

## EXPECTATION GRADUATION ROOM PILOT PROJECT

### Supporting at-risk students

In 2004, 50 at-risk HISD students from Lee, Sterling, Yates and Madison High Schools signed a *YES Mayor White, I Will Complete High School Commitment Card*, promising that they would stay in school and graduate in 2009.

Hashoo Foundation USA created the Expectation Graduation Room pilot project in conjunction with Houston Independent School District (HISD), Expectation Graduation and the City of Houston Digital Inclusion WeCan program to recognize the achievements of 50 at-risk low income students who signed the 'YES Mayor White, I Will Complete High School' Commitment Card in 2004. Despite tremendous adversity, these students fulfilled their commitment to graduate from high school in 2009 and took the first steps toward building better lives for themselves and their families. Hashoo Foundation and its partners awarded each student with resources that promote a positive learning environment, support the family's involvement in the student's education, and reinforce the student's commitment to growing academically and socially.

A press conference celebrating the students awarded with the Expectation Graduation Room package was hosted by HISD in Houston, Texas, on September 8, 2009, at Sterling High School. Participants included Houston Mayor Bill White, HISD Interim Chief Academic Officer Thelma Garza, Students and their parents, project partners and Hashoo Foundation USA Executive Director Cristal Montañéz Baylor. During the event students' families were connected to the resources available to them through community organizations such as United Way THRIVE, ACCION Texas, Dress for Success and University of St. Thomas MicroCredit Program to ensure these students and their families have all the support they need as the students begin their experience in college or a career.

Based on the result of the need assessment conducted by HISD of the selected students and their families, Hashoo Foundation USA and HISD team and volunteers delivered the graduation packages to each of the student's home and interview the families. The graduation packages included the following items which promotes a positive learning environment: refurbished computer, desk, desk lamp and chair; twin size bed, pillows, two sets of sheets, a blanket, a mattress pad, a dust ruffle and comforter; night stand and chest of drawers; Good Bear of the World (GBW), Tsunamikas Doll and T-shirt. The award package aims to serve as a visual representation of the students' success, and to support the families' involvement in their students' education and reinforce the students' commitment to growing academically and socially. Each family completed a delivery questionnaire which led to the following findings.

#### **Delivery Questionnaire findings:**

##### **Out of the 50 students selected by HSID to participate in the project**

33 Students received their Expectation Graduation Room package

2 Students did not graduate

15 Relocated

Each of the 33 recipients were interviewed by Hashoo Foundation during the delivery of the Expectation Graduation Room package.

**Cultural diversity - the students represent several countries and cultures**

- 17 African American
- 10 Hispanic (Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala)
- 3 Asian (Pakistan, Bangladesh, India)
- 3 African (New Guinea, Congo)

**Students sex**

- 25 Females
- 9 Males

**People in household of selected students**

- 144 Direct impact
  - 37 Under 18 years old
  - 107 Over 18 years old

**Where are the students today?**

- 21 Attending a 4-year university
- 8 Attending a community college
- 1 Attending a vocational training
- 3 Applied/enrolled to attend HCC Spring 10

**Scholarships**

- Out of the 33 students
  - 12 Attending school on scholarships

**Financial aid**

- 20 Applied for financial aid
- 3 Need help requesting financial aid
- 3 Need more financial aid
- 8 Interested in UST micro credit loan

**Employment**

- 8 Employed
- 25 Non employed
- 7 Seeking Employment

**Computers**

- 10 Students have computers
  - 3 Internet access
  - 3 Not internet access
  - 3 Not working properly
  - 23 Did not have computers

**Expectation Graduation Room Pilot Project from the student's perspective**

*Now I have a computer desk to do my work. It is a great experience to be awarded for completing a goal.*  
- Kelly Cruz, Ross Sterling High School

*It was so nice to be rewarded for making a commitment. Now, every time I see this stuff, I'm going to work even harder. I will be able to teach my father to send emails to improve his business.*  
-M'ballou Berete, Robert E. Lee High School

*Now I can sit in my desk to study and do my assignments in the computer.*  
- Deja Smith, Ross Sterling High School

*I love my expectation graduation room package. I've set up all my items from my package and I put my computer together and decided to email you. I am truly thankful for this. I am still very speechless, but I am thankful to know that when you do good things you can be rewarded for it.*

- De'bhi'Omonique' Locks, Ross Sterling High School

*This graduation package will benefit my sister and me because now most of the school work is online. Having my own computer and desk will help me improve my grades and set my priorities in an easier way.*

-Cynthia Garcia, Robert E. Lee High School

*The Expectation Graduation Room package will make things easier for me as I go to school. I won't have to spend long hours in the library doing my assignments. Now, I can do them from my own dorm.*

- Brittney Dotson, Madison High School

*Now, I have my own bed and comforter which makes me proud of myself. The computer will be used for homework and for other resources.*

- Christina Llano, Ross Sterling High School

### **Our Partners**

The Expectation Graduation Room pilot project is made possible thanks to the passion and collaboration of the following local organizations, working together to recognize students' success and provide encouragement and opportunities for a better future: HISD, Expectation Graduation, City of Houston Digital Inclusion WeCan program Tech Corps Texas, University of St. Thomas MicroCredit Program (UST MCP), Orr Textiles Company, Ramada Inn (Will Clayton Parkway), Star Furniture, Wal-Mart, The Divas, Furniture Bank, Leela Krishnamurthy & friends, Montañez Baylor Foundation, and Greater Houston Women Chamber of Commerce (GHWCC).

### **Students helping Students!**

The University of St. Thomas MicroCredit Program (UST MCP) students committed to raising the necessary funds to offer a low-interest micro-credit loan to one of the graduating students to support his/her education expenses at a community college in the Houston area.

### **A Clinton Global Initiative Commitment to Action**

The Expectation Graduation Room Pilot Project is Hashoo Foundation's Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Commitment to Action for the 2009 Education Portfolio.

### **About HISD**

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 295 schools and more than 200,000 students. The 301-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with nearly 30,000 employees. As a result of tremendous academic gains in recent years, a record 200 HISD schools achieved Texas' top ratings of Exemplary or Recognized in 2009. [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org)

### **About Expectation Graduation**

In May 2004, Houston First Lady Andrea White and HISD hosted the "Expectation Graduation" summit to help more students complete high school by increasing public awareness of the dropout issue, developing ways to address it, creating action plans based on those strategies, and actively engaging local leaders in carrying out those plans. Hundreds of business and community leaders, parents, and students attended the event, and one of the many initiatives that grew from it was HISD's "Reach Out to Dropouts" (ROTD) walk. Held every fall since 2004, ROTD recruits hundreds of HISD and community volunteers to visit dropouts' homes and persuade many of the students to return to school to continue their education.

The Reach Out to Dropouts walk is now in its fifth year. The first walk engaged 1,300 volunteers to walk in eight Houston Independent School District (HISD) neighborhoods. Over the years the program has grown to include more than 6,000 volunteers walking in neighborhoods of six large Texas cities. Taken

together, over 5,500 students have returned to school and more than 500 of these students have already graduated thanks to the Walk and the Dropout Prevention Specialists. The program has garnered so much attention that officials from several other cities and states have called to get advice on how to do the walk.  
<http://www.houstontx.gov/education/expectation.html>

**About the Hashoo Foundation**

Our mission is to enable and empower communities to be independent by facilitating equitable access to opportunities through economic development, education and skills development, supporting people with special needs, and providing emergency relief and social welfare.

Hashoo Foundation USA is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization in the US and a registered charity in UK.

Since 1999, Hashoo Foundation has sponsored programs that provide access to quality education for out-of-school and drop-out-children in the remote areas of Pakistan. Following the Foundation interest to support at-risk students, Hashoo Foundation USA is supporting the Expectation Graduation Program and the Reach-out to Drop-out Walk in Houston as a way to give back to the local community.

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

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