



# STAR Sponsorship Times

*Making a difference...one student at a time!*

## Vision Statement

The Board of Trustees of the STAR Sponsorship Program, Inc. is dedicated to increasing educational options for children in Tarrant County whose parents do not have the financial means to provide an education best suited to their children's unique needs.

We believe the well-being of the entire community is enhanced when children are given a quality education that allows them to achieve to their utmost ability. Therefore, we intend wherever possible, to encourage partnerships with schools, parents, community organizations and concerned citizens in supporting its children to achieve the American Dream!

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What do 3,370 pairs of feet, the infamous P. Diddy, and a 26-mile long-dash all have in common? The answer may not be immediately apparent. But for STAR program Board Member Frost Prioleau, it marks a beginning to helping local, underprivileged children achieve a better future through academic success.

Prioleau's involvement began in 2003 with a unique fundraising opportunity. As he wrote in a letter to prospective donors: *"This year again I am going to do an athletic event [to help] raise some money for a worthy cause. At the suggestion of my son, I am going to run a*

*marathon in order to complete an extremely long (by elapsed time, that is) triathlon. This is the triathlon that I started two years ago with a chilly swim in San Francisco Bay, and continued last year with the California Death Ride (a biking event in the Sierras with lots of hills)."*



The finishing touch to Prioleau's trifecta of athletic exploits was to be the 2003 Dallas White Rock Marathon.

Offering his participation as a fundraising springboard, he asked people to consider supporting STAR Sponsorship and its *"excellent record in an area about which I feel strongly: the education of underprivileged children."* To raise the stakes, Prioleau aspired to beat a marathon record of P. Diddy, who had posted a 4-hour-14-minute finish time in that year's New York Marathon.

While Prioleau posted an outstanding 3-hour-16-minute finish time, this proved just to be the stepping stones to his involvement. In 2004, he joined the program Board of Trustees. Since then, he has been a staunch advocate for offering high-quality educational opportunities to at-risk children of elementary-school age. Apart from his steadfast and invaluable support as a committed Board Member, he and his wife, Martha, have been sponsors of STAR students.

One of their students, Michael Hernandez, recalled how influential they were in his educational journey. In his own words: *"I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Prioleau, my sponsors, and tell them how much I appreciate them for being there all these years for me. It is nice to know there are people who care so much about our education."* Michael is currently a student in the University of Texas at Arlington.



Another STAR student, Said Garcia, was greatly impacted by the Prioleaus' generosity. Earlier this year, he and his family met Prioleau and his colleagues at Simpli.fi, an advertising technology company of which Prioleau is President, CEO, and Co-Founder. Said recalled the experience with

great enthusiasm: *"When the day came, we met in the parking lot of Mr. Prioleau's business building. I could feel nervousness building up within me. We entered the building and headed over to the lunch room to*



*wait. As I turned and looked over my shoulder, I saw people at rows of computer stations, working hard and staying organized."*

*"After a few minutes, Mr. Prioleau walked in through the hallway. I saw he was a kind and hard-working man, and I felt grateful and lucky that I had a sponsor who was that good. He gave me a journal, which I still use. Thank you, Mr. Prioleau, for helping my family with my tuition and letting me stay in school. I appreciate your support!"*

To this day, and no doubt will be into the future, Prioleau continues to be an invaluable asset to local, underprivileged children. STAR Sponsorship and our families are grateful for his unwavering support and commitment to our cause.



STAR families meet Simpli.fi and Prioleau.



## **Local Company Helps Program Students for Better Future**



Over the years, many donors have not only given generous support toward STAR students and their academic endeavors, but also been active change agents in the students' overall future. In several cases, their involvement has been a hands-on approach, meeting with students one-on-one and building unforgettable camaraderie through personalized mentoring.

Recently, several STAR students met with one of our corporate sponsors, Simpli.fi, a Fort Worth-based advertising technology company. We reached out to Dr. Ashley Graham, Executive Administrator at Simpli.fi, and asked for her thoughts on the experience. This is what she had to say.

*“As someone who continued my education through receipt of a PhD, I perhaps have a different perspective on education. Education, I think, is not simply a granted degree, a passed test, or strong report card. It is the equipping of persons for their vocations and for civic engagement. Regardless of whether someone pursues a trade school, a university education, or even a professional degree having a strong educational foundation is critical.*



**Simpli.fi employees meet their STAR student.**

*In our earliest encounters with teachers, we learn habits of listening, of empathy, of critical thinking, of textual analysis, of planning, and of enduring through work's difficulties. Unfortunately, not everyone has these experiences in early education. Bad experiences of school—whether due to lack of opportunity, lack of teacher training, or socioeconomic pressures on the school—can have the adverse effect of inhibiting this habit formation. This is why the STAR organization's work is so important. It gives students opportunities to discover learning as an enjoyable, rewarding, and relevant process.*

*We had the joy of hosting Genesis Olivares, her mother, and siblings at our office. We were able to learn about Genesis' strengths as a student (a commendable report card in academics and in behavior). And were delighted by the artwork she brought for us. (It is proudly displayed on our bulletin board in the common area.) It was also helpful to hear Mrs. Olivares' perspective on what the STAR program means to her. She and her*

*husband are incredibly hard-working individuals who deserve all the best for her children.*

*I enjoyed watching employees talk and play with the students as the CCO, CFO, and I talked with Mrs. Olivares. The CCO was especially grateful to commiserate and celebrate with Mrs. Olivares on the experiences of parenting. It was a very congenial day of showing students the office, talking with them about career possibilities, and encouraging them in their good work.*

*I often post photos, letters, homework assignments, and artwork that we receive from Genesis on our bulletin board. When we finally were able to have Genesis visit the office, one of her sisters was surprised to find Genesis' artwork on the board. She said something like, “Look! That's yours!” and then looked at me, “You have my sister's drawing!” The pride that we showed in Genesis' work was in that moment shared by her sister. And I think that an important moment—to see her sister also supporting her. Simpli.fi cannot be the kind of immediate, constant source of encouragement that Genesis*

*needs. So it was great to see our small action—supporting Genesis in her school work—could in turn affect the support she receives at home. It is more a testimony to Mrs. Olivares' parenting, perhaps, that her sister was not jealous but proud. But in any event, this story signifies that one action has ripple effects of support for students.*

*The STAR program is expanding educational opportunities to children who may not see these opportunities otherwise. This is an important task with high returns for persons, local communities, and the wider society. It is tragic that not every student has access to the same resources as those schools in areas of less socioeconomic pressures. STAR is leveling an uneven playing field, giving students a head-start that is a sound step toward success.”*



**Simpli.fi gifts for Genesis.**

**Please introduce us to a friend who may be interested in providing hope and opportunity for a family who values education. Give a student a chance for a better future through a gift of education. All donations are tax-deductible.**

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6707 Brentwood Stair Rd. Suite 205, Fort Worth, TX 76112

817-888-3255 Fax 817-332-8825

[starcsf@gmail.com](mailto:starcsf@gmail.com)

