

# Non-Profit Organizations

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## The Jesse Tree Celebrates Cultural Diversity and Healthy Living

The Jesse Tree is not your grandfather's Oldsmobile! Founded in Galveston in 1995, we are a convening organization that helps individuals integrate healthcare, social services and ministerial assistance. As a "hybrid" organization, fueled with dignity and compassion we take people to unexpected places. For example, in the past year over 50,000 people have been fed though one or more of The Jesse Tree's nutrition programs but most were surprised to discover that in addition to food, they received medical screening, education or multiple enrollments in social services, medical programs or services to assist their families. Using the internet and an electronic case-management system, The Jesse Tree imposes no eligibility restrictions, because we know that everyone needs help at one time or another and guides individuals and families toward the help and support for which they are eligible. This saves time, gas, and frustration while promoting independence, self-sufficiency and dignity. As a faith-based, ecumenical program, we help people, body, mind and spirit, by offering holistic services and support in concert with the individual's beliefs. The Jesse Tree creates a safety-net of services by linking local faith communities of every denomination, social services and healthcare options - with a special focus on the uninsured, low-income and vulnerable of the community.

Galveston is a melting pot of cultures languages and ethnicities. The Jesse Tree incorporates cultural projects that celebrate the diversity and creativity of our community. Peter Davis, Chief of Galveston Island Beach Patrol pioneered the Survivor's Support

Network that summons The Jesse Tree to drowning scenes where trained team members support family members, while the Beach Patrol searches for the victim. This compassionate response to critical local incidents has become an international model for beach communities to employ an effective response for the survivors when a drowning occurs. Like most of us, Peter Davis has other interests. As an artist inspired by his travels in Africa, he created an exhibit entitled "Begendings", large panels, in acrylic and mixed media on canvas that convey his impressions of cultural exchange between African and Western cultures. Unfortunately, the panels were submerged in ten feet of Hurricane Ike's floodwater in 2008. However, they were quickly salvaged, transported to the porch of Jeff Kaler's "Lasker House" where they were washed, sprayed and allowed to dry. Today they are proudly displayed on the walls of the re-claimed case management and education centers at The Jesse Tree where they are enjoyed by clients and visitors. Several panels are available for sale by individual appointment only.

Those who visited The Jesse Tree prior to the flood may recall the collection of handmade wall hangings collected during medical mission trips throughout Central and South America or the African art objects that decorated the office of David Mitchell, the Director of Programs and Services. Many of these items were salvaged, as well. David brings another aspect of culture to The Jesse Tree through his Music Project. He and his many musician friends often provide contemporary and spiritually uplifting



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songs at Food Fairs and other Jesse Tree events.

The Jesse Tree's Chronic Conditions Management Program, Directed by Darlene Cass, RN, puts a great deal of emphasis on culturally friendly foods and how modifying traditional recipes can reduce fats, sugars and salt, but leaving those familiar, comforting flavors. Prior to the storm, The Houston Food Bank sent area chefs to The Jesse Tree to provide cooking classes. Currently the Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service offers Better Living for Texans, a nutrition education program food preparation safety and resource management for those with limited resources.

Sandra Martinez Geary, Director of the Bilingual Telephone Help Line handles the Community Switchboard and offers translation and interpretation services. After Hurricane Ike, translators for French, Vietnamese, Spanish and Creole were called upon to assist storm victims. She is assisted by Ana Rivera, who is also employed by the College of the Mainland offering English as a Second Language (ESL) classes twice daily on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in The Jesse Tree Education Center. Rosa Salinas recently joined the staff as bilingual receptionist and greeter.

Each year, The Unitarian Universalist Fel-



### Food Fair Schedule 2009

#### October

- Oct. 23rd - LaMarque
- Oct. 28th - Bacliff
- Oct. 30th - Galveston & Hitchcock

#### November

- Nov. 2nd - Texas City
- Nov. 6th - LaMarque
- Nov. 13th - Galveston & Hitchcock
- Nov. 16th - Texas City
- Nov. 20th - LaMarque
- Nov. 23rd - Galveston & Hitchcock
- Nov. 24th - Bacliff

#### December

- Dec. 4th - LaMarque
- Dec. 7th - Texas City
- Dec. 11th - Galveston & Hitchcock
- Dec. 18th - LaMarque

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Name: Community Action Cou; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a709143; Size: 8 in

Name: Jesse Tree; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black plus three; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a709169; Size: 8 in

Name: United Way Galveston; Width: 19p10; Depth: 4 in; Color: Black; Comment: Size: 8.00 SP:MB; Ad Number: a709142; Size: 8 in

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