

To Protect

**Office of Victim Assistance
& Safe Environment
Archdiocese of San
Antonio**



Special points of interest:

CBCS on VIRTUS

New Year/New
Commitments

2020: A Year
Unlike Any Other

In this issue:

Criminal Background Checks 1

New Year, New 2

Holiday Events 2

2020: A Year Unlike Any Other 3

Director's Cut 4

December 2020

Volume 14, Issue 4



**Good
News!!!**

Criminal Background Checks are now on VIRTUS

**As of November 2020, all
Criminal Background Checks will be
submitted via VIRTUS.**

We no longer utilize EAPPS.

**Parish/ School Facilitator's; please contact our
office for instructions on how to enter
Criminal Background Checks
for you Parish, School or Organization.**

A New Year, A New Commitment

With 2021 approaching, we look back on 2020 and recognize that being a Safe Environment Facilitator is a huge job! Many of you are not full time employees, only part time volunteers. We do recognize that we all have a full plate. We just ask for everyone to take the time during the New Year to re-evaluate their own lives. Ask yourself the following questions: Am I committed to the mission of this Ministry? Do I have the personal and emotional energy that it will require? Do I have the passion to help others? Praise God if you answered YES! We ask that you pray for our Ministry's continued support and strengthen your commitment in 2021. If you answered NO, to any of the questions, then we ask that you pray for guidance. The Lord will help you make the decision if this is the Ministry for you. You can even call our office and we will offer guidance. We ask those who are in this Ministry to "re-commit" to the mission of protecting children as we start a new year.

Our office will support each and every one of you in 2021 in any way possible. We will continue to be available by phone, email, or by personal visits. Whatever your needs are, we will do our best to meet them. That is our commitment to you this New Year!



Holiday Events in San Antonio

Whataburger Zoo Lights : Thru 12/31— Experience the Zoo in a whole new lights. Admission required.

FORD Fiesta De Las Luminarias: Thru 12/20—Experience the Holiday serenity of the Riverwalk as you stroll along the lush banks of the San Antonio River guided by more than 2,000 luminarias.

Old West Christmas Light Fest: Thru 12/25—What's better than 2 Million lights? An entire town! 86-acres in Enchanted Springs Ranch in Boerne. Online purchase; Military/First responder discount.

Holiday in the Park: Thru 1/3—Six Flags Fiesta Texas is transformed into a Winter Wonderland with millions of colorful twinkling lights throughout the park with meet and greets with Santa and his helpers! Tickets Required.

Ford Holiday Boat Caroling: Thru 12/22—Sing the Holidays by Caroling with friends and family as you watch Boats float by our Riverwalk. Various times throughout the evenings; Free.

Seaworld San Antonio's Christmas Celebration: Thru 1/3— Included with park admission; Seaworld's Christmas Celebration is back with Santa, Sea Lions, over 9 million shimmering lights, and so much more! Admission Required.



2020: A Year Unlike Any Other

By: Storie N. Arredondo

We spent that Friday of Spring Break 2020 at the San Antonio Zoo for a 5th grade field trip. Feeding giraffes, laughing with classmates and teachers. That weekend, we went about our days, I'm sure. Spring Break was our first introduction to "Quarantining" and, like a majority of San Antonian's; my 4 sons and I filled our days with TV, video games, and daily walks. Quarantine became a new, fun challenge to see what "stay at home" activities we could come up with. Recipes were googled, bread was made, we pulled out that 100pc bucket of sidewalk chalk, we crafted, and we laughed. We binged on a lot of movie marathons, we wore LOTS and LOTS of loungewear.

We prayed. We prayed for the world, we prayed to keep the virus at bay, we prayed others would follow and practice social distancing, we prayed for the Blessing of not feeling the strain of being confined at home. We had shelter, we had food, we had running water, we had electricity, and we even had luxuries like WIFI, Netflix, and Hulu. We even had toilet paper!! That bliss was short lived; news hit that schools would be out and we all learned a new phrase: DISTANCE LEARNING. Quickly, we were applying for electronic devices, because with 4 school age boys, one device would not suffice. We started adjusting daily routines to accommodate working from home and distance learning; printing out various class schedules, finding work stations for the boys. Settling with the office on how we were going to tackle working from home; finding a work station for mom...I was out in the laundry room. It was still new, still exciting, well as exciting as a working parent with kids during a brand new life experience being experienced worldwide...a Pandemic.

My Community band together; offering grocery shopping for elderly or frail neighbors, offering lunches of PB&J to hungry neighbor kids, lots of chalk messages of Hope on driveways for families out on walks. The schoolyear ended and now a COVID-summer was upon us. Backyard pools sold out just as quickly as toilet paper. Slip-n-slides were dusted off and re-patched, "fun in the sun" took on a whole new meaning. We tried our best to keep our sanity. Some of us tried meditation, others a new hobby, or some, home improvement. Others comforted one another, ensuring we'd make it; we'd all pull through this "new normal" together. We tried our best to keep in touch with family and friends; Zoom meetings, Google Hangouts, FaceTime, various apps that allowed multiple friends to chat, cry, karaoke, watch TV together, and many times, just simply be on the other end.

In a blink, our pandemic summer was over; a new school year was upon us, all parents were anxious to embark on a different school journey. None of us knew what that would look like. We were all in the same boat...a sense of Community...even in tough times, we were reminded that we were not alone. Once again we were accommodating, juggling, failing, and succeeding at both working from home and distance learning. We all realized how we took Schools for granted; at least I did. The "newness" of quarantine has worn off; we are tired, we are a new level of exhaustion. Christmas is upon us, and things are looking different.

It is 10 days until Christmas and there are no presents under our tree; in our household it seems as if the last 9 months have shown us we already have what we need. Jesus will be born, Santa will be by, whether your gifts are under the tree or around it, let's give ourselves some Grace; 2020 was a year to be Grateful for all we have. I pray we all take time, within the next 2 weeks, to look back and be Proud of the Journey we embarked, just like Noah, we had no idea where God was leading us, but we walk in Faith. Always with Faith.

Scheduled Training

Please contact your Safe Environment Coordinator at your Parish for a list of Scheduled Training.

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

This has been a challenging year. I believe that we are all stressed and emotionally exhausted. However, with these challenges comes hope. At times, hope is all we can grasp on to. Hope that things will get better, Hope that life will return to some normalcy. Hope that we will come together. In the end, hope is faith, and faith is power. Power to overcome, power to heal, and power to overcome.

With this year came some big changes within the Archdiocese of San Antonio. For OVASE, we became responsible for Criminal Background Checks throughout the diocese. As soon as we took over, the process of completing a background check changed.

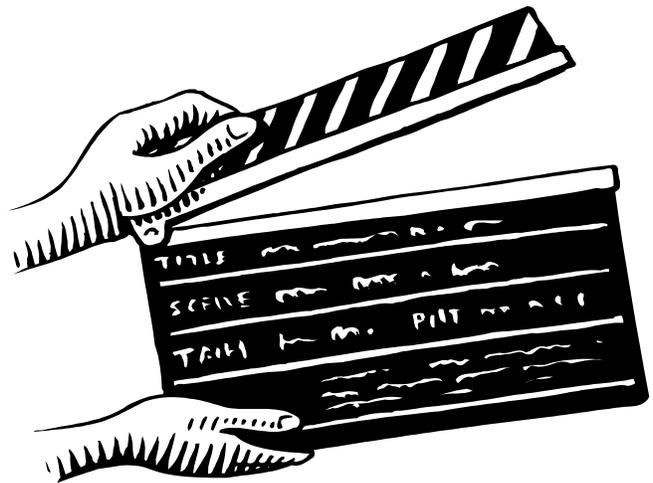
We changed the process in order to make things easier for everyone. Instead of having a process for background checks and a process for training, we decided to consolidate down to one. All Safe Environment issues (background checks and trainings) are all being done and tracked through Virtus.

The process is still being ironed out and finalized, however, as of this date, background checks are being conducted through Virtus. Once the process is finalized, OVASE will be sending out instructions to all within the Archdiocese. We ask that everyone be

patient and understanding while we work out all the bugs. If you have any questions or need assistance with a background check, please contact OVASE at 210-734-7786.

Thank you for all of your hard work and determination in ensuring that this ministry is successful.

- Steve Martinez, LCSW, LSOTP





Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment

St. Peter Prince of the Apostle

135 Barilla Pl.

San Antonio, Texas, 78209

Tel: 210-734-7786 or 1-877-700-1888

Fax: 210-738-8278 E-mail: ovase@archsa.org