

Baptist agency serves up Operation JAVA

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SAN ANTONIO—[Baptist Child & Family Services](#) has launched Operation JAVA—Juveniles Advancing through Vocational Attainment.

The one-of-a-kind program provides at-risk teens with innovative on-the-job training opportunities that aim to deter juvenile crime.

[Guadalupe Street Coffee](#), the coffee house ministry BCFS sponsors in West San Antonio, serves as the base of operations for Operation JAVA, a partnership between BCFS' juvenile justice program and the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department.

"It is so important that we provide kids, especially troubled kids, with meaningful options so they have good choices available to them. Combining the skills learned at the coffee house with one-on-one mentors is another example of the innovative, on-the-ground interventions that make BCFS such a valuable partner for our agency," said David Reilly, Bexar County chief juvenile probation officer.

"It is programs like this that make a difference not only in a young person's life, but in the community as well. And when that happens, it's a win-win for everyone."

Operation JAVA teaches youth hands-on lessons in business operations, such as running inventory, learning customer service and basic accounting through jobs at the coffee house.

The program also provides professional development training such as resume writing, job interview skills and personal money management in

order to prepare youth for the real world.

“Youth who have gotten into trouble with the law are often written off before they are given the chance to prove themselves,” said Cindi Garcia, BCFS executive director of community-based services.

“BCFS’ Operation JAVA will not only offer teens the opportunity to build a practical skill set, but they’ll also develop long-term mentoring relationships that will keep them on-track and out of trouble as they enter the real world.”

West Side middle school students who hang out at the coffee house also will benefit from building relationships with students who have “been there and done that,” learning about the consequences of negative decision making.

Guadalupe Street Coffee is a community development project operated by BCFS’ inner-city program. Located in the heart of San Antonio’s West Side—where less than three percent of homes have a computer—the coffee shop provides college readiness and cultural arts programs for local youth aimed at increasing school retention and enhancing students’ likelihood of graduation.