

Bexar County

Restorative Foster Care Courts:

PEARLS & EAGLES

2021-2022 Annual Report



Message from PEARLS Court Founding Judge Renee Yanta

Dear Friends,

PEARLS Court began just over four years ago—based upon a dream and a mission: Heal, Love, Inspire teen girls in our Foster Care system.

The hurdles were high. We had no funding and no staff. But the need was profound. This population—teen girls spending the rest of their childhood in Foster Care—is highly marginalized. On a national basis, 7 in 10 have a baby while still a teen; only 3 out of 10 graduate from high school; and almost all have unstable “placement”.

Despite these statistics, we refused to believe our teen girls cannot succeed! In fact, as a civil court judge, my experience confirmed these young ladies have strong spirits, loving souls, and brilliant minds. They simply need a greater investment of healthy relationships, inspiring challenges, and trauma-informed therapeutic care—an investment they deserve!

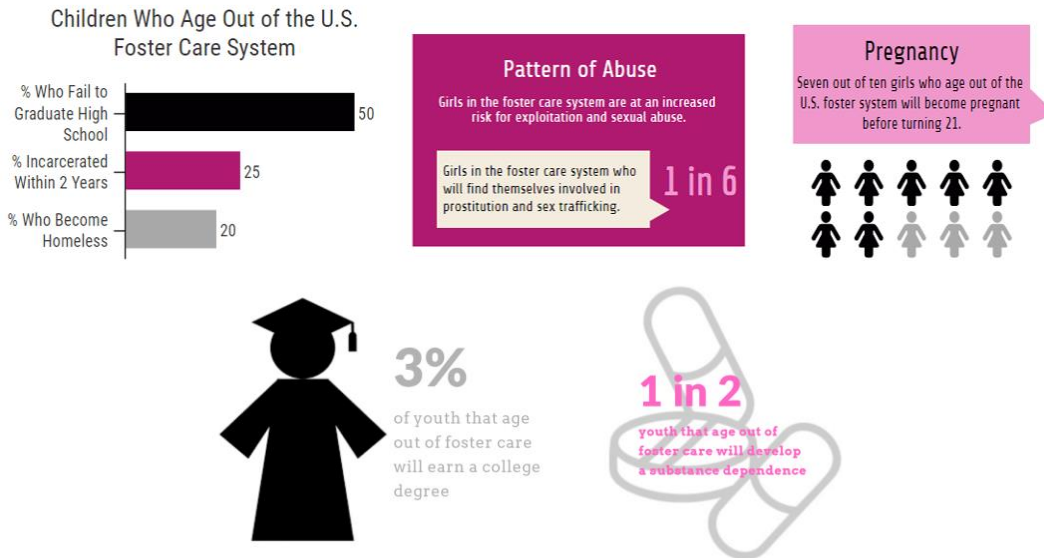
So, we built PEARLS Court in 2015, relying solely on volunteers and inspired by Matthew 13:45-46 and the analogy of pearls as byproducts of healing. We were blessed in October 2016 to receive grant funding, enabling us to hire professional staff to provide the therapy and case management, and administer the life-skill curriculum and mentoring program.

Our outcomes have been heartwarming: Our PEARLS Girls have excelled, motivated by 50+ committed volunteers (giving 1000+ hours of their hearts and lives), dedicated DFPS case workers, remarkably gifted staff, and two impassioned Judges. In the 2020-21 program year five seniors graduated from high school (!!) and three have moved on to college; every Girl planned for their future, every Girl made and kept short and long term goals; every Girl “paid it forward” in service projects, and every Girl learned and strengthened her ability to have strong, permanent healthy relationships. PEARLS Court has been a great success; and we are honored to share this Annual Report with you.

Renee A. Yanta

The Challenge

Children in the foster care system face many challenges.



PEARLS Court History

PEARLS Court was started by Judge Renee Yanta in 2015. It relied solely on volunteers. In January of 2019, Judge Rosie Alvarado and Judge Angelica Jimenez became the judicial leaders of Pearls Court. In 2020, Judge Canales expanded to meet the needs of male youth through the EAGLES Court. These courts now make up the Restorative Foster Care Courts of Bexar County and have a Court Manager, two Court Monitors, two dedicated licensed therapists and a volunteer base of 50+ dedicated individuals. PEARLS Foundation was created to support these efforts and is led by Judge Yanta.



**Founding Judge
Renee Yanta**



**PEARLS
Presiding Judge
Angelica Jimenez
438th Civil District Court**



**PEARLS
Presiding Judge
Rosie Alvarado
408th Civil District Court**



**EAGLES
Presiding Judge
David Canales
73rd Civil District Court**

Our Mission

PEARLS & EAGLES Courts assist youth in learning to value their whole selves and their inherent strengths. The goal is to enable youth to heal from past trauma, build resilience, reach educational goals, develop healthy relationships, and become accomplished adults, role models, and leaders.

In furtherance of these goals, the courts provide a comprehensive continuum of gender responsive services to instill character and address the following:

- trauma,
- life-skills training,
- mentoring and strengthening relationships,
- mental health treatment,
- domestic violence prevention,
- teen pregnancy prevention,
- substance abuse prevention, and
- resiliency and self-esteem building.

Excellence
Achievement
Grit
Learning & Leadership
Esteem
Strength

Preparation
Esteem
Achievement
Resiliency
Learning
Strength & Stamina

The Court Process

These Courts serve youth in foster care, ages 14-18, with current permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) cases in Bexar County. This program takes a customized approach creating an individualized treatment plan for each youth to focus on building inner strengths and empowering their ability to succeed upon graduation from Child Protective Services custody.

Every 3 months, personalized court hearings focus on case management and harnessing resources for each youth.

Each court executes treatment plans using a three-pronged approach:

1. Therapeutic Group Counseling
2. One-on-one time with a mentor who is trained in trauma-informed mentoring
3. Resiliency Training through Life Skills lessons

Support is extended by offering youth the opportunity to participate in an **After Care Program** providing supplementary case management and services to youth who want further encouragement beyond age 18.

The Court Program

Twice a month, youth will join with peers, trauma informed mentors, and court staff to learn new life skills, fellowship, engage in therapy, and harness their strengths to lead healthy, educated, and successful lives.

In addition, both courts introduce youth to new experiences and offer opportunities to invest in their community, to expand their perspective and inspire them to greater service during Days of Opportunity and Days of Service.



This year's Days of Opportunity included college visits, leadership conferences and the PEARLS Annual Career Festival.

This year's Days of Service included volunteering with HallowEast, Meals on Wheels, Brookdale Senior Living Center, and Blueprint Ministries.

***Programming transitioned to a virtual platform during the 2020-2021 year due to COVID. Many of our outcomes were also impacted by this.

Community Partnerships

In addition to our dedicated volunteers, our Courts are blessed to have deep and consistent relationships throughout the Bexar County community. During this program year, we collaborated with The University of Texas at San Antonio and the Bexar County Fostering Educational Success Pilot. We look forward to our continued partnerships with Texas A&M San Antonio, Blueprint Ministries, St. Mary's School of Law, HEB, and NuStar Energy, among many other organizations. Despite COVID, during the 2020-2021 Program Year, volunteers from the community continued to serve as support networks to our youth investing over 800 hours.

Total Youth Reached
(since formation)



134

2022 Volunteer Hours Donated



\$14,598

2022 Volunteers



34

2022 Community Partnerships



15

Outcomes

Primary Outcomes:



43
youth actively
participated in
**PEARLS &
EAGLES Court**



39
youth were
matched with a
mentor from the
community.



100%
Of youth eligible
to graduate high
school
graduated with
their high school
diploma.

PEARLS Court tracks the following outcomes of active participants:

Objective	Target	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Promoted to the next grade level	80%	88%	88%	84%	90%
Progress toward a stable and permanent placement	80%	81%	86%	84%	75%
Exhibit improved stress management	90%	92%	90%	87%	95%
Choosing to postpone parenthood	80%	96%	92%	97%	98%
Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and unprescribed drugs	80%	81%	86%	84%	80%

..... Our Youth Are College Bound.....



50%

of PEARLS Court Youth
have entered Higher
Education



75%

of PEARLS Court Youth
enrolled in college successfully
completed their first year of
college

This year we
celebrated
our very 1st
**COLLEGE
GRADUATE!!**

Restorative Foster Court Team

**Please contact us if you have any questions!
We look forward to partnering with you!**

PEARLS Presiding Judge
Judge Angelica Jimenez

PEARLS Presiding Judge
Judge Rosie Alvarado

EAGLES Presiding Judge
Judge David Canales

PEARLS & EAGLES Court Manager
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EAGLES Court Monitor
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Court Therapists: **Stephanie Ramos & Briana Rodriguez**

