



# PHOENIX HOUSE TEXAS

Page 2  
Phoenix House Public  
Service Award Luncheon

Page 3  
The Baker Bunch  
Beats the Odds

Page 4  
Prevention Takes  
the Court

## PHOENIX HOUSE

## *Change for life*

FALL 2008

A crowd of more than 300 honored  
**John and Libba Massey**  
at the 2008 Phoenix House  
Public Service Award Luncheon.



## PHOENIX HOUSE PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD LUNCHEON RAISES MORE THAN \$550,000 FOR TREATMENT SERVICES IN TEXAS

Phoenix House raised more than \$550,000 at its 2008 Public Service Award Luncheon held at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas on Tuesday, April 15, 2008. Proceeds from the event, which honored Libba and John H. Massey, will help Phoenix Houses of Texas continue to provide much-needed drug-prevention and education services.



*At the award luncheon (l to r): Texas Board Chairman Hill A. Feinberg, Crystal Gray and her daughter Brandi, and Monty Mueller, Texas Regional Director.*

Texas Board Member, Paul M. Bass, Jr. welcomed more than 300 luncheon guests, who listened with rapt attention as John and Libba Massey, dedicated contributors to the cause of substance abuse treatment and recovery, expressed their heartfelt admiration for the work of Phoenix House. Another compelling speaker at the luncheon was Brandi Gray, a proud graduate of the Phoenix Academy of Los Angeles. She proceeded to captivate the audience with the dramatic story of her personal struggles and spoke thoughtfully about young people's particular vulnerabilities to addiction. Ms. Gray's touching story, combined with the contagious enthusiasm of the Masseys, generated a palpable level of engagement and empathy for recovering substance abusers.



*Words of welcome from Board member, Paul M. Bass Jr.*



*Brandi Gray tells of recovery at a Phoenix Academy.*

Phoenix House, offering services in Texas since 1995, works each year with approximately 15,000 young people who are confronting their struggles with substance abuse. There are now two Phoenix Academies in Texas. The Phoenix Academy model was recently added to the federal government's list of "evidence-based practices" as a recommended treatment option for teens. An earlier federally-funded, independent study evaluation of Phoenix House teen treatment programs in Dallas found that 12 months from admission, nearly 70 percent of the adolescents were back in school or employed; 75 percent reported no illicit drug use, and 95 percent were arrest free.

Event sponsors included, Mr. and Mrs. William A. Custard; Renee and Hill A. Feinberg; Orix USA, the James and Angela Thompson Foundation, and others.

## THE BAKER BUNCH BEATS THE ODDS

I was privileged to meet the Baker family last year when I started working for Phoenix House. Marcia Baker, Director of the Houston Office of Phoenix House, had interviewed me, and I had been employed only one week when her son, athletic, bright and popular 17-year-old Colin Thompson Baker, was diagnosed with leukemia.



*Colin Baker and friend.*

Colin, a handsome teen with flowing blonde hair and soulful dark brown eyes; a senior in high school at seventeen, met the diagnosis bravely.

He was admitted to Texas Children's Hospital, which would become his home for the following year. Colin and his mother opted for a new treatment and medication considered by medical experts to be the very best available.

## PHOENIX ASSOCIATES HOSTS AFTER-WORK EVENT TO RAISE AWARENESS

Tuesday, May 13th, Phoenix Houses of Texas Board Members and Phoenix Associates hosted "Drinks on the Terrace," an after-work social event designed to increase awareness of Phoenix House and the programs and services offered statewide. Held on the Rosewood Mansion's terrace, around fifty young professionals gathered to mix and mingle and listen to Hill A. Feinberg, Chairman of the Texas Board of Directors, and Robert Weatherly, Chairman of Phoenix Associates, tell of their motivation for supporting Phoenix House and its mission. Howard Meitiner, President and CEO of Phoenix House, and Monty Mueller, Regional Director for Phoenix Houses of Texas, both spoke briefly about "the importance for Phoenix Houses of Texas of having a young and involved group dedicated to the organization's success."

Colin's mom had been in the counseling field for so long that she had learned to remain calm and focused in what might be overwhelming situations for others. Managing her daily responsibilities at work and interacting effectively with the medical team in charge of Colin's care, Ms. Baker continued to hold it together. Nights spent at the hospital sleeping next to her son became the norm. All holidays were spent at Texas Children's Hospital during the end of 2006 and part of 2007. Colin's older brother Ian moved back home from Arizona State University to be by his brothers side.

Colin enjoyed playing video games and watching his favorite show "Scrubs." But he was often not feeling very well with all the medication, having little energy, and hardly any appetite. I remember staying around the office just to ask or hear a little news: "Did he eat today? Maybe we can get some of his favorite foods." I will never forget his favorite – berries...strawberries and blueberries. Eventually he was able to come home on weekends when he felt well enough.

I finally met Colin when we celebrated his eighteenth birthday on Halloween in 2007. The next big celebration was on Christmas 2007 when Colin's cancer had gone into remission.

Colin is now attending college at Arizona State with his brother Ian, thanks to the Make A Wish Foundation, which granted Colin his wish to go to college.

By Gloria Tudon

Phoenix Associates is a group of professionals in the greater Dallas area committed to raising awareness of Phoenix House among their peers and becoming advocates for disadvantaged youth needing treatment for substance abuse. "Drinks on the Terrace" was the first of several gatherings for Phoenix Associates this year. If you would like more information about Phoenix Associates or future events please call Caren McGratty at 214.717.1800.

## PREVENTION TAKES THE COURT

The Phoenix House Summer Youth Prevention Program in Austin has taken their after-school youth program to a new and uncharted field; they have taken their group into the basketball court. Kids from economically disadvantaged backgrounds involved in the after-school groups have taken part in various creative and recreational activities in the past, but never before have they engaged in sports.

Terrance Simms, who started working at Phoenix House in March 2007, is a former collegiate and professional football player. By June he had a summer sports program up and running. When summer ended, the adolescents had participated in a variety of games, including football, basketball, and baseball. They learned the basic rules of each sport and experienced, for the first time, being part of a team.

For these young athletes, belonging to a team was so powerful that Mr. Simms didn't want the sports program to stop at the end of the summer. He wanted to take it further and went on to form a basketball team with kids in the prevention program's after-school groups. They then joined a league in the fall of 2007. This was the first time these young people had ever taken part in an organized sports program. Although the league had many youths who had been playing together for years, the relatively inexperienced Phoenix House team was able to compete, playing with high spirits and unbridled motivation. By the end of the season, not only



*Coach Simms and his inexperienced but determined team.*

had they improved interpersonal relationships, teamwork and accountability, but they also mastered new basketball techniques. Overall, their team finished second in the twelve-team league—an astonishing accomplishment for these young people who had not previously participated in the game.

Team members performing poorly at school or badly at home had to change their behavior or raise their grades to remain on the team. Many parents came to the games who were previously never involved in the prevention program, and the team's success became a source of community pride.

The purpose of youth sports goes way beyond the technical aspects of the game. Being on a team gives the kids a sense of self-worth and accountability while also teaching goal-setting.

## A FULL HOUSE FOR BRUNCH AND FASHION PREVIEW AT NEIMAN MARCUS

More than eighty Austin women turned out on a Saturday morning in February for a fashion show benefitting the Phoenix House Academy of Austin. This event, Fashion Frills and Brunch Bites, was held at the recently opened Neiman Marcus store located at the Domain. Neiman Marcus graciously sponsored the event, giving Phoenix Houses of Texas the opportunity to tell the "story" of this organization that works to "reclaim the lives of young Texans suffering from substance abuse."

Amber Carden (Executive Vice President, Bank of America) and Martha Ernst (Senior Director, Daniller and Company) as co-chairs, filled the room to capacity with friends and supporters. Marissa, a former client at the Phoenix Academy,

told how far she had come from her difficult times since she entered the Academy two years ago. The treatment and support she received created the path to a new, healthy life.

Everyone enjoyed the luscious brunch and new spring fashion trends. Nancy Nichols, Neiman Marcus store manager, shared her insider secrets on how to create the newest look. To no one's surprise, the shoes proved to be a great hit.

For anyone who missed the event this year, we are pleased to announce that you will have the chance to join us next year. Please mark your calendars for Saturday, February 21, 2009, and if you would like to be involved please contact Caren McGratty at [cmcgratty@phoenixhouse.org](mailto:cmcgratty@phoenixhouse.org).