



BakerRipley



COMMUNITY IN ACTION

BakerRipley Team,
Partners, and Volunteers
committed to delivering
aid and services in time of
crisis after Hurricane
Beryl

PROGRAM IMPACT

NEWSLETTER
August 2024

FEATURE FROM THE COVER

BakerRipley Team, Partners, and Volunteers Rally after Hurricane Beryl

On July 8, 2024, Hurricane Beryl unleashed severe destruction across Houston, converting roads into waterways and leaving millions of citizens without power. Many residents faced significant losses, including food and shelter, as their homes sustained damage. In response, BakerRipley collaborated with the American Red Cross to establish emergency shelters at two community centers: BakerRipley East End Campus (Ripley House) and the BakerRipley Gulfton-Sharpstown Campus.

The Ripley House Campus operated as a shelter from July 10 to July 18, while the Gulfton-Sharpstown Campus provided shelter from July 10 to July 17. These facilities offered immediate relief, including 150 beds for those displaced by the hurricane, as well as access to essential services, meals, and a safe environment during the extreme heat. Additionally, the BakerRipley Central office was opened to team members and their families for cooling relief.

To further assist the community, BakerRipley coordinated food distributions at locations including the Pasadena Campus, Ripley Campus, Gulfton-Sharpstown Campus, and Aldine Campus. These distributions provided essential supplies such as water, hot meals, fresh produce, MREs (Meals Ready-to-Eat), and included solar chargers.

BakerRipley also partnered with the Salvation Army, the Houston Texans, and the Near Northside Community Response Team (NNCRT) in hurricane response efforts. Volunteers from HP and the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce provided additional support. BakerRipley remains committed to delivering aid and impactful service in times of crisis.



BAKERRIPLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

BakerRipley Schools Kickoff for the 2024-25 School Year



BakerRipley Community Schools is welcoming the 2024-25 school year. Most of the team professionals have been hired and have participated in the annual start of year summit. The Summit focused on ensuring a smooth transition to the new school year for educators. Team-building activities are offered to foster connections among team members, alongside professional development sessions customized by the district team to equip everyone with the necessary knowledge for the upcoming year. As preparations to welcome students continue, final touches are being made to classrooms, and efforts are ramping up for a year of learning, growth, and achievement, guiding students towards true choice.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

East Aldine Annual Summer Bash

The annual East Aldine Campus Summer Bash event was held on July 20th and was a resounding success. The event was attended by 68 neighborhood families who enjoyed a day of sun, water, fun, and food. Participants received free hot dogs, and the local Raising Cane's and the Harris County Sheriff's Office provided 120 bread boxes to families. Soil to Hand provided water to keep everyone hydrated and water games which kept children cooled and entertained. The BakerRipley Fab Lab provided STEM related activities and participants created tags for the community center's large metal tree. Chick-fil-A provided chicken meals to volunteers and families. Volunteers included medical students from Lone Star College-East Aldine. The event highlighted the unveiling and ribbon-cutting of a new Little Library, made possible by Friends of High Meadows Library and Jed's Hardware & Lumber. In addition, the Westfield Fire Department engaged with the community, and Eastex Jensen Neighborhood School promoted its PK program for 3 and 4-year-olds.



HEAD START

Preparing for the New School Year

The BakerRipley Head Start Program has been preparing for the start of the 2024-25 school year. The leadership team worked all through June and July to develop plans for a successful year. Intensive leadership learning sessions were led by an educational consulting group with a focus on teamwork and leadership development. Leaders completed “The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team” assessments and analyzed their results. At the conclusion of training, Dr. Adrian Yam shared his vision and goals for the upcoming school year.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health Promotion Program to younger populations



The BakerRipley Health Promotion Program has long been dedicated to providing evidence-based programming to Seniors across Harris County, focusing on critical areas such as falls prevention, diabetes management, and physical activity. This year the Health Promotion Program team set a new goal: to broaden the reach and impact to younger populations. The expansion plans included the introduction of new evidence-based programs, such as an asthma management education program for elementary students, and the adaptation of existing programs to better serve the diverse needs of the younger community.



A notable example of this effort is a collaboration with MD Anderson's Be Well Acres Homes Initiative, which allowed BakerRipley to offer physical activity programs to all residents of Acres Homes, not just Seniors. By reaching different age groups, the team is working to impact health outcomes at an earlier stage in life.

Bingocize program sessions were held on Mondays and Wednesdays from March 26th through May 29th at Anderson Academy Elementary School. The program engaged children in physical activity and educated them on nutrition, providing them with valuable tools to stay active and healthy outside of school. The program concluded by participating in the school's field day, ensuring that every student left with the resources they needed to start their summer break on a healthy note.



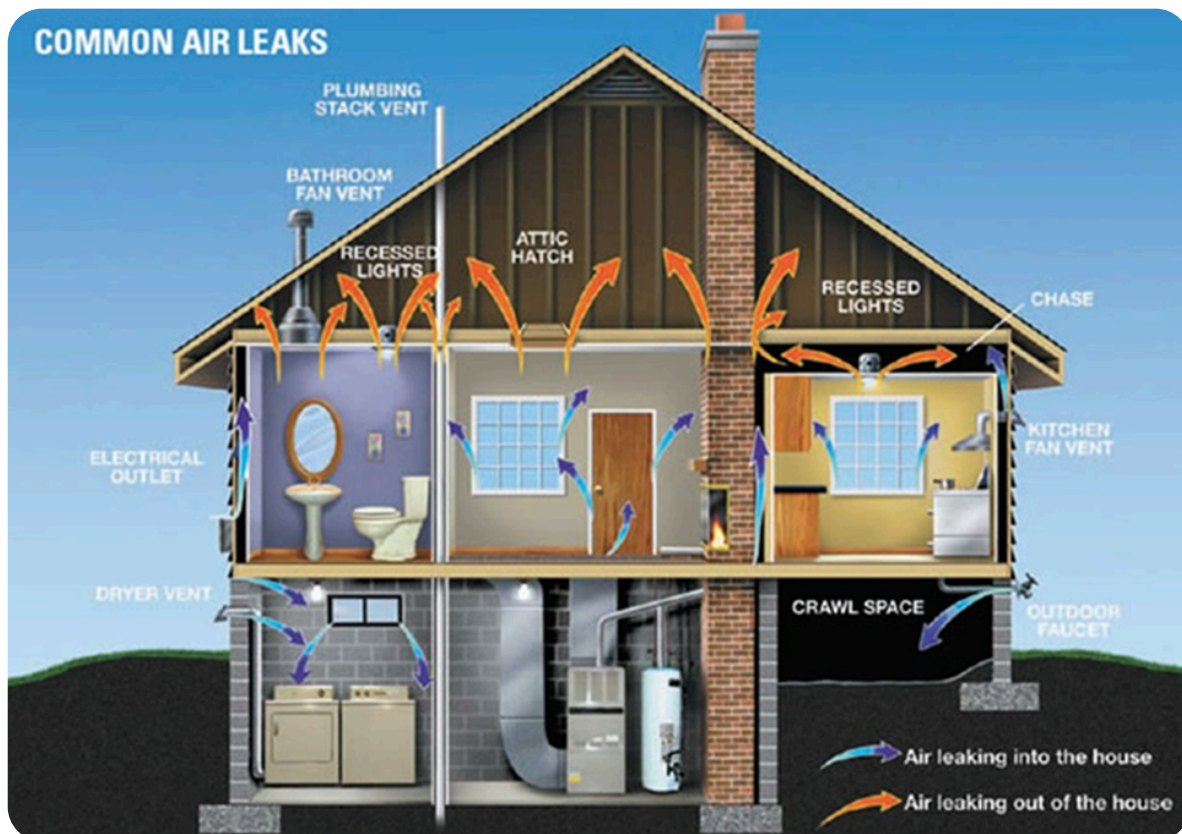
REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Energy Saving Tips for Houston’s Hot Summers Provided to the Community

As the temperature rise during Houston’s summer days, cooling systems work harder to keep homes cool. The BakerRipley Weatherization Program provides education to homeowners and communities on how they can create more energy efficiency inside their homes and reduce their energy expense burden. Tips provided to communities include – investing in a programmable thermostat, changing air filters, having cooling systems serviced regularly, how to effectively use ceiling or room fans to create an effective wind chill effect, switching to LED bulbs, upgrading to ENERGY STAR-rated appliances, checking the weather stripping around doors and windows, inspecting baseboards for gaps and cracks, and placing door sweeps under doors.

The BakerRipley Weatherization Assistance Program reduces energy costs for approximately 250 low-income households per year by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety. It is available to low-income Harris County residents who have not had weatherization improvements done in the past 15 years using federal funds. A utility assistance application starts the process.

Scan to learn more about BakerRipley Weatherization Program!



The BakerRipley Utility Assistance Program has a New and Improved Application System



The BakerRipley Utility Assistance Program launched a new program software system in January 2024. Since then, more than \$11M in applications and assistance has been provided to over 7,000 households across Brazoria, Galveston, and Harris Counties.

The new system has several features which improves services and experience to Utility Assistance customers. Notably, the new system has – an online application portal, provides customers with application status updates, allows for better document management, and allows customers to submit inquiries to program team members.

Rosa Fraide, a Customer Specialist II, says that the “the direct links from notifications module saves a lot of time and provides a smooth workflow for handling revisions and updates to customer applications.” Omar Lopez, also a Customer Service Specialist II, added – “being able to chat directly within the application streamlines communication with customers.”

Housing Assistance for Veterans

Veteran Lorenzo Davis sought assistance from BakerRipley in the Fall of 2023 and was assigned to the Rapid Rehousing service under Case Manager Karen Tillman. At that time, Mr. Davis, his wife, and their four children were living in a hotel in Washington State due to job insecurity and insufficient income. They decided to relocate to Houston for better job opportunities, despite lacking local support.

Mr. Davis initially applied for assistance from federal sources and was declined. But case manager Karen Tillman helped him navigate the process and after additional program consideration was selected for assistance. Mr. Davis chose a suitable housing option close to his children's school and the BakerRipley program supported the family by covering their security deposit, paying for rent from October 2023 to June 2024, and by providing household supplies and new mattresses.



The family moved into their new home on July 22, 2024. This successful outcome marks the culmination of a challenging journey for Mr. Davis and his family but thanks to the dedicated efforts of BakerRipley, the family has found a new home in Houston.

2024 Tax Season Celebration

The BakerRipley Neighborhood Tax Centers (NTC) Program assisted families in filing a record-breaking 36,281 tax returns during the 2024 tax season, marking a 6% increase from the previous year. These efforts resulted in neighbors receiving over \$51.4 million in gross refunds, providing a substantial financial boost to the community. Additionally, over \$8.4 million in tax preparation fees were saved.



On June 6th, the NTC Program celebrated its 2024 tax season achievements and volunteer milestones. The program team gathered at the BakerRipley Gulfton Campus with 130 volunteers and community partners in attendance. Gwen Garren, IRS Director of Stakeholder Partnerships, Education, and Communication recognized the BakerRipley tax center program for being the largest VITA program in the country for the second consecutive year. April Lambert, IRS Territory Manager, helped recognize the achievements of volunteers and community partners who have been involved with the program for 10 and 30 years. The dedication of 308 volunteers, along with support from funders and collaboration with community partners, made this successful tax season possible.

Become a BakerRipley Neighborhood Tax Centers Volunteer! Scan code or find other opportunities for involvement by visiting our website at bakerripley.org/get-involved/volunteer/



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Harris County Early REACH Program Wins 2024 NACo Achievement Award

Harris County has been honored with a 2024 Achievement Award by the National Association of Counties (NACo) for its Early REACH program. The Early REACH program goal is to create 800-1,000 new spaces within existing high-quality child care programs to serve additional children across child care deserts in Harris County. On July 15th, Claudia Aguirre, President and CEO of BakerRipley, and Margaret Oser, Vice President of Mission and Strategy at United Way of Greater Houston, attended the County Commissioners meeting. They expressed their gratitude to the Commissioners for supporting the program, which has benefited 1,014 children, 238 teachers, and 25 small businesses to date. Claudia and Margaret also advocated for the continued funding of the program, receiving commendations from Harris County Judge Hidalgo and other commissioners for its successful implementation.



Scan to watch video and learn more about the Early REACH Program!



HELP OUR BAKERRIPLEY FAMILY HELP OTHER FAMILIES AND GIVE TODAY.

Get behind this work, and contribute to the growth and financial stability of our region.

Donate Now.

