



WEEK OF APRIL 22, 2019

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Of Note...

It's hard to fathom that we're already in the throes of the last days of school. It seems as though the academic year just began. We have so many accomplishments and successes for which to be proud.

I am pleased to report that the Bank of Texas just issued a \$7,020 check to our Head Start centers for books to support literacy. In addition to the check, representatives from the bank also delivered 150 children's books in support of Head Start's "Read-Excel-Achieve-Lead" (REAL) SuperMENTors literacy program. This is a worthwhile program and I encourage each Board Member to become part of this rewarding experience. It can have a profound impact on the life of a child.

Speaking of Head Start, we recently celebrated the Week of the Young Child. This annual event gives the community an opportunity to learn more about this essential program for young children. See page 5 for scenes from this year's observation.

I began this week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team (ELT) as well as standing internal meetings. ELT and I also continued to conduct budget hearings and I had several internal meetings scheduled around the hearings. Today, I am making a site visit to the new AB-West campus site. Following that, I will meet with staff and conduct business at the North Post Oak location.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week with my regularly standing meeting with ELT. That meeting will be followed by one with a mentee. Later in the week, I will conduct agenda review and engage various staff in other regularly standing internal meetings.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following workshops and training sessions: HCDE Superintendent Certification Institute Information Webinar; Library and Media Specialist Collaborative; Quest for Grants Training Series: Grant Writing Best Practices; Harris County Social Studies Leadership Team; The Edible Academy: A Rainbow of Garden Nutrition; and School Finance Council. I can't reiterate enough the cost savings we offer client school districts for our exceptional professional development opportunities.

I am pleased to mention that the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge, hosted by CASE, is set for this Saturday, April 27, at the Berry Center in Cy-Fair. The theme of this year's event is Space: The Next Giant Leap. The challenge will include 49 elementary teams composed of approximately 250 students from Houston, and the surrounding area.

In closing, please be reminded that the next meeting of the board will take place Wednesday, May 15, 2019.

As always, thank you for your continued support of HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and have a relaxing weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Bank of Texas Execs Deliver \$7,020 Check, Books to Support Literacy Across HCDE Head Start Centers



Photo: Bank of Texas donates check and books to Harris County Department of Education Head Start. (left) Chris Frey, assistant vice president, commercial banking, Bank of Texas; Gary Whitt, senior vice president, commercial banking, Bank of Texas; Venetia Peacock, senior director, Harris County Department of Education Head Start; Steve Bradshaw, CEO, BOK Financial; Armando Rodriguez, community partnerships manager, HCDE Head Start; and Randy Miller, market CEO, Bank of Texas

Bank of Texas delivered approximately 150 children's books to Harris County Department of Education Head Start centers along with a \$7,020 check as continued support for the HCDE Head Start "Read-Excel-Achieve-Lead" (REAL) SuperMENTors literacy program.

REAL SuperMENTors is a volunteer program that encourages male mentors to

read aloud to children in HCDE's 15 Head Start centers and four Early Head Start Partnerships. Children receive books from each SuperMENTor visit to build home libraries. Bank of Texas has provided support and volunteers since 2014. To date, the company has pledged and delivered \$42,000 to the literacy program.

A recent Child Trends research brief found that young people who participate in mentoring programs have better attendance, are more likely to pursue higher education and have positive attitudes toward school than those without mentors. More information about volunteering is available at <https://bit.ly/2Gvv4mm>.

"We appreciate and revere Bank of Texas' commitment and support for child literacy early-on," said Venetia Peacock, senior director for HCDE Head Start. "We also recognize the community commitment several officers provide as they volunteer their personal time to read and mentor students in our centers."



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

APRIL 23, 2019

HCDE Superintendent Certification Institute Information Webinar

APRIL 24, 2019

Library and Media Specialist Collaborative

Quest for Grants Training Series: Grant Writing Best Practices

APRIL 25, 2019

Harris County Social Studies Leadership Team

The Edible Academy: A Rainbow of Garden Nutrition

APRIL 26, 2019

School Finance Council



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Personal Struggle for Deer Park Student Leads to Scholastic Regional Recognition and Nomination



Elizabeth Willms struggled with an eating disorder while in junior high and wanted to address it through her writing.

“I wrote a letter to anorexia about the

process of how it took over my life and how I took it out of my life,” Willms, a Deer Park High School-North Campus ninth-grader, said.

Her letter was awarded a Gold Key in the 2019 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, sponsored by Harris County Department of Education, and an American Voices Nominee. She also received a \$250 scholarship as an American Voices Nominee.

She was fortunate to have a teacher this year who let her express herself even though the topic was one that not everyone wants to talk about.

“I think a big part of Scholastic is adjusting to things that people don’t like to think about because it could be painful, confusing or controversial,” Willms said. “I think a big part of writing is expecting those things.”

This journey began when she was in elementary school. She feels when she is dealing with pain, writing is the best way to express herself. She started writing to express her depression and challenges.

“I know writing is what got me through the death of my grandfather, and I know he would be very proud of me today,” she said. “I think it comes full circle because the things that got me into writing is the journey that is never going to start or end.”

When she started paying attention to Hollywood and the modeling industry in fifth grade, it transferred to her own

body image. She still struggles with her eating disorder today, but not like before.

“I am not sure how long it will affect me or if it will stop affecting me, but I know that I will stop letting it have such an impact on me,” Willms said. “I know that one day it won’t be something that we can see anymore, it will be something that empowers me. Until that day, I will just have to keep staying strong.”

With this personal experience and having gone through it recently, it took her only eight minutes to write the Scholastic entry. She had her mother, a former English teacher, and English teacher friends of her mother look over her work.

“They didn’t have much to say, as far as critiquing it, because when you have something so important to talk about there’s not much editing that can be done,” she said. “It should be broad and come right from the heart.”

She believes she got recognized for her letter because the emotions are real, and they all occur in the heart, not the brain.

Her first Scholastic entry was in seventh grade as a mandatory assignment, which led to national recognition and a goal to submit entries each year. She was awarded a national gold key medal for her topic on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

When she grows up, she would like to be a published author by either writing a novel or have a collection of poetry or short stories.

“I want to be able to speak to people and let them know that it’s OK to not be OK, and they are not alone,” Willms said. “All I really want to do in life is to help people find writing because that’s what I am best at, and I think that’s the best job I have to make the world a better place.”

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Fore! Young CASE for Kids Golfers Showcase Afterschool Accomplishments at Kids Day Event



Students are using the game of golf to learn math-and-science concepts and character development as Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids) joins with Kids' Day and Little Birdies Mobile Golf Academy.

The Kids' Day event was held April 24 at F.M. Law Park, 8400 Mykawa Road. Students ages 4-12 who studied the Kids' Day curriculum in their CASE for Kids afterschool programs showed off their golfing acumen and competed with other schools.

Students attending were from Aldine ISD's Raymond Academy, Alief ISD's Liestman Elementary and Martin Elementary, Houston ISD's Benbrook Elementary, Pasadena ISD Frazier Elementary, Sheldon ISD Garrett Elementary and Sheldon Elementary and the Academy of Accelerated Learning Charter School.

Kids' Days are supported by CASE for Kids and Houston-Galveston Area Council funding.

"CASE for Kids provides Kids' Days as the culminating day where students showcase what they've learned and celebrate their accomplishments," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. "Afterschool activities can



reinforce social-emotional learning (SEL) so that children get to explore and understand their emotions. We also provide academic reinforcement. In addition, kids get an opportunity to sample the fine arts and hobbies such as golf, dance or even fencing."

Little Birdies' Archie Craft, owner and lead instructor, said the curriculum he uses for Kids' Day reinforces academics, character education and SEL.

"We talk about how far you hit the ball with this club versus the other club," he said. "How much force do you need to put on the putter to make a three-foot putt? How can the wind effect your ball in flight?"

Afterschool vendors such as Little Birdies Mobile Golf Academy work with CASE for Kids to supply the extracurricular expertise through afterschool contracts. Students are enrolled in afterschool programs through their schools, community centers and child care facilities benefit.

CASE for Kids is an afterschool intermediary which provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 14,000 students and 2,800 teachers in greater Harris County. Partnering vendors like Little Birdies Mobile Golf Academy teach concepts, skills and fundamentals for particular subjects and interests.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

All-Earth Ecobot Challenge Hosted by CASE for Kids Set for April 27 at Berry Center in Cy-Fair



With a mission to land on Mars, the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge 2019 hosted by CASE for Kids involves robotics in outer space and the colonization of the red planet in “Space: The Next Giant Leap.” The event set for April 27 at the Berry Center in Cypress, Texas will feature 49 elementary teams of approximately 250 students.

Teams travel from Houston and surrounding areas such as New Caney, Spring, Huffman, Spring Branch, Seguin, Cy-Fair, Galena Park and Cleveland.

Judging begins at 10:15 a.m., and the event ends at 4 p.m., with closing ceremony and awards. The space-minded robotics teams use Mindstorm Lego kits to build, program and compete with their space robots. The challenge includes the Eco-Genius Lab which provides professionals from local industries who will demonstrate real-world examples of science, technology, engineering and math at the Genius Lab.



Community Partners Visit Head Start Centers During Week of the Young Child

As part of the Week of the Young Child (April 15-19), about 15 HCDE staff and community partners visited two of our Head Start centers. The center visits gave the community a chance to learn about early childhood education and interact with the children and teachers.



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to:

- Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, ensuring a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and the community; and to
- Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.

The Bank of Texas demonstrated its commitment and support to early childhood literacy through the donation of a check in the amount of \$7,020. In addition, the bank donated 150 children's books towards the Head Start Read-Excel-Achieve-Lead (REAL) SuperMENTors literacy program.

This is a volunteer program that encourages male mentors to read aloud to children in HCDE's 15 Head Start centers and four Early Head Start partnerships. Research recently found that young people who participate in



mentoring programs have better attendance, are more likely to pursue higher education, and have positive attitudes toward school than those without mentors.

We are appreciative of the Bank of Texas donation and its support of our program.

By informing the community of programs such as this, I am striving to meet the Board's goal to communicate the needs and accomplishments of the HCDE through a variety of formats: through written reports, communication with school districts, political arenas, and public meetings. I am also listening and considering differing viewpoints of various constituencies and using good judgment to discern the best decision and action for the Department.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Summers

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

