

Fathers unite to provide holiday cheer

Dads are working together to donate to needy families.

By VIANNA DAVILA

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VICENTE ESCOBEDO

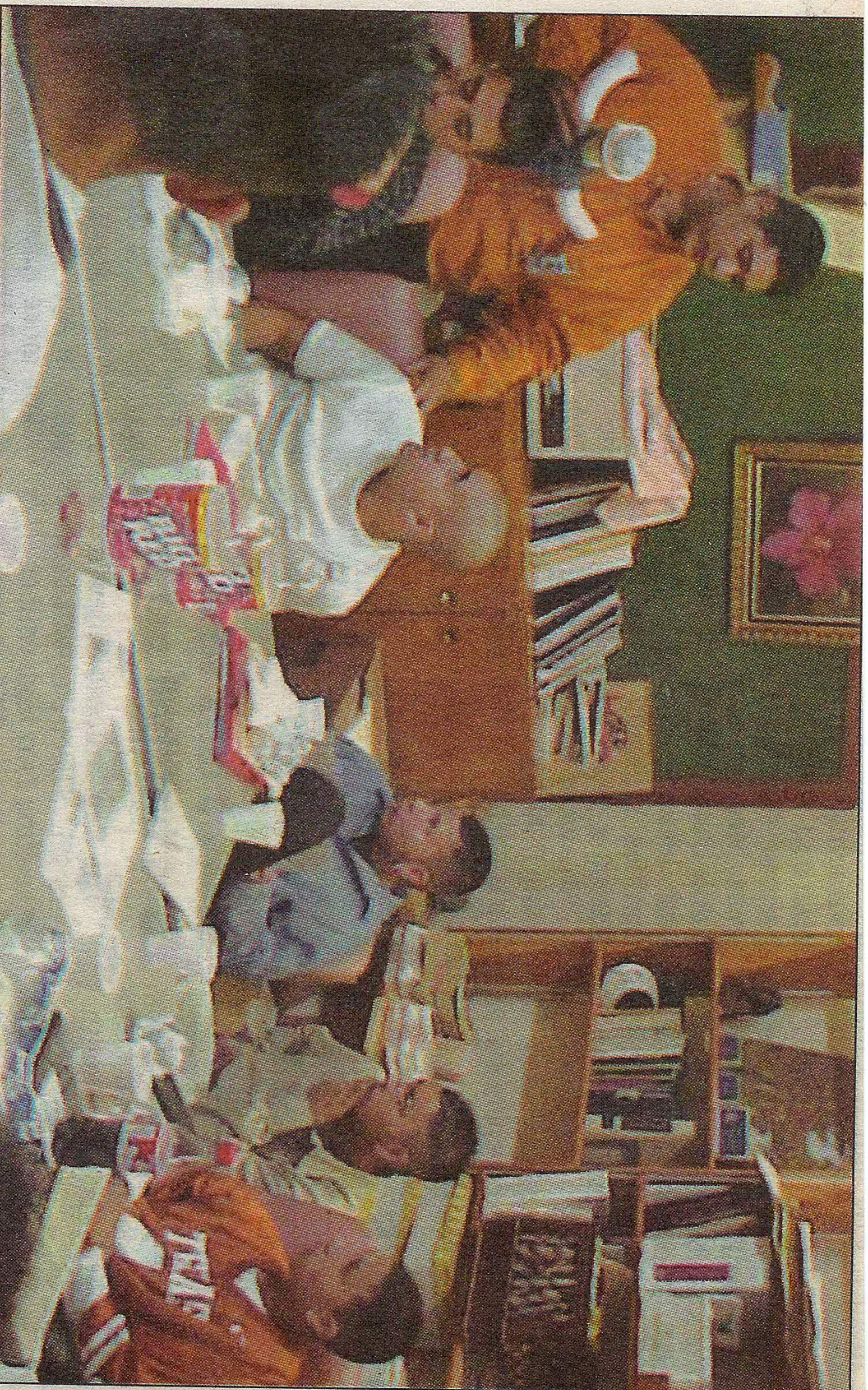
Participant in the San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign

Abraham Gonzales is a young father receiving help for his family this Christmas. Vicente Escobedo is a young father who's giving it.

Escobedo, 17, is among a group of San Antonio dads who will donate to needy families across the city this Saturday for the Fatherhood Goodwill Christmas Drive. He's also the single parent of 20-month-old Selena.

"I'm just helping other families to get the help that I get, the support that I need and everything," said Escobedo, a student at Por Vida Academy, a charter school where he is working toward his high school diploma and taking parenting classes.

See **DADS/6NW**



COURTESY PHOTO

Por Vida Academy counselor Jose Gonzalez discusses parenting techniques during a session designed to promote the role of fathers in families.

Dads unite to help the needy

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Castro Jr., coordinator of the San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign, a partnership to promote the role of fathers in families. This is the first year for the campaign.

"We wanted to make it a unique opportunity for fathers to reach out to other families who may be going through some of the same circumstances they're going through, whether it's economic or family," Castro said.

The father volunteers come from eight local programs that are part of the San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign: American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions, Southwest Key Latino Fatherhood Program, AVANCE, JOVEN, the MATCH/PATCH program, San Antonio National Compadres Network, Project WORTH and

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FRANK CASTRO JR.
coordinator, San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign

Making Connections.

Each program plans to nominate at least two families to receive donations, Castro said.

The Christmas drive comes at the end of a year that has seen a series of child deaths across the state. When Castro discussed the incidents with Escobedo's fatherhood class at Por Vida, students said, "No more."

"I think we can end this year on a positive note by finding men and fathers who will stand up against these things and

kind of shed a bright light and say . . . this is the beginning of something men will put forward," Castro said.

Castro and other leaders in the Fatherhood Campaign plan to sponsor a rally next month to show their commitment to parenting.

And next year, Gonzales plans to go door-to-door with the other dads in San Antonio.

This year, Escobedo will be the young dad handing out the gifts, although he can only afford to buy gifts for his daughter this year. The main present he hopes to give her is love. "I want my baby to know that she has a loving father and that he will always be there for her," he said.

For more information, call the San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign at (210) 227-3463.

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