



# insider

## *Celebrating* NEW BEGINNINGS



**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS  
REALIGNS TO MEET  
NEIGHBORS WHERE THEY ARE**

**PLUS!**

- Upcoming holiday closures, Pg. 5
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- Mandatory compliance training, Pg. 11

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

# DID YOU KNOW?

BakerRipley just updated a number of its policies and created a new SharePoint site repository titled “Compliance Corner.” The Agency also updated the BakerRipley Employee Handbook.

Learn more on Pg. 8.

# USEFUL LINKS

WeConnect  
[Bakerripley.org](https://bakerripley.org)  
[BakerRipley Employee Handbook](#)  
[BakerRipley Community Schools Handbook](#)  
[Head Start Handbook](#)  
[BakerRipley 2024-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

# WHAT’S INSIDE

## GET PUBLISHED IN THE INSIDER!

Submit your photos or  
Insider story ideas to  
[brfeedback@bakerripley.org](mailto:brfeedback@bakerripley.org).

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## HEART TO HEART WITH CLAUDIA AGUIRRE

Celebrate the “Power of Opportunity” with a look back at our 2025 Heart of Gold luncheon.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

BakerRipley will be closed for the holidays. Plus, see who is celebrating milestone anniversaries!

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## COVER STORY: WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CELEBRATES NEW BEGINNINGS

Upon opening a new office in Pearland, Workforce Solutions Sr. Director Neil Hanson discusses the program’s future plans for realignment.

## AGENCY NEWS FLASH

2026 holiday calendars are here, Agency policies have been updated, BREA applications are open, and more!

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## WELCOME TO OUR HOUSE

Meet your newest colleagues who just attended NEO!

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## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

See the upcoming NEO schedule, discover what training is available and review upcoming Paycom training options.





# HEART to HEART

with **Claudia Aguirre**  
President and CEO, BakerRipley

## CELEBRATING THE POWER OF OPPORTUNITY

Our recent Heart of Gold Luncheon offered BakerRipley a chance to connect with more than 300 of our funders, partners, and civic leaders in an authentic way, telling our Agency story while illustrating how the “Power of Opportunity,” the luncheon’s theme, can help Neighbors not only overcome adversity, but triumph and then pay their good fortune forward.

It was a celebration of spirit, grit, and generosity. I was so proud to present our four Heart of Gold honorees with their awards for championing our Neighbors and serving them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

As I said to the Heart of Gold audience, creating opportunity is like setting a table. The table, for BakerRipley, is our foundation—our history and our values. It’s the work we’ve been devoted to for more than a century. And it all began with Alice Graham Baker, whose vision of a stronger and more connected Houston still drives us today.

I encouraged the audience to continue the important work of bringing all their neighbor’s voices to the table and developing with us the path forward into Houston and the Gulf Coast region’s future. Because our city is changing. New challenges are calling us to design new solutions for tomorrow. So, let’s start these conversations and invite those who can help us set this table and make it complete.

[READ THE EVENT RECAP](#)



**ABOVE:** Watch me deliver my Heart of Gold luncheon speech. **BELOW:** I was so proud to join BakerRipley Board Chair Irma Diaz-Gonzalez in presenting our four honorees with their awards. **You can find a repository of luncheon photos linked in our Heart of Gold Blog on our Agency website.**

[READ THE BLOG](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS



### BAKERRIPLEY IS CLOSED FOR THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!

The Agency will be closed Thursday and Friday, Nov. 27-28, for Thanksgiving. Remember to set up your automatic out-of-office replies in Outlook.

### 2025 HOLIDAY CALENDAR

(See Pg. 8 for the 2026 Holiday Calendars)

**\*Community Centers will close early at 6 p.m. Monday, Nov. 24, through Wednesday, Nov. 26.** We will reopen to our normal operating hours on Monday, Dec. 1.

### COMMUNITY CENTER HOLIDAY HOURS:

- Operational Hour Change: From Monday, Dec. 15, to Friday, Jan. 2, 2026, we will close daily at 6 p.m.
- Early Closure: Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 3 p.m.
- Closed: Thursday, Dec. 25; Friday, Dec. 26; and Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026.

### BAKERRIPLEY EVENTS CALENDAR



This month, learn about BakerRipley’s Adult Education & Mobility Mentoring & Navigation! Click the button below to register in the LMS. Search for “Eureka” to view upcoming webinars and to access past presentations.

[REGISTER!](#)

## LET’S CELEBRATE!

This November, we have 14 colleagues celebrating milestone anniversaries at BakerRipley!

### 25 YEARS

- Dedryal Brantley

### 15 YEARS

- Desiree Davis
- Maria Fernanda Fonseca
- Belky Campos

### 10 YEARS

- Kerrilyn Tripp
- Isha Pascal
- Zhe Mo
- Ginelsa Valenzuela
- Jonathan Bisso
- Sherri Guillory

### 5 YEARS

- Patricia Narvaez
- Maria Campos
- Victoria Castillo
- Angela Marie Johnson



Held each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Giving Tuesday has become one of the biggest fundraising days of the year for nonprofits. Read more about Giving Tuesday on Pg. 8.



# CELEBRATING NEW BEGINNINGS



## New Pearland location, ‘community access points’ part of Workforce Solutions’ new realignment strategy

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast is undergoing a lot of exciting changes as it continues to evolve to meet our Neighbors’ needs.

The program welcomed the Pearland Workforce Solutions team to the BakerRipley family on Oct. 16, in a part of South Houston where the Agency doesn’t yet have a large reach. The Pearland office has been operating since 2018, under different management.

Neil Hanson, Senior Director of Workforce Initiatives, said taking on new brick-and-mortar offices like the Pearland location was going to be less frequent as Workforce Solutions delves deeper into its realignment strategy.

“The vision that was in our recent proposal in

response to the RFP, and what we’re working with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board on, is to provide more services at ‘community access points,’” Neil said. “This is where for one, two, or some number of days per week, we go onsite at a partner site such as a community college, or a public library, and provide our services there during a predetermined and advertised schedule.”

This strategy would allow Workforce Solutions to reduce overhead costs associated with facility leases and maintenance, while also allowing the program to still reach job seekers in need of its services.

“We want to go where people are that need our services, not make them come to us,” Neil said.

He said that in addition to offering services online or in more transitory locations, Workforce Solutions is hoping to reach more young people in need of the program’s services, another key aspect of Workforce Solutions’ realignment goals.

“It’s primarily about engaging more out-of-school youth,” he said. “We can help them get their GED, provide exposure to apprenticeships or occupations with high growth.

“Many youth haven’t been exposed to work and a big step in everyone’s career is their first job. So, we work with employers to place youth in jobs for an agreed upon number of weeks, and we pay their wages for that period. Then, ideally, if they

demonstrate themselves well, they can then go on to a full-time position with that employer.

“We are also working with school districts to create career pathways for students who are enrolled in a CTE course,” Neil added. “We establish work readiness and a work-based learning component so the students can gain work experience right after they graduate high school.”

The overarching goal of Workforce Solutions is to create a strong, competitive workforce that meets the needs of both job seekers and employers in the region. If you know someone who could benefit from Workforce Solutions, send them to the [Workforce Solutions page](#) on BakerRipley.org.



# AGENCY NEWS FLASH

**AGENCY HOLIDAY CALENDARS**  
They're here! Start planning your 2026 vacations today!

**2026 AGENCY CALENDAR** **2026 WFS CALENDAR**

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK UPDATED WITH POLICIES, SUPPLEMENT

BakerRipley has updated a number of policies and the Employer Harassment and Discrimination Protection (EHP) Plan, which is now managed by Work Shield. The updated policies, in addition to a supplement detailing the EHP Plan, has been added to the back of the [BakerRipley Employee Handbook](#).

The Compliance and Quality Assurance (CQA) Team has also launched a new site for employees to access all Agency policies. "Compliance Corner" makes it easy for you to find the policies you're looking for with new search functionality and a preview feature.

CQA will continue adding more compliance-focused resources to this page, so check back often for more updates. We highly recommend bookmarking the page for quick access. If you need to update your policies or have questions about the new site, please reach out to [compliance@bakerripley.org](mailto:compliance@bakerripley.org).

**VISIT COMPLIANCE CORNER**



**LEARN MORE ABOUT BREAf**

## BREAf DONATIONS, APPLICATIONS OPEN

Gina Cacioppo, Manager of Case Outreach for Veterans, applied for aid from the BakerRipley Employee Assistance Fund (BREAf) and was a lucky early recipient. She shares her story in the video testimonial to the right.

There are more colleagues like Gina who are currently in need. **If you need assistance, please visit the BREAf page to learn how to apply.**

You may now use Paycom to donate to BREAf through your payroll. Open Paycom, navigate to Benefits, and select the "My Benefits" tab.

## HELP US ACHIEVE OUR MISSION THIS GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity when people come together to support causes that make a difference in their communities. Held each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, the day has become one of the biggest fundraising days of the year for nonprofits. This year, Giving Tuesday falls on Dec. 2. BakerRipley is proud to participate in this movement to empower and uplift our Neighbors.

**Share this special day with your family and friends!** Let them know how they can join BakerRipley in making an impact by volunteering their time or giving a donation to BakerRipley. Every contribution helps us create meaningful change in the communities we serve. Thank you for being a part of the BakerRipley family and for spreading the spirit of generosity!



**BakerRipley**

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**GIVING  
TUESDAY**

**DONATE!**



## 2025 EMPLOYEE HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

The HR team hosted its most successful Employee Health and Wellness Fair to date on Oct. 10. BakerRipley employees had an opportunity to meet the Agency's benefits partners and ask them all about their 2025 and 2026 options ahead of Open Enrollment, which just wrapped up on Nov. 17. This year, the event was held in BakerRipley's Ripley House gym on a teacher in-service day that was also a student holiday, which accounted for the larger crowd of employees who were able to attend. Following are photos captured at the event:



# TOTAL REWARDS

Make the most of your health and wellness benefits and employee perks!

## EAP IS HERE FOR YOU

Feeling down or stressing out about the holidays? We all need a support network from time to time. Your ComPsych GuidanceResources program can be yours.

This **Employee Assistance Program** is provided free of charge to all BakerRipley employees and offers someone to talk to and resources to consult whenever and wherever you need them, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Call ComPsych for confidential help at 1-800-311-4327 or visit them online at [guidanceresources.com](https://guidanceresources.com).**

## ON-CALL HEALTH INSURANCE HELP

Whether you have questions about a new claim, need to find a doctor or just want to better understand your plan benefits, United Healthcare (UHC) Advocates are here to help. UHC can help you find care, make sense of a bill, access plan benefits you didn't know were there, and a whole lot more.

**Call the number on your health plan ID card, sign in to [myuhc.com](https://myuhc.com) and click on Chat or open the UHC app for assistance on the go.**



# WELCOME TO OUR HOUSE

We recently welcomed 36 new colleagues to BakerRipley! If you see these smiling faces around the workplace, be sure to introduce yourself and welcome them to the fold!



## OCT. 6 NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

**Top row, standing (L-R):**  
Kendra Burrell, Early Childhood Education; AKeiseia Griffin, Early Childhood Education; Hailey Villegas, Workforce Initiatives; Daisy Huerta, Early Childhood Education; Juan Reyes, Workforce Initiatives; Toni Guillory, Early Childhood Education

**Seated (L-R):**  
Alma Cortes Zuniga, Early Childhood Education; Ana Maria Ramirez-Ricks, Early Childhood Education; Nyla Gibson, Early Childhood Education; Grededys Miranda, Early Childhood Education; Raymara Aroche, Early Childhood Education; Chelsea Fernandez, Early Childhood Education

## OCT. 20 NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

**Top row, standing (L-R):**  
Graciela Santoyo, Workforce Initiatives; Lesly Osorio, Administration; Edwin Hernandez, Early Childhood Education; Nilia Jimenez, Early Childhood Education; Melisa Morin, Workforce Initiatives; Miguel Retana, Administration

**Seated (L-R):**  
Stephanie Shortt, Early Childhood Education; Yaneth Guillen, Early Childhood Education; Nanc Cristobal, Early Childhood Education; Aurora Aguero, Early Childhood Education; Deise Cruz, Early Childhood Education



## NOV. 3 NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

**Top row, standing (L-R):**  
Kamaca Lacy, Workforce Initiatives; Dominique August, Administration; James Ogle, Facilities; Derrick Irby, Workforce Initiatives; Marcos Antuna, Community Impact and Vitality; Carmen Belt, Early Childhood Education; Cordell Dubuclet, Workforce Initiatives

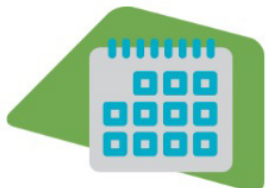
**Seated (L-R):**  
Kanika Williams, Workforce Initiatives; Emma Nagle, Early Childhood Education; Jere Gonzalez, Early Childhood Education; Karina Guerrero, Workforce Initiatives; Emily Berry, Early Childhood Education; Pricilla Perez, Workforce Initiatives

# LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## DECEMBER 2025 NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION



**In-Person NEO**  
Agencywide  
Dec. 1, 15, and 29  
8:30 AM – 4:30 PM



**Virtual NEO**  
Rural  
Dec. 4 & 17  
10 AM – 12:30 PM

## 2025 INFORMATION SECURITY & PRIVACY TRAINING DUE: DEC. 12

All BakerRipley employees must take an Agencywide Compliance e-learning module titled “2025 Information Security and Privacy Training,” available under “My Courses” in the BakerRipley Learning Management System (LMS). If you have any questions, please email [learning@bakerripley.org](mailto:learning@bakerripley.org).

This 20-minute compliance training is divided into three parts:

**Part 1:** Data Privacy (why it’s important) and Data Breaches

**Part 2:** Data Classification and How to use and store sensitive and confidential information

**Part 3:** Reporting Incidents and Consequences of Noncompliance.

**LOG INTO LMS**

# PAYCOM TRAINING

If you need a little extra help working in the Agency’s new Paycom HRIS, we’ve got you covered.

## ONGOING LEARNING

The training team will host monthly Paycom training as a strategic investment to improve individual and organizational performance.

**REGISTER!**

## TRAINING RESOURCES

If you need assistance or a Paycom training refresher, you can access training resources and tutorials in Paycom at any time. Log into Paycom and search for the training resources you need. (You can also find them on WeConnect.)

## INTRODUCTION TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY DEC. 16 IN PERSON

**BakerRipley Central**  
4450 Harrisburg Blvd., Houston, TX 77011  
Rooms 249-250 | 9 – 11:30 AM

The HR Team will be hosting Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry Training for all new team members. This mandatory course is part of the 12-month onboarding experience. You will learn the guiding philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and come to understand how to apply appreciative practices, at an elementary level, to your current work and projects.

**REGISTER!**



**BakerRipley**