

NORTH CHANNEL★STAR

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Serving all of the North Shore -- Channelview, Sheldon, Galena Park, Jacinto City

VOLUME 2, NO. 50

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2014

www.northchannelstar.com

CHANNEL CHATTER

North Shore Senior Dance

North Shore Senior Citizens hold a monthly dance the second Thursday of every month from 1 - 4 pm at the Grayson/Baldree Building, Corpus Christi street. Live bands and refreshments. Cost is \$ 5/per person. For more information call 713-455-3660.

Santa on the Fire Truck - Dec. 13

Santa Claus, riding atop a fire truck, will circulate throughout Jacinto City on Saturday, Dec. 13, beginning at 8:00 a.m. Santa and his helpers will be distributing bags of candy to children.

Christmas Remembrance Tree

Carter Funeral Home has a **Christmas Remembrance Tree** in effect until January 21, 2015. You can hang a Christmas Ornament personalized with the name of your departed loved one, which will be your to keep after the holidays. For additional information, please call 713-455-5100. Carter Funeral Home is located 13701 Corpus Christi Street.

Galena Park ISD Fine Arts Holiday Calendar

• Friday, December 12
North Shore Middle School Band
Holiday Concert
NSSH Auditorium, 7:00 pm.
See more on page 6.

Channelview ISD Holiday Calendar

• Thursday, Dec. 11: 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM Family Math Night-Brown Elementary.
• 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Schochler Elementary Honor Choir Christmas Concert @ Schochle.
• 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Aguirre & Johnson JH Choirs Concert @ CHS Auditorium.
• 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Anthony Aguirre JH Band Holiday Concert @ AAJH .See more on page 6

AT THE WHITE HOUSE:

San Jacinto College commits to expand college access

PASADENA, Texas December 4, 2014 – Today in Washington, D.C., San Jacinto College Chancellor Dr. Brenda Hellyer, will join President Obama, the First Lady, and Vice President Biden, along with hundreds of college presidents and other higher education leaders, to announce new actions to help more students prepare for and graduate from college.

The White House College Opportunity Day of Action helps support the President's commitment to partner with colleges and universities, business leaders, and nonprofits to support students across the country to help our nation reach its goal of leading the world in college degree attainment.

Making sure students complete what they started has always been a priority for San Jacinto College, and participation in today's White House Summit will build on existing initiatives and efforts already in place to promote completing a college degree. Among those initiatives are Intentional Connections, College Success Interventions, Men of Honor and Women of Integrity, Acceleration in Mathematics (AIM), student success courses and faculty advising attached to the course, and an integrated reading and writing program.

See COMMITMENT, page 6



San Jacinto College System Chancellor Brenda Hellyer attended the summit, and committed to increasing the graduation rate.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT:

Houston Texans Foundation donates to local school district

Houston Texans Foundation donates \$10,000 toward new playground equipment at De Zavala.

Houston Texans Foundation recently brought smiles to the faces of happy children at staff members at De Zavala Elementary School.

Before the kickoff of Houston's home game against Tennessee at NRG Stadium on Nov. 30, representatives from the Texans presented the school with a \$10,000 grant through the National Football League's Play 60 program.

De Zavala teachers Andrea Marquez, Justin Jackson and Monica Coody had submitted their grant request to the Texans Foundation earlier this year.

Funds from the grant will be used for new playground equipment for the campus. Representatives from the Texans, as well as De Zavala students and staff will formally dedicate the playground site later this spring.



De Zavala Elementary teachers Andrea Marquez, Justin Jackson and Monica Coody accepted a \$10,000 grant donation on behalf of the school from the Houston Texans Foundation before a recent game at NRG Stadium. The funds will go toward new playground equipment for the campus.

Christmas Season starts in Jacinto City

Tradition of Parade, Music, Santa & Tree Lighting



THE CHRISTMAS SEASON opened last Saturday, in Jacinto City, with the Annual Christmas Parade down Market Street, ending at the TownCenter. Prominent in the Parade was Santa Claus, riding on a Jacinto City fire truck. Heading the Parade was a float with city officials, Congressman Gene Green and Sheila Jackson Lee.

About 25 units were in the Parade, and prizes were awarded by the three judges. Awards were: Most Beautiful, Chica's Revolution Zumba; Most Original, Jacinto City Elementary; Best Marching/Walking, Scroggins Toe-Tappers; Mayor's Choice, North Chan-



nel Martial Arts; and Honorable Mention, Galena Park Jacketeers.

Hundreds watched the parade on Market Street, and then assembled at the TownCenter for the program. Trophies were awarded at this ceremony, and music was provided by the Roger Matheny Family, and performed by Councilman Allen Lee and the Jacinto City Elementary Honor Choir. Santa was present in the Gazebo to greet and hear children's wishes, and the finale was the lighting of the Tree.

MORE PHOTOS IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF THE NORTH CHANNEL STAR

Harris County Sheriff's Office elves deliver toys to abused children



Santa, Mrs. Claus and the HCSO elves made a stop at the Children's Assessment Center (CAC) past Friday, December 5 to deliver a truck-load of toys to abused children. The toys were delivered this morning in an 18-wheeler preceded by a caravan with Santa, Mrs. Claus, Sheriff Garcia, the HCSO Mounted Patrol, and other members of the Sheriff's Office. Now in its 20th year, the HCSO's annual toy delivery has granted Christmas toy wishes to thousands of clients of the Children's Assessment Center. The toys are destined for clients of the CAC, whose mission is to provide a professional, compassionate, and coordinated approach to the treatment of sexually abused children and their families and to serve as an advocate for all children in our community.





Paramedics recognize service to area

A gala dinner was held on Dec. 5 at the Monument Inn for local ambulance crews. Crosby Volunteer Fire Chief Alan Kulak was recognised for the coordination and mutual assistance between Harris County Emergency Service #5 and Crosby Volunteer Fire Dept.



Randy Wooten and Theresa Aldy received special recognition with a joint CPR Life Saver Award on December 5 for a Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation save of a life April 4 at the Battleground Speedway in Highlands. The two worked together above and beyond the call of duty to save the life.



Christy Graves is presented an award by Joann Kuritz for 10 years as Coordinator of Services for HCESD#5, director of the ambulance service has been with the service for 17 years. Previously, 2.5 years was the record.



Jeanette Thompson has served Crosby's ambulance service for 20 years as an employee for HCESD#5. She was said to soon be the first person to retire from Crosby's service.



John Strawbridge has served on HCESD#5 Board for 10 years. His experience as an engineer and knowledge of the history and functions of HCESD#5 has been a valuable asset.



Randy Wooten was voted employee of the year by his peers for exhibiting a team effort, putting the citizens first and always willing to go above and beyond the call of duty.



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OPINION PAGE

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TEXAS

With Russell A. Graves

Plays Lakes - Part 2



Plays lakes

For centuries, the wet-dry cycles of the high plains wetlands benefited wildlife and plant life alike. Since the Clovis period of 11,500 years ago, ancient people benefited from the lakes as well. Artifacts discovered in an ancient Roberts County playa (just a few miles southeast of here, near Miami) include spears and scrapers found in proximity to elephant bones. People of the Folsom period (10,900 – 10,000 years ago) supplemented their bison diet with various aquatic animals and ducks they captured from playas.

The term playa is Spanish in origin and literally means beach. Perhaps Francisco Coronado coined the term when he crossed the plains in search of the fabled Quivira — the lost city of gold. Pedro de Castaneda traveled with Coronado on the expedition and made note of the playas in the mid-1500s. “Occasionally there were found some ponds, round like plates, a stone’s throw wider or larger,” he wrote. “Some contained fresh water, others salt.”

Throughout recorded history, the playas, which are the main water source on the plains, drew American Indians and 19th-century settlers. Comanche, and later hide hunters, knew that bison drank from the playas and often hunted them at the water holes. In fact, one of the theories that attempt to explain the origins of the playas suggests that bison wallowing in the mud over time caused the depressions. Still known as “buffalo wallows” by many contemporary plains residents, playas were actually formed by decaying organic matter that formed carbonic acid and dissolved the caliche soil layer. Once the caliche layer dissolved, various materials such as rock and organic matter permeated the soil and eventually formed a layer of clay in the bottom of the lakes that, when wet, is impermeable.

As more settlers moved into the Panhandle, farms and ranches sprang up around the playas. Over time, however, many playas were partially filled in or

entirely eliminated as the area evolved into the agricultural breadbasket of Texas. Bill Johnson, a biologist for the United States Fish & Wildlife Service based in the Panhandle, says that most playa degradation came from agricultural practices such as irrigation ditching and close-proximity plowing. Although the rate of destructive practices has slowed considerably, Johnson estimates that at least half of the playas that originally existed in Texas have been severely damaged or destroyed.

“Although they represent only two percent of the landscape in the Southern High Plains, playas are key to both floral and faunal diversity,” explains Johnson. “They are the primary wetland feature in a very arid landscape — without functioning playas, both plant and animal diversity in the Texas High Plains would be very low.” Johnson says that, during the peak of the winter, as many as half a million ducks are on the lakes in wet years. During the fall and spring migrations, that number increases substantially. “The numbers of ducks, geese, cranes and shorebirds that use playas during migration periods and winter can be quite impressive. Without functioning playas, it’s not a stretch to say that waterfowl numbers would be affected on a continental level.”

However, waterfowl and shorebirds aren’t the only avian species that utilize playas. The Panhandle’s premier game bird, the ring-necked pheasant, is inexorably tied to the shallow water lakes. According to Texas Tech University researchers, pheasants spend as much as 90 percent of their time around playa lakes during the nonbreeding season. Without playas, pheasant numbers and, ultimately, the local hunting economies would suffer. Towns like Hart and Nazareth host huge groups of pheasant hunters annually, and their presence is essential to maintaining a vigorous local hunting economy even when the broader agricultural economy is marginal.



Perry directs state agencies to screen employees

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry on Dec. 3 ordered state agencies to check the employment eligibility of current and prospective employees by using E-Verify, an Internet-based system that allows employers to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States.

Perry also urged Congress to pass legislation “to provide the resources necessary to secure our southern border.” Perry’s announcements come in the wake of President Obama’s executive action on immigration on Nov. 20. At the time, in a national broadcast, Obama said he would take various actions because of the protracted unwillingness of Congress to pass an immigration reform bill that addresses the legal status of millions of undocumented workers employed in Texas and other states by American business owners. A White House news release lists three elements of the president’s executive actions:

1. Cracking down on illegal immigration at the border to increase the chances that anyone attempting to cross illegally will be caught and sent back; continuing the surge of resources that effectively reduced the number of unaccompanied children crossing the border illegally last summer; and centralizing border security command-and-control.
2. Deporting felons, not families to focus on the deportation of people who threaten national security and public safety; and directing immigration enforcement to place anyone suspected of terrorism, violent criminals, gang members and recent border crossers at the top of the deportation priority list.
3. Accountability through criminal background checks and taxes, to hold accountable those undocumented immigrants who have lived in the

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STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling



United States for more than five years and are parents of U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents.

Meanwhile, Perry said, “It’s clear now more than ever that Congress must finally pass a bill that dedicates the necessary resources to securing our border, once and for all. Without border security, immigration reform is a fruitless exercise.”

States challenge president

Texas was joined by 16 other states on Dec. 3 in filing a court challenge to President Obama’s executive actions on immigration that he announced last month.

Texas Attorney General and governor-elect Greg Abbott, who filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court Southern District of Texas, wrote that the U.S. Constitution’s Take Care Clause “limits the President’s power and ensures that he will faithfully execute Con-

gress’s laws – not rewrite them under the guise of ‘prosecutorial discretion.’”

Also claimed is that the Department of Homeland Security’s directive was issued without following the Administrative Procedure Act’s rule-making guidelines and awards “legal benefits to individuals whose conduct contradicts the priorities of Congress.”

States joining Texas in the lawsuit are Alabama, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Task force issues report

Gov. Perry on Dec. 4 announced the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response has issued a 174-page report regarding the state’s capabilities to prepare for and respond to infectious diseases, such as the Ebola virus and other emerging pathogens.

Examples of the report’s findings and recommendations:

- Education of diverse health care professionals is essential for the initial identification, assessment, triage, care and isolation of patients with Ebola or other uncommon but high-consequence infectious diseases.
- Consideration should be given to the care, monitoring and disposition of domestic animals, especially pets.
- The state and external partners should develop a “mobile app” for real-time collection and monitoring of temperature and symptom data.
- Establishment of bio-containment treatment facilities and a pediatric unit specializing in the care of infants and children with Ebola and other high consequence infectious diseases.

Former Senate secretary dies

Betty King, who served as secretary of the Texas Senate from 1977 to 2001, died Dec. 1 in Austin. She was 89.

First hired as a House Appropriations Committee clerk in 1947, her patience, grace and unflappability were soon known and long appreciated, until her retirement in 2001.

Plans are for a private burial in the Texas State Cemetery.

Kolkhorst wins Senate runoff

State Rep. Lois W. Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, last week won the runoff election for the Senate District 18 seat and will succeed Sen. Glenn Hegar, R-Katy, who was elected state comptroller in the November general election.

Kolkhorst, who chairs the House Public Health committee, has served as a member of the Texas House of Representatives since 2001.

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OPINION

How To Purchase Your First Home In 2015

(NAPSI)—The American dream of homeownership may not be as hard to attain as many people seem to fear. A few intriguing facts and hints can help.

The Facts

While existing home sales have risen recently, the National Association of Realtors’ annual Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers found that the share of first-time buyers recently fell to its lowest level (33 percent) in nearly three decades.

Many first-time buyers experience obstacles on the path to homeownership, including difficulty saving for a down payment and tight credit conditions.

The Hints

Consider these tips:

- **Find and work with an expert Realtor who knows the neighborhood.** Nothing can replace the local knowledge and real insight that professional Realtors can provide to first-time buyers as they navigate the complex home buying process.

According to the Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, while most home buyers in the past year began their home search online, 90 percent ended up purchasing their home through an agent. Realtors are not only the source of online real estate data, they also use their unparalleled local market knowledge and resources to help close the deal for buyers and sellers.

- **Meet with a lender to determine how much you can afford.** Last year, the median price a first-time buyer spent on a home was \$169,000. Chances are, you don’t have that amount of cash lying around. That’s why 95 percent of first-time buyers who bought a home in the past year financed their purchase.

Find out what you can afford with a preapproval from a lender. A lender will check your credit history, current debt obligations and other expenses to determine the amount of money you’re qualified to borrow at a specific interest rate. Don’t forget to consider the other costs of homeownership, such as taxes, insurance and utilities.

- **Identify your housing wish list.**

Although 46 percent of first-time buyers got a single-family home in the suburbs, you may prefer a condo in an urban environment near public transportation.

Regardless of your preferences, identifying and sharing your wish list can help your Realtor focus on the right home for you, scan listings and connect with those who represent sellers to zero in on homes for sale that meet your budget and criteria.

Keep this advice in mind and you may soon find yourself waking up in the home of your dreams.

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LIFESTYLE



Christmas Spirit

(back) Caden Bocox, (front, l to r) Maycee Mitchell and Kailyona Thomas, Hopper Primary students, perform at the opening exercises of the recent meeting of the Goose Creek CISD Board of Trustees.

Photo by Carrie Pryor-Newman

Legion Con event to be hosted in Crosby

Legion Con
What is it?
Legion con is an event being hosted at The American Legion post 658 in Crosby, TX.
There will be a Magic: the gathering tournament, Dungeons and Dragons, A Cosplay Contest, and LARPing
When is it?
The event is going to happen December 19th-21st, Friday through Sunday
How Much?
\$15 for a 3-day pass
For more info please visit www.legioncon.com
Legion Con is an event

geared toward bringing the young veteran the well-served welcome home, and needed resources to make the transition from the military to civilian life, as well as giving them a chance to give back to their still deployed Brothers and Sisters.
We are planning to hold this event on December 19th-21st, 2014 a Friday through Sunday at the American Legion Hall, located in Crosby, Texas.
American Legion Post 658 is located at 14890 FM 2100 in Crosby, Texas 77532.

Great grant giveaway for Crosby ISD teachers

By Dr. Rob Tatman

The Crosby Education Foundation (CEF) recently awarded district teachers over \$62,000 for innovative teacher grants. Award-winning teachers will be utilizing their grants for balanced literacy, technology-based learning platforms, English language acquisition, reading fluency improvement, science, math and environmental projects as well as Sensory Sensation at Drew Intermediate and a ‘Cougar Spirit Store’ at Crosby HS run by students! Grants were distributed over all grade levels and represented the grant applications from 67 teachers district-wide. Many grants were adopted by community members and the others were subsidized by the Foundation. The Crosby Education Foundation is proud to serve Crosby ISD teachers and schools and is appreciative of all the donors (companies, families & individuals), volunteers, and CEF Board members who made the Great Grant Giveaway possible.

Walter F. Tutor to receive community builders award

C.A. Fortner Masonic Lodge No. 1304 will be presenting Walter F. Tutor with the Community Builders Award on Thursday, December 11, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.
This event is open to the public. C. A. Forntet Lodge is located at 716 Sheldon Road in Channelview, TX. next to the Advance Auto Store.



Picture shows Crosby Education Foundation members with Principal Jennifer Roach and teacher grant award winner Ms. Sharon Taylor and her students. Ms. Taylor's grant was titled, Super-Charged Balanced Literacy with iPads!



Picture shows Superintendent Dr. Keith Moore, Principal Todd Hicks, Crosby Education Foundation members, teachers awarded a \$4799 grant titled Increasing Reading Achievement through iPad Minis!

Nominees for the 2014 American Legion Boys & Girls State



Students nominated to the 2014 American Legion Boys State were recognized at a recent meeting of the Goose Creek CISD Board of Trustees. Pictured are (l to r) Hermann Hopson, Robert E. Lee High School; Ricky Price, member of American Legion Post 323; Thomas Hotchkiss, Ross S. Sterling High School; Christian E. Gonzalez, Goose Creek Memorial High School and Benjamin Clausen, Sterling High School.



Students nominated to the 2014 American Legion Bluebonnet Girls State were recognized at a recent meeting of the Goose Creek CISD Board of Trustees. Pictured are (l to r) Kimberlee Walters and Kenzie Lackey, Ross S. Sterling High School and Georgeanne Jacobs, Goose Creek Memorial High School. They are under the direction of Ricky Price of American Legion Post 323.

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1 Corinthians 16:13

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show respect for the elderly and
revere your God.
Leviticus 19:32

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SPORTS, BUSINESS

San Jac Women’s basketball ranked 13th in the nation

HOUSTON – Showing marked improvement, the San Jacinto College women’s basketball team is ranked 13th in the nation by the National Junior College Athletic Association for the week of Dec. 1.

“As far as I know, this is the first time in the College’s history for the women’s basketball program to achieve a national ranking,” commented Head Coach Brenita Williams Jackson. “It’s a testament to the teamwork, hustle, and focus of this team.”

San Jac owns an overall record of 8-1, 1-0 in conference.

“We are blessed and humbled by the national ranking,” Jackson remarked. “Our team is deep and everybody plays and produces, which makes us hard to defend.”

Sophomore guard Kendra Howard (Dallas / Cedar Hill High School) leads the team in scoring at 16 points per game, followed by freshman forward Anika Nottingham (Trinidad & Tobago / Macurapo West Secondary), with 11.8 points per game. Howard also leads on defense, averaging 3.4 steals per game, followed by sophomore guard Nekeita Bailey (Alief / Alief Hastings High School), with 2.9 steals per game. The top rebounder is sophomore post Jameela McCarthy (Dabadie, Trinidad & Tobago / San Juan North Secondary), with 10.3 rebounds per game.

“A lot of blood, sweat, and tears went into the preseason and I am happy these girls are seeing their hard work and dedication paying off,” Jackson said. “We are not satisfied and will keep pushing to be great. We hope to see our community continue to support these young ladies.”

All of the women’s basketball games are free and open to the public, and are played in Nichols Gym at the North Campus, 5800 Uvalde Road. For more information, visit sanjacsports.com.

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All of the women’s basketball games are free and open to the public, and are played in Nichols Gym at the North Campus, 5800 Uvalde Road. For more information, visit sanjacsports.com.



The San Jacinto College women's basketball team is led by sophomore players, from left (front row) Sarah Davis, Anika Nottingham, Nekeita Bailey, and Kendra Howard; (back row) Jameela McCarthy, Raven Wilson, Alex Kochner, and Brittani Austin.

Photo by Rob Vanya, San Jacinto College.

Channelview ISD Holiday Performances

- Friday, Dec. 12** Campbell Learning Center Blood Drive
- Saturday** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Schochler Honor Choir performs at Chick-Fil-A Toy Drive
- Monday, Dec. 15** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Cobb Elementary 5th Grade Christmas Concert
- Tuesday, Dec. 16** 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM Cobb Choir performing at Sam's Whole Sale Club on I10
- 5:30 PM - 6:00 PM DeZavala 3rd & 4th Graders Winter Music Program @ DeZavala
- 6:30 PM - 7:00 PM McMullan Elementary 3rd Grade Christmas Musical “The Littlest Reindeer”
- 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Alice Johnson JH Band Holiday Concert @ AJJH
- 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM CHS Choir Concert @ CHS Auditorium
- 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM CHS Choir Holiday Concert
- Wednesday, December 17, 2014** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Schochler Honor Choir performs @ Sam's Club I-10
- Thursday, December 18, 2014** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Brown Elementary 5th Grade Christmas Concert @ Brown Elementary
- 6:30 PM - 7:00 PM Schochler Honor Choir performs for Legend Oaks Healthcare & Rehab on Wallisville.

Galena Park ISD Fine Arts Holiday Performance Calendar

- Friday, December 12**
North Shore Middle School Band Holiday Concert
NSSH Auditorium, 7:00 PM
- Monday, December 15**
Cloverleaf Elementary Music Honor Choir, Christmas Musical
CLF Auditorium, 8:45 AM & 12:45 PM
- Galena Park Middle School Choir**
Winter Concert (6th Grade) GPHS Auditorium, 6:00 PM
Galena Park Middle School Choir
Winter Concert (7th & 8th Grade) GPHS Auditorium, 7:30 PM
- Tuesday, December 16**
Galena Park Elementary Music
PTA Program / Honor Choir
GPE Cafeteria, 5:30 PM
- Cloverleaf Elementary Music Honor Choir; Christmas Musical**
CLF Auditorium, 6:00 PM
Normandy Crossing Elementary Music
Winter Showcase featuring NCE Honor Choir & students from 3rd, 4th, & 5th grades NCE Multi Purpose Room, 6:00 PM
- Woodland Acres Middle School Choir**
Holiday Concert
GPHS Auditorium, 6:00 PM
North Shore Sr. High School Band
Winter Concert & Spaghetti Dinner (\$10, includes concert & dinner) NSSH Cafeteria & Auditorium, 7:00 PM
- Wednesday, December 17**
Woodland Acres Middle School Band
Winter Concert
GPHS Auditorium, 6:00 PM
- Cunningham Middle School Choir**
Winter Pops Concert
NSSH Auditorium, 6:30 PM
- Thursday, December 18**
Harvard Elementary Music
Fine Arts Winter Extravaganza (1st Grade, Honor Choir & Band) HAV Multi Purpose Room, 9:00 AM
- Williamson Elementary Music**
PTA Performance / Honor Choir & 4th Grade
SJW Multi Purpose Room, 5:30 PM
Harvard Elementary Music
Fine Arts Winter Extravaganza (1st Grade, Honor Choir & Band) HAV Multi Purpose Room, 6:00 PM

Channelview High School Career Day

Channelview High School students got an inside look at a variety of different professions during its annual Career Day recently. More than 60 presenters shared information about their careers, including educational experience and certifications, professional experience and other requirements.



Carla Rankin with CMEF talks to students about careers in construction.



NASA Astronaut Cap Nguyen visits with a Channelview High School students after his formal Career Day presentation.

COMMITMENT,

Continued from page 1

“Student success is at the core of every decision and action we take at San Jacinto College,” said Dr. Hellyer. “We want our students to complete their associate degree, and our success initiatives are helping them do that. When our students succeed, we succeed. An associate degree provides our students the opportunity to transfer to a four-year university, or enter the workforce with the skills they need to start a meaningful career. This is the focus of our entire College, from the Board of Trustees and throughout the College.”

The San Jacinto College Intentional Connections initiative provides guidance and mentoring for students who struggle with core subjects and who previously had not been successful in any course, but want to complete college and improve their lives. It allows students to “test drive” different programs prior to enrolling in a full semester course to determine if that area of study is a fit. The College Success Interventions identifies at-risk students and provides face-to-face advising early in the student’s college career to insure the student stays on track and understands the support available through tutoring and counseling.

Men of Honor and Women of Integrity serve to provide mentors for African American and Latino male and female students, respectively, offering support, guidance, and encouragement along their educational journeys. Aaron Moore, a Men of Honor student, said about the program, “I found mentors and began to follow their good examples. We learn from each others’ experiences, and we check on each other for accountability.”

The AIM, and integrated reading and writing courses, are collaborative learning models developed by San Jacinto College faculty. The Acceleration in

Math program is a one-semester course that pairs instruction and concepts in developmental mathematics and college algebra, scaffolding instruction so that the appropriate algebra concept immediately follows the developmental one. Students complete the two courses in one semester, expediting their time to degree completion. With integrated reading and writing, students learn critical reading and academic writing skills together in one course. This has reduced the number of developmental reading and writing courses from five to two, again accelerating a student’s time through developmental and into college-level courses.

One of the most successful strategies at San Jacinto College has been the faculty advising through the required developmental and college-level student success courses. Advising sessions are required at several points during the course, which makes students aware of support services and creates strong connections between students and faculty members. That personal meeting with a faculty member often keeps a struggling student in class and gets them back on the right track.

“Initiatives such as these are designed to help our students be better prepared, so that when they graduate, they have all the tools they need to be successful,” added Dr. Hellyer.

As part of the commitment to the College Opportunity Summit, San Jacinto College will join other colleges and universities throughout the country in declaring a commitment to increase its overall six-year graduation rate by 10 percent; increase the overall transfer rate to a four-year university by 10 percent; and reduce by half the achievement gap between underrepresented and non-underrepresented students.

“Over the last five years, we have nearly doubled the total number of San Jacinto College graduates,” added Dr. Hellyer. “This is significant progress that comes by creating a culture

focused on student success and continuous improvement, taking a fresh look at where we are and what we are doing, and measuring what is important.”

Today’s White House College Opportunity Day of Action participants were asked to commit to a new action in one of four areas: building networks of colleges around promoting completion; creating K-16 partnerships around college readiness; investing in high school counselors as part of the First Lady’s Reach Higher initiative; and increasing the number of college graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The President will announce new steps on how his Administration is helping to support these actions, including announcing \$10 million to help promote college completion and a \$30 million AmeriCorps program that will improve low-income students’ access to college. Today’s event is the second College Opportunity Day of Action and will include a progress report on the commitments made at the first day of action on Jan. 14, 2014.

Expanding opportunity for more students to enroll and succeed in college, especially low-income and underrepresented students, is vital to building a strong economy and a strong middle class. Today, only 9 percent of those born in the lowest family income quartile attain a bachelor’s degree by age 25, compared to 54 percent in the top quartile. In an effort to expand college access, the Obama Administration has increased Pell scholarships by \$1,000 a year, created the new American Opportunity Tax Credit worth up to \$10,000 over four years of college, limited student loan payments to 10 percent of income, and laid out an ambitious agenda to reduce college costs and promote innovation and competition.

“I am extremely honored to be representing San Jacinto College at today’s White House event,” concluded Dr. Hellyer. “I applaud the Administration for bringing together a diverse group of higher education leaders and experts. We are all in this together, and together we can make a difference.”

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