh, and I collect vintage.

### Who inspires you?

- God
- My Father, Alberto Luis Pomales
- My Mother, Silvia Loredana Guzman
- My Grandmother, Leticia Ramirez. If you are going to be a garbage man, then be the best garbage man in the world.
- My Wife, Edith Ramirez
- My Boss, Thomas Smith
- My Mentor, Mark Adams
- Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison... all people who have continuously failed and never quit.
- Charlie O'Neil, the little girl I am raising money for who has been diagnosed with Leukemia
- DRK Hoaxell
- Rocky Balboa
- Myself, you can be your greatest asset in enemy.

### What book made a difference in your life?

- Good to Great
- Question behind the Question
- Rhema Success
- 1984
- Of Mice and Men
- Life of Pi
- The Bridge

### What type of music is your favorite to listen to and why?

- No favorite. I enjoy Hip-hop, rap, rock, classic rock, alternative, latin, merengue, reggaeton, blues, R&B, electronic, classical (great for thinking), and country (great favorite).

### Who inspires you?

- My oldest sister - Taught me that I could do it. She was first to earn both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in our family.
- My mom - Taught me to be strong and stand up for what I believe in.
- My dad - Taught me my love of anything mechanical and how to have fun.
- My kindergarten teacher - Taught me my love of education.

### What event made a difference in your life?

- Earning my Mechanical Engineering degree showed me that I can achieve whatever I set my mind to accomplish no matter how difficult.
- Earning my 1st Black Belt in Taekwondo showed me that I am both mentally and physically strong.

### What type of music is your favorite to listen to and why?

- I enjoy listening to all types of music. I love the way different songs make me want to dance, relax or just laugh.



## Liliana Valenzuela

Born: 01/26/60  
City: Mexico City



### Education:

- 1982 Certified by American Translation Association to translate from English to Spanish
- 1988 M.A. University of Texas at Austin
- Anthropology/History
- 1984 B.A. University of Texas at Austin
- Cultural Anthropology
- One year of coursework in Cultural Anthropology
- Mexico City
- 1979-1980 Mexico Commission
- Exchange Student for a year
- Denmark

### Awards & Accomplishments:

- Recipient of Awards in translation, writing and poetry, such as the Alicia Gordon Award for World Poetry in Translation, the Chicano/Latina Award, the prize in fiction, and the Christina Teguer Award. Had prize in poetry. Had eight awards in journalism.

### Occupation:

- Reporter/ Copy editor at various of
- Spanish editor of the Austin American-Statesman

### Volunteer:

- Mentor of a writing student since 2008
- Interpreter at various times
- Texas Hispanic Young Writers Conference
- Faria Arts Appender
- Coach for kids
- Volunteer Elementary
- Los Compadres para las Americas

### What do you like to do in your spare time:

- Go for walks on Town Lake or Pease Park.
- Garden.
- Hang out with friends.
- Watch foreign, indie, wacky movies and some TV series on Netflix (don't have cable).
- Do yoga.



## Marisela Rios

Born: March 7, 1971  
City: McAllen, TX



### Education:

- The University of Texas at Austin - December 1994
- Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering

### Awards & Accomplishments:

- Numerous awards of Applied Materials:
  - Team
  - Leadership
- 2nd Degree Black Belt in Taekwondo
- Hispanic Austin Leadership Program (HALP)

### Occupation:

- Applied Materials (18 years)
- Manufacturing Project Manager

### Community Involvement:

- SWAG
- GEDnet
- Introduce a lot to Engineering - UT Austin
- Mentor Mentoring
- The Nobility Project - Backstop Restoration
- Self Defense Classes - UT Austin
- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Coach for kids
- Austin Parkies in Education
- Breakthrough Austin
- Applied Materials - Hispanics in Partnership
- Hispanic Austin Leadership

### What do you like to do in your spare time:

- Reading books (all types)
- Watching Tuff movies and shows
- Working in my garden
- Hanging out with friends
- Bunking up in my archery skills
- Learning to play my Xbox Kinect
- Practicing and teaching Taekwondo

