Social Vulnerability Index Dashboard
Developed by Rice D2K Students

Five Rice University students sponsored by BakerRipley's Program Strategy, Planning, and Evaluation Division developed a tool that compares specific census tracts and identifies areas where Harris County residents face the greatest concentration of inequity. The tool was developed as part of the university's “Data 2 Knowledge” (D2K) capstone project, which took place during the Spring 2022 semester.

D2K provides students across different disciplines with a data-science curriculum that offers them an opportunity to work with area organizations, businesses, and other entities on real-world projects that they can then use to enhance their coursework.

The students participating in this project used the Center for Disease Control's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) framework to examine inequality based on factors pertinent to Houstonians' everyday lives, such as transportation and environmental themes. Based on their index, the students’ analysis showed that a majority of inequities were related to FEMA requests following Hurricane Harvey and Winter Storm Uri and the Urban Institute's measure of Housing Instability due to COVID. The Program Strategy, Planning, and Evaluation Division is looking into extending the work of understanding inequity through Rice's D2K and other partnerships.

The Program Strategy, Planning, and Evaluation Division also works with the University of Houston's Graduate School of Social Work and Rice University's Community Bridge interns to develop tools and resources that help BakerRipley better respond to the goals and aspirations of the communities we serve.
BakerRipley Cheer Spirit

BakerRipley Community Schools is excited to share its most recent community partnership. On April 23rd, 45 cheerleaders from Ripley House Elementary, representing grades K-5, performed for the first time at the Sideline Cheer Camp in Spring, TX. Students and four staff coaches represented the BakerRipley Community School District well with their fantastic performance on a weekend that offered opportunities for friendship, teamwork, and self-confidence building. The Sideline Cheer Camp has invited the cheerleaders to come back and perform in the Fall of 2022. Great partnerships are forming across the metro Houston area for our students.

Uniting For Every Child’s Opportunity - Community School Conference

The great team of educators from BakerRipley Community Schools participated in their first Community Schools Conference in Los Angeles, California. Our Community School leaders engaged in community school work and a learning platform to assist their efforts of driving the community schools’ model for BakerRipley throughout the community.

The group included Superintendent, Dr. Sylvia Thomas, Sr. Director of Special Populations, Ms. Andreya Sampy, instructional leadership team members, including Mr. Davian Reynolds (STEM Expert), Mrs. Courtnie Byrne (Literacy Expert), Ms. Katiya Boudette (Early Childhood Educator Expert) and Ms. Tracie Mullens, (Intervention/RTI Specialist). There were opportunities to engage in conversations and visit California site-based campuses with models of community schools. The conference also provided a space to evolve the practice and shared language of technical assistance, research, and funding. As the 2021-22 school year ends, the team looks forward to further implementing the strategic plan with integrity. Dr. Thomas and the district leadership team are excited and poised to take BakerRipley to new levels of growth and achievement.
**Ripley House Partners with Volunteer Houston and Dow Chemicals to Feed East End Neighbors**

On May 26th, Volunteer Houston (VH) and Dow Chemical celebrated Day of Giving. Dow Chemical provided 25 employees who volunteered at the Ripley House Food Fair. Dow has worked with VH to identify a series of volunteer engagements for employees to volunteer with BakerRipley and nine other local nonprofits. Heeding a request for Spanish-speaking volunteers, Dow provided team members from Latin American countries representing Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, and Venezuela. Their Spanish-language fluency was a great asset in communicating with our Neighbors.

The event provided food for more than 136 families in the East End community, many of whom depend on these food-distribution events to supplement their fixed income and the rising cost of basic necessities. The corporate volunteers from Dow also had the opportunity to learn firsthand about BakerRipley’s impact in the community, including the history of the Agency’s presence in the East End.

**Immigration & Citizenship Program Helps Afghan Refugee Family on their Six-Year Journey to U.S. Citizenship**

Zahir and his father originally came to the United States as refugees in 2016. His journey to U.S. Citizenship began when BakerRipley helped him apply for his green card. Then, in 2021, Citizenship Manager Crystal Gonzalez, was able to help Zahir apply for U.S. Citizenship, and then in May 2022, Zahir successfully became a U.S. Citizen!

“BakerRipley has helped my family and me so much,” Zahir says. “Now that I’m a U.S. Citizen, there are a lot of opportunities for me, including applying for jobs that require travel outside the United States with a U.S. passport. I have always wanted to apply for a U.S. government job, but I had to be a U.S. Citizen. Now, I can apply for those jobs.”

Zahir’s father also applied for his U.S. citizenship through BakerRipley’s Immigration & Citizenship Program this year. However, his father is disabled and had difficulties with the exam due to a mental disability. “If we had not received assistance and support from BakerRipley’s legal team at my father’s Naturalization interview, then I don’t think my father would have been able to get his Naturalization case approved,” Zahir said. “He would have lost his Social Security benefits.”

Zahir works for Interfaith Ministries as a case manager serving the Dari-speaking community. He is enrolled at Houston Community College and wants to major in political science. “I will always be grateful to BakerRipley,” he says. “Crystal and the team have made a whole new life possible for me and my father.”
Selena was working in retail when the COVID pandemic began. Like many others in the service industry, Selena lost her job. She only had experience working in retail and she struggled finding other higher-paying jobs. During this period of uncertainty, Selena’s sister told her about the BakerRipley’s Careers in Tech program and encouraged her to apply. Selena, though interested in technology, was hesitant to apply.

“I didn’t see myself in a tech career,” Selena says. “The tech field seemed so male-dominant, and I couldn’t see myself competing in the same space.” Still, her family convinced her to try. “There I was, no tech background, no tech-job experience—it was scary,” she says. But the Tech Bridge allowed Selena to access relevant information about careers in tech and to hear from employers and professionals in the field. She was also surrounded by other participants that, like her, didn’t have experience in tech. They were all participating in work-readiness workshops and career test drives in tech, focused in making an informed decision about their futures.

“The Tech Bridge was so engaging, and the presenters were great,” Selena says. “It gave me an outlook of what it’s going to be like in that career.” Selena completed the Tech Bridge, and on the last day of classes, she expressed her gratitude for the program and its impact on her.

“I can see myself being the first one in my family with a tech career. I’m determined to be a woman in coding.” Selena was referred to General Assembly for the Software Engineering immersive program. A full-time, intensive 12-week course.

She says the Software Engineering program “was a bit too much and overwhelming sometimes because of the amount of information, and there were days I felt like I wasn’t going to make it.” Still, Selena never gave up and with the support of General Assembly and the rest of the BakerRipley cohort, she knew she could complete the program.

“I was always more like a follower and collaborator than a leader; [I was] someone that wouldn’t speak up,” Selena says. “With this training, I found myself taking charge during class projects and speaking up. I discovered I am a problem solver and I’m very detail-oriented.”

Now, Selena is hunting for a job as a software developer. She helps BakerRipley’s Digital Literacy students by answering their computer questions and supporting them so they are able to connect to their classes.

“I feel like BakerRipley gave me so much that now I want to help other BakerRipley adult learners,” she says.
We have completed the 2021-2022 Head Start academic school year with great success. Our 30 Head Start and Early Head Start centers served 2,120 students during the school year.

1,097 students graduated from the Head Start program and will be prepared and energized to begin Kindergarten in the fall. The other 1,023 students, along with new students, will be welcomed next school year. We have enjoyed having the privilege of seeing our students grow, learn, and explore their educational interests right before our eyes. BakerRipley understands the critical role early childhood education plays in the development of our children and the Head Start Program lays the groundwork for their future success in school and in life.

Dr. Cimberli Darrough, Senior Director of Head Start, says it’s a common misperception that early childhood education is only about learning fundamental skills.

“It’s so much more,” she says. “It’s a time when children learn critical social and emotional skills and a partnership is formed between the child, their parent(s), and the teacher. When we do this successfully, it lays the foundation for it to continue throughout the child’s education.”

Graduation from Head Start is bittersweet but we strive to make it a fun and enjoyable experience for our students and their families. In the spirit of celebration, we host graduation ceremonies for our students at all of our Head Start locations. Each location puts its own spin on its graduation festivities, including award ceremonies, graduation pictures, classroom parties, and field days.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**BakerRipley Senior Director of Health and Wellness Presents at National Council on Aging Conference.**

On June 6th, Tanya Treece, Senior Director of Health and Wellness, was a Panelist Speaker at the National Council on Aging: Age + Action Conference. This annual conference brings together professionals in aging from around the country to learn best practices and advancements in serving older adults in our communities.

As one of 16 selected Congregate Meal Initiative Innovation Grant members in Texas, BakerRipley created The BakerRipley Morning Perk Breakfast Café at our JW Peavy Senior Health and Wellness Center. The center reopened in May after operations were suspended to the pandemic.
HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Thank You – A Note from our Neighbor

On May 31st, Mary Lee celebrated her 50th day of attendance since the reopening of the BakerRipley Senior Centers. She left us this personal reflection:

“March 2020 was my last month at BakerRipley Harbach Senior Center due to the pandemic. Instantly, it seemed like everything just stopped. I had nowhere to go or could not socialize with others. Afraid of the unknown, no one visited me, and for the first time I felt alone and afraid.

But it wasn't long before the Health and Wellness team at BakerRipley figured out how to serve seniors during these strange and trying times we found ourselves in. I received daily devotionals, wellness calls, and music to soothe my mind from my site specialist at Harbach, which helped me stay grounded and lifted.

Over the pandemic, I participated in close to 30 virtual Tai Chi classes and learned how to meditate. The weekly newsletters I received in the mail offered tips on how I could stay active at home, techniques for breathing better, kept me up to date on nutrition, and COVID-19 specific education and other essential topics.

BakerRipley, even after the closure, continued to send me meals, which really helped out because many times I could not get to the store or just did not have the money. I would often just reach into that magical meal box and pull out a nutritional meal.

I'm most grateful to BakerRipley because their support allowed me to worry less about things I had no control over during the pandemic. Thank you for being there with me for the entire two years of the pandemic.”
Program Resource Development

BakerRipley’s significant impact across the region is supported by collaborations and effective resource utilization. Our Program Resource Development Division remains committed to securing those necessary resources that support BakerRipley’s mission.

In May, Program Resource Development (PRD) Division received great news in response to our rebid to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; we have been awarded $1,926,973 to allow our Greater Houston Area Veteran Services team to continue providing supportive services for veteran families. We were also informed that Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia submitted our $1.3 million proposal (to add congregate breakfasts at Houston Senior Centers to mitigate food insecurity and improve health outcomes for low-income Houston Seniors) as one of her official requests for earmark (Community Project) funding. We will work with her team as this request goes through the proper channels for consideration for Congressional approval.

Program Resource Development Division submitted six proposals in May totaling $1,757,742 with potential program impacts to Economic Initiatives, Health & Wellness, Regional Initiatives, and Community Initiatives divisions.

President’s Volunteer Service Awards

The President’s Volunteer Service Award comes from the Office of the President of the United States and is given to volunteers who have contributed over 100 hours of service within the calendar year and whose service positively impacts communities. Recipients of the award receive a personalized certificate of achievement and letter signed by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and the official President’s Volunteer Service Award pin. BakerRipley had 97 volunteers who received the recognition.

- 76 BakerRipley Bronze Pin Volunteers: 100-249 hours (adults) & 100-174 hours (young adult)
- 17 BakerRipley Silver Pin Volunteers: 250-499 hours (adults) & 175-249 hours (young adult)
- 4 BakerRipley Gold Pin Volunteers: 500+ hours (adults) & 250+ hours (young adult)

A special Thank You to our Gold Pin Volunteers;

Richard Kummins who volunteered 557 with Neighborhood Tax Centers
Bendy Rios-Lazo who volunteered 523 hours with the Immigration and Citizenship Program
Josue Salmeron who volunteered 350 hours with the Volunteer Program
Paige Wright who volunteered 310 hours with the Volunteer Program
PROGRAM RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Volunteer Group of the Year

Each year, we honor the contributions of a group or company that goes above and beyond for our neighbors. BakerRipley is proud and honored to present this award to ExxonMobil and its members for the dedication they’ve brought to BakerRipley’s mission through various volunteer opportunities, such as participating in our Community Food Distributions and our Neighborhood Tax Centers program. ExxonMobil Volunteer Coordinator, Kristiann J. Carr, was in attendance to accept the award on behalf of ExxonMobil with BakerRipley CEO, Claudia Aguirre.

Barbara Day Volunteer of the Year

The Barbara Day Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to one BakerRipley volunteer who has made a lasting impact on BakerRipley and our community through their dedicated volunteer service. The recipient of this award is chosen by an evaluation committee comprised of representatives from across the Agency.

Over the past 15 years, Mrs. Comeaux has helped bring financial relief to the Sunnyside community through her volunteer work as a tax preparer at the Sunnyside Multiservice Center. As a result, she has become a staple in that community. Comeaux volunteers every day, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the tax season (January-April). This 2022 tax season, she volunteered more than 400 hours and is one of our Presidential Volunteer Service Silver Award recipients. The Sunnyside tax center is dependent on her dedication and commitment. As she has more than 20 years of experience as an IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance member, she has managed the Sunnyside Tax Center by herself on multiple occasions. To the community, she is known as “Momma Comeaux,” and she has built incredible relationships and connections with every single tax-center client she has helped.
REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Faith Restored

Jasman, 22, lived in a hotel in Alabama for seven months after the sudden passing of her grandmother and the subsequent loss of the apartment they were living in. Then, with what little money she had finally ran out, a friend in Houston bought her a Greyhound bus ticket and told her, “Houston is the place to be if you’re looking for a new life.”

She arrived in August of 2021 and found Covenant House, a nonprofit organization that gives shelter to homeless and home-insecure individuals. Jasman spent two weeks at Covenant House while on a housing waitlist. Then she got a call from BakerRipley. Through the Rapid Re-Housing Program, Jasman was able to secure an apartment in West Houston. Now, almost a year later, she still calls that apartment her home and says, “It was because of BakerRipley that I’m back on my feet. Not having to worry about where I’m going to sleep and eat has allowed me to focus my time on finding a job.”

In May, Jasman landed a full-time job at Southern Cross Corporation making $17 an hour. “It gives me some comfort seeing a steady stream of money coming into my bank account,” she says. “I’ve started saving for a car, which feels very much like you made it.” Jasman also attends school online at Crossroads College, where she is currently studying business management and marketing.

“I have grown as an individual, become an adult, and now I am an independent woman,” she says. “Being in this program gave me hope that I didn’t realize I had lost. It helped me be closer to God, it helped me prioritize better, be more appreciative and open to the right resources, [and] it helped me have faith in people and in myself.”

A partnership in El Paso has helped neighbors stay in their homes.

BakerRipley and the Paso del Norte Community Foundation are celebrating the EP Rent Help Program after working for two years to provide emergency rental assistance. The City of El Paso and the El Paso County awarded the funds to Paso del Norte Community Foundation, one of the leading nonprofit organizations in the area, and BakerRipley joined the effort to manage the program. So far, $38 Million in rental assistance has been provided to over 6,000 families.

The impact of this partnership was recently recognized by United Way of El Paso as they awarded the 2021 Community Partner Award to Paso del Norte Community Foundation, for their commitment to serving individuals who are at risk of facing homelessness or eviction.

Mica Short, Vice President of Development for Paso del Norte Community Foundation, shared: “We are so grateful for the partnership with BakerRipley. The success of the El Paso Emergency Rental Assistance Program was possible because of BakerRipley’s expertise in structuring an effective rental assistance program and their dedicated team members who processed thousands of rental assistance applications.”
**Workforce Initiatives**

**East Texas Serving More Children**

With an increase in funding for child care from the State of Texas, the BakerRipley East Texas Child Care Services team has been out in the community doing outreach, connecting with partners, and increasing team capacity to enroll more children in the program.

During the current contract year, enrollment for childcare subsidies has grown by 762 children. Great work and congratulations goes out to the BakerRipley East Texas Childcare Services Team!

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**Oceans of Opportunity**

Workforce Solutions and the Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted the 15th Annual Oceans of Opportunities job and career fair on May 25th in Galveston, TX.

There were 62 employers in attendance which included Center Point Energy, the City of Galveston, Harris County Department of Education, Landry's Corp., Port of Galveston, Texas International Terminals, and the University of Texas Medical Branch.

There was one young job seeker, Uriah Miller, who had an on-site interview and received a job offer from Hilton Hotels that same day.

Our BakerRipley Workforce Professionals were at the event assisting job seekers and employers, and contributing to the economic and workforce development efforts of Galveston County.