



**FOOD**

# HOPE FOR ALL

**Boys Hope Girls Hope gives support, guidance**

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The table is a little longer and more people crowd around it, but dinnertime at Boys Hope Girls Hope of Baton Rouge is not much different than that of any other family. Maybe the pots hold more food, but the banter around the dinner table is typical.

The privately funded, nonprofit, multid denominational organization helps academically capable and motivated children in need “by providing value-centered, neighborhood homes with qualified live-in counselors who provide support, guidance and discipline,” Development Director Cindy Macha said. “Our children are provided

opportunities and education in first-rate schools through college.”

Its “scholars,” as the residents are called, are expected to attend cultural and enrichment activities, help counselors with daily living tasks, participate in extracurricular activities at school and within the community, and older children are required to obtain summer jobs to begin saving for college, she said.

Every month, volunteers from Adams and Reese law firm provide a homemade dinner for children at Boys Hope Girls Hope to give the live-in staff a break from cooking.

On a recent Monday night, six boys, ages 12 to 17, and three girls were at dinner when the law firm group prepared a three-course dinner and then sat down to eat with them and their counselors.

The cooks are part of the law firm’s employee volunteer program, HUGS, which stands for Hope, Understanding, Giving and Support.

Attorney Melissa Grand, who's on the Boys Hope Girls Hope board of directors, came with her two young children, who are regular visitors at the home.

Tina Marshall, who helped coordinate the law firm's visits, said the group began coming once a month a year ago.

"Four attorneys each also do separate dinners here with their own families once a month," she said.

"It's inspiring to see them (the home's scholars) want to succeed," added Marshall's daughter, Stephanie.

The law firm's volunteers are part of a regular army of volunteers who prepare meals at the home.

"Sometimes the kids help cook," program director Audra Ray said, but "usually one lady or family comes and then the children help prepare the meal."

The boys live in the home with the live-in counselors while the girls, ages 16 and 17, come for tutoring and computer time, Bridget Dougherty explained.

"My mom says I'm a good cook. I make omelets and pancakes for breakfast," said 13-year-old Angel Arita, as the Sacred Heart eighth-grader enjoyed Pastalaya prepared by Kevin Crasto, whose wife, Reneé, is an attorney at Adams and Reese.

"For the most part, I like everything they serve," said Josh Shepherd, 17, a senior at Catholic High School.

"Everyone's favorite dish is enchiladas."



