

# Building Connections—Building Community (BC2)

*Changing the Lives of Tomorrow—Today!*

## TCYC—Tarrant County Youth Collaboration

### HISTORY:

Would you believe that TCYC has been serving the communities of Tarrant County, Texas for over 25 years? Well, it's true! Incorporating on July 09, 1981, TCYC was formed by a collaboration consisting of the Junior League of Fort Worth, National Council of Jewish Women, Parenting Guidance Center, City of Fort Worth, Junior League of Arlington, Camp Fire USA First Texas Council, and the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth. Since that time, TCYC has continued to champion a number of initiatives, of which BC2 is just one, which focus on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children, youth, and families living in Tarrant County.

### VISION:

Tarrant County's children are the first priority in every decision and every action.

### MISSION:

To unite and mobilize the citizens of Tarrant County to leverage assets which promote and protect the positive development of our children and our youth.

[www.tcy4kids.org](http://www.tcy4kids.org)

## TCYC teams up with NRH

Imagine helping children at risk of abuse or neglect *before they ever become a victim*. In 2005, the Tarrant County Youth Collaboration (TCYC) and the City of North Richland Hills formed a partnership with civic and business leaders, the local school district, and the faith community to do just that! And so, in July 2005, a federally funded child abuse and neglect project, **Building Connections—Building Community (BC2)**, began.

Initially managed by TCYC, BC2 is a unique collaboration based upon research indicating parents who abuse or neglect their children are more likely to be socially isolated from formal and informal support systems. BC2 partners work together to reduce this social isolation in our community by facilitating two integrated components: a Prevention Component and an Intervention Component.

The *prevention component* seeks to build the social capital infrastructure within the community to help alleviate the social isolation leading to abuse or neglect. By organizing and hosting any number of community events, BC2 team members are able to

*The prevention component seeks to alleviate the social isolation leading to abuse or neglect.*

identify and reach out to neighbors who have somehow become disconnected from the community around them and refer them to the most appropriate services to fit their unique need and circumstances.

For example, at the Smithfield Family Festival held in 2006, TCYC staffed a booth (inset on page 2) at which people could enter for raffle prizes, ask questions, and “get connected.” At the same time, people were asked to answer a simple,

*(Continued on page 2)*

## The FRC Connection

In July 2006, in coordination with TCYC and the BC2 project, the North Richland Hills Police Department implemented the city's first Family Resource Coordinator.

Recognizing the need to position the FRC within closest reach to those we aim to help, this innovative new FRC works directly with police officers and other emer-

gency services personnel so that we can act swiftly as soon as a need is identified. And act we did!

Since joining us in mid-2006, our FRC has received referrals to help over 1,000 families! Fortunately, not every family for which the FRC receives a referral needs

*(Continued on page 2)*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A Brief History of TCYC and its Connection to NRH	1
The Family Resource Coordinator (FRC) Connection	1-2
Choosing North Richland Hills	3
Success Stories	4



# TCYC teams up with NRH

(Continued from page 1)

voluntary survey regarding services to which they would like to receive more information or to which they would like a direct referral. In this manner, BC2 members were able to identify 177 households in attendance and assist 31 families requesting help connecting with such community resources as churches, after-school care, single-parent support classes, etc. By using social events such as this to help



Our Family Resource Coordinator, Geny Court (middle) and other TCYC members

“c o n n e c t” people to the community around them, BC2 members not only strengthen those particular families, but the entire community as well.

The *intervention component* is focused on connecting families at risk of child abuse and/or neglect to natural community resources that will decrease the social isolation of these families and help to strengthen family resiliency *before* CPS involvement becomes necessary.

To do so, our Family Resource Coordinator (FRC) receives referrals from police officers, the BISD School District, and/or CPS screeners which identify families living in conditions leading one to believe the family is *at risk* of child abuse or neglect, but do not yet meet the level necessitating statutorily mandated CPS or other legal intervention. In this manner, the FRC and the North Richland Hills Police Department are now given another means to proactively intervene in the lives of “at-risk” families *before* any injurious conduct is committed. Wow! Now that is an awesome concept. Where police officers may have been once forced to walk away, powerlessly, from bad situations, the inclusion of this new FRC now gives us another outlet to help before something truly bad occurs.

After receiving a referral, our Family Resource Coordinator will attempt contact with the family within 48 hours. During that time, the FRC will assess any specific need and simply ask the individual/family if they would like help getting connected not only to social services, but to the community around them. The FRC’s job is to convince a parent to *voluntarily* take the first step on the path to family resiliency and then to help them connect with the most appropriate resources to help them do so. The FRC model is a 30-day intervention. ✨

## The FRC Connection

(Continued from page 1)

help, but many do. Of the more than 1,000 referrals received, our FRC successfully contacted over 698 families and, of those, 548 successfully and voluntarily completed their Community Connections plan.

After receiving a referral and making contact with a family, our FRC helps the parent develop a **Community Connections** plan which includes options for connecting both adults and the children to a range of natural community resources that are geographically accessible to the family and are designed to help strengthen family resiliency. Such options may include connections to appropriate faith community resources, local parks and recreations offerings, support groups, organized athletics, and much more.

And by helping to make these connections, our FRC is not only helping to break down the social isolation which may have the family in a

stranglehold of abusive, neglectful, or other destructive behaviors, but our FRC is also connecting these families to resources and support groups directly alleviating the underlying stressors leading to damaging family interactions in the first place!

Unfortunately, despite the tremendous success of our FRC and the value it brings to our city, there is risk the FRC program may not always remain here in NRH. Now that the BC2 network has taken root here, the Tarrant County Youth Collaboration is preparing to leave and replicate the success of the BC2 project elsewhere. And while the collaborative partnerships and the mission remain, the original funding of the FRC, which was made through a federal grant which expired at the end of 2007, does not. **To learn how your organization might help keep generations of children and families safe for years to come, contact the North Richland Hills Police Department at 817-427-7025.** ✨

### Community Events

#### **SMITHFIELD FAMILY FESTIVAL:**

BC2 hosted its first community event in 2006. Targeting the neighborhoods in the Smithfield Elementary School attendance zone, this event was no ordinary block party! True, it had all the fun and festivities of a block party, but it also had real work going on behind the scenes. And because of this event, BC2 team members were able to not only identify persons in need of customary referral services, but were also able to identify and help 5 people reporting to be in a state of acute crisis.

#### **PARKPALOOZA:**

BC2 hosted this neighborhood event, targeting the Mullendore Elementary School attendance zone, in 2007. Similar to the fun and festivities of its predecessor, this event also contributed to real results with even greater success! At this event, 221 families registered with 91 requesting direct assistance from our Family Resource Coordinator. That is what BC2 is all about!



The BC2 Advantage

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:**

The Tarrant County Youth Collaboration provided the impetus for the creation of Building Connections—Building Community (BC2) and provided, at least initially, the administrative and fiscal oversight of the project. But the true driving force of BC2 has always been and remains the grassroots, community partnerships which have led to its continued success. And that was done with purpose.

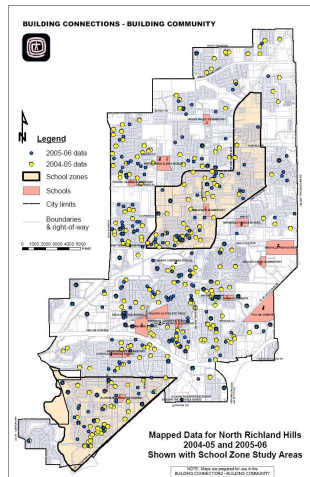
TCYC recognized there would come a time when their mission would lead them into other communities and, therefore, away from NRH. That time has come. But because TCYC and the City of NRH carefully planted the seed, BC2 continues to grow, live and breathe in our community.

In fact, the core group leaders in the city, BISD, and the faith community meet regularly to cultivate that seed to ensure BC2 continues to thrive as we progress into the future!

# Choosing North Richland Hills

At this point, you may be reading this and asking yourself, “So, why here? Why a nice city like North Richland Hills?” Put simply, we saw a need—a need to proactively intervene in the lives of *all* children in our community to ensure that each is given the ability to live a life without fear or neglect so that each may *truly* live and love...life.

Like the City of North Richland Hills, TCYC also recognized this need. And so, work began in 2005 to build a unique partnership that continues today. That partnership now includes three geographically distinct teams working within the city and comprised of TCYC, the City of NRH, the Birdville Independent School District, nearly ten different churches and faith organizations located inside the city, and numerous other non-profits and individuals lending support and expertise in creative and various ways. That winning partnership is Building Connections—Building Community (BC2)!



Mapping conducted by TCYC. The shaded portions encase the two school attendance zones being focused upon.

an effort to determine where the group’s efforts could best be focused.

Despite the realization that this increase could be, and likely was, influenced by any number of factors including continued population growth in the city, possible changes in reporting and report tracking criteria, and an increased resolution by emergency services personnel to report even those cases believed to be below the necessary,



Parkalooza was promoted as a Neighborhood Block Party. Here, a sign welcomes visitors to the festival.

albeit sometimes frustrating, threshold for CPS investigation to ensure that no abused child slips past the system, TCYC concluded, nonetheless, this mapping process provided the best visible indicator of areas within the city having the most need. And so, based in part upon patterns and groupings of reports discovered from these maps, TCYC ultimately decided to focus upon two distinct

school attendance zones encircling the Smithfield Elementary School in the northern portion of the city and the Mullendore Elementary School down south.

Following the formation of this BC2 partnership, the city subsequently realized an 8.7% decrease in child abuse and neglect cases reported to CPS by the end of 2005. And although this decrease cannot, and should not, be contributed to the efforts of TCYC or BC2 alone, it may be significant to acknowledge that the Smithfield Elementary School attendance zone experienced a 30% decrease in CPS referrals from July 2005 to June 2006, while the Mullendore Elementary School attendance zone experienced a 34% decrease during the same time period.

Due in large part to the success of the first two teams, BC2 has now added a third team to focus efforts within the Academy at Carrie F. Thomas (elementary) school attendance zone and the group will continue to evaluate other areas within the city that may benefit by having similar teams in place.

Undoubtedly, this type of progressive and proactive response to help tackle such a meaningful problem as child abuse and neglect is certainly nothing new to a city like North Richland Hills, but it is definitely one to be proud of all the same!



A lucky raffle winner shows off his new bike!

So when we are asked, “Why North Richland Hills,” the answer is clear. We value all life. From the youngest to the oldest, this is our community. This is who we are!



# True Meaning of “Success”

*Building Connections—Building Community (BC2) has numerous success stories. These are just two, real-life examples (names have been changed) of how BC2 and our Family Resource Coordinator has made a difference in the life of our community.*

The North Richland Hills Police Department referred Mary and her children to the BC2 program after police officers had responded to her home on a domestic violence call. The report read that there was domestic violence occurring in the home. In this instance, Mary reported her husband tried to choke her and had been very abusive to her children. At the time, Mary was pregnant, still living with her husband, and feeling very overwhelmed.

When the Family Resource Coordinator became involved, Mary already knew she wanted to leave her abusive husband, but she was afraid of what he might do and of starting all over again. The FRC gained Mary’s trust and helped Mary develop her [Community Connections](#) plan. Mary voluntarily followed all the suggested steps of her plan and even agreed to accept the FRC’s help obtaining counseling for herself and her children. Using discretionary funds, the FRC also paid for recreational classes for Mary’s children.

Through it all, Mary realized she was in an abusive relationship that would not improve, so she gathered all the strength she needed to finally leave her husband. She and her children now happily live in their own home and Mary has a full-time job to support her family. They even decided to continue the kids’ recreational classes. Although Mary is divorced, she is very proud of herself and of her courage. She and her kids are now doing great and more importantly they are finally *safe*.

Karen is a single mom who was introduced to BC2 after CPS received a report that Karen’s 16-year-old daughter had been abusive to her 4-year-old sister. Although this case did not meet the threshold level for CPS intervention, the intake caseworker promptly referred it to our Family Resource Coordinator so that the family could be helped before the situation deteriorated even further.

When the FRC first became involved, Karen didn’t have the money to obtain the

needed counseling for her family. Being a busy single mom, she had also become disconnected from the community around her and was feeling very isolated and alone.

The positive connection between the FRC and Karen’s family was almost immediate and Karen developed her [Community Connections](#) plan during the very first visit! By the end of the month, Karen’s 16-year-old daughter was no longer abusive toward her sister or anyone else. In fact, she now joyfully helps out around the house and helps care for her sister.

With the FRC’s help, she had enrolled in counseling to help resolve her anger issues and even began taking painting lessons to learn how to express herself positively. Using discretionary funds, the FRC also paid to enroll the 4-year-old into her first month of pre-school which Karen chose to continue afterward. As part of her [Community Connections](#) plan, Karen even started attending a local church, where she later began meeting with a single parents support group.

Karen’s family is very happy now. But Karen’s story also has a unique and particularly happy ending for her. Five months after successfully closing Karen’s case, our Family Resource Coordinator received a phone call from Karen with an invitation to her wedding! It seems Karen found true love while attending her church and she wanted to invite the person who helped make her new life possible. ✨

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*We at the North Richland Hills Police Department and within the rest of the [Building Connections—Building Community \(BC2\)](#) network invite you to witness new success stories as the BC2 project and our Family Resource Coordinator move into the future.*

*To learn how you can make a difference and how, working together, we can ensure continued funding for the FRC program, please contact the North Richland Hills Police Department at 817-427-7025.*

## Final Words: How We Help, Together

### **BC2:**

It is important to reiterate that BC2 is more than just a program, it’s a movement! BC2 thrives on the cooperative, synergistic relationships that compose its makeup. Each member breathes life to the project and brings an energy that ensures the group continues to look for new and creative ways to combat the social problems associated with child abuse and neglect.

BC2 also continually looks beyond its core leadership in TCYC, the City, BISD, and the various faith organizations represented in the group to build effective relationships with other individuals and organizations having similar goals. For example, one such relationship is the one TCYC has built with Strong Fathers/Strong Families. Strong Fathers, as its name implies, is an organization which strives to build strong families through the effective, caring and nurturing leadership of the father.

By continually looking for new and effective relationships such as this, BC2 continues to grow, improve, and succeed—for the children!

### **For more information:**

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Police Department**

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