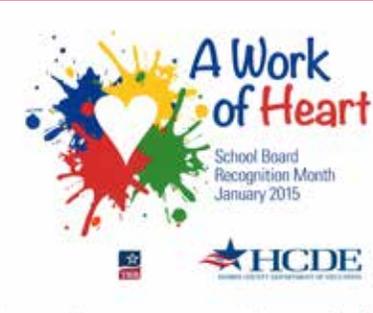


The Connector

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education
for the HCDE Board of Trustees

From the office of **JAMES COLBERT, JR. | SUPERINTENDENT**



Of Note...

While I trust that you've had an enjoyable year thus far, I regret to mention that we returned to the office after Winter Break only to be saddened upon learning of the loss of a dedicated employee, Mr. Dana McNatt, math teacher at Highpoint North. Mr. McNatt suffered a stroke over the holiday season and unfortunately passed away as a result of associated complications. The Highpoint North administration and faculty had the dreaded responsibility of informing the students of this great loss and consoling them during their grief. While I hate to be the bearer of such sad news, I would be remiss if I didn't bring to your attention this significant loss of a strong link in HCDE's internal education chain.

Upon my return, I continued to seize opportunities to expand my network within the Harris County area having met with Superintendent Benny Soileau from Huffman ISD earlier this week and with State Representative Garnet Coleman, just this morning. Earlier this week, I also had the pleasure of meeting with the Vice President/General Manager of Fox 26 Houston, D'Artagnan Bebel.

Please be reminded that January is Board Appreciation Month! We look forward to honoring you for your continued service to the children of Harris County at a reception that will be held on Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 12:00 noon in the HCDE Conference Center on the 5th floor of the parking garage. Immediately following that reception at our Board Meeting at 1:00 p.m., we will swear in our two new trustees, Mr. Don Sumners and Mr. Michael Wolfe. Please look forward to those two events.

This week has been one of regrouping. Schools are back in session after winding down the fall semester. Divisions and program staff are playing post Winter Break catch-up. Our client districts are also making similar typical second semester adjustments this week so although busy, it's a slower week at HCDE than usual. We're gearing up for big things this semester!

I hope you enjoy this first issue of **The Connector** for calendar year 2015!

House Public Education Committee Releases Interim Report

The House Committee on Public Education released its Interim Report. The report summarizes the services and programs at HCDE and the cost savings to school districts and taxpayers. See page 33 for the information on HCDE or view the entire report: http://www.house.state.tx.us/_media/pdf/committees/reports/83interim/House-Committee-on-Public-Education-Interim-Report-12.19.14.pdf

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

IT'S SCHOLASTIC TIME



**Scholastic
Art & Writing
Awards**

Houston-area art and writing professionals met this week to judge regional art and writing entries for The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards of Harris County.

This year, **HCDE** received a total of 2,619 art and 1,292 writing entries from students in the Harris County region. Entries are all judged electronically. Awardees will be announced by January 31, 2015. *Photo:* Museum of Fine Arts Houston docents Robin Thomas, Jo Frances Greenlaw and Lois Richards; Texas Art Supply event coordinator Eepi Chaad; and HCDE's Scholastic Art & Writing regional coordinator Melba Kent view artwork from past Scholastic Art & Writing regional awards.

ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

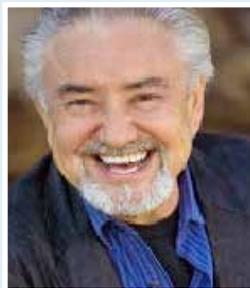
01.05 | Recruitment for HCDE Alternative Certification Program for Teachers Information Meeting

01.05 | Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Judging all week long

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Head Start Trains with Motivational Speaker Steve Saffron

Wellness motivational speaker Steve Saffron presented a three-hour workshop to kick off the new semester at **Head Start**. All staff attended the workshop entitled: "Change Your Thoughts/Change Your World—How to Build a Positive Work Climate." During the course of the day, he covered seven traits every employer values which include work ethic, problem-solving on the job, meeting the needs of customers, being a person of honesty and integrity, knowing how to use technology, getting better at what you do and being a team player.



Special Schools Gears Up for Successful Spring Semester, Remembers Beloved Highpoint North Math Teacher

On Monday, teachers and staff spent the day averaging and recording student grades and planning for the second semester. Students returned to school on Tuesday.

At Highpoint North, counselors and staff were on hand to help students deal with the loss of their math teacher Dana McNatt, who died from complications after suffering a stroke. He will be missed by both his colleagues and his students.

ABC West Parent Testimonial Video featuring Patrick Coleman, Former Houston Oiler



ABC West Aide Patrick Coleman, a former Houston Oilers' wide receiver, has worked at ABC West for 16 years since his football retirement and dons his Santa suit each December for students, parents and staff. He talks about what makes the school special along with testimonials from parents and staff in this featured video produced by Technology videographer Daniel Villarreal. Access HCDEtv: <http://youtu.be/xe5I7vm42L4>.

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Business Services Recognized by TASBO

Hats off to the **Business Services** division for having received the TASBO Award of Merit for Purchasing and Operations with Recognized Status for the 6th year in a row! The award is provided to school districts and Education Service Centers statewide that are committed to following professional standards in the acquisition of goods and services.

HCDE will be recognized for this honor on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at the awards reception at the TASBO 69th Annual Conference in Houston.



Readying for Budget Training

Business Services staff is gearing up for budget training for FY2015-2016. Training sessions for budget managers and other staff will take place early February.



25 Harris County School Districts

- Aldine
- Alief
- Channelview
- Clear Creek
- Crosby
- Cy-Fair
- Dayton
- Deer Park
- Galena Park
- Goose Creek
- Houston
- Huffman
- Humble
- Katy
- Klein
- La Porte
- New Caney
- Pasadena
- Pearland
- Sheldon
- Spring
- Spring Branch
- Stafford
- Tomball
- Waller

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Superintendent James Colbert Studies Meteorology at Fox 26 Houston



Superintendent James Colbert briefly studies meteorology at Fox 26 Houston after meeting with Vice-President/General Manager D'Artagnan Bebel.

Grant awards to continue as 8 organizations gain \$80,000 in afterschool funding from City Connections initiative with City of Houston, CASE for Kids

Eight Houston organizations will each receive afterschool funding through June 2015 ranging from \$5,000 to \$22,500 as part of an ongoing funding project from the City of Houston. The collaboration between the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Extended Learning, or **CASE for Kids**, a division of Harris County Department of Education and the City of Houston spreads \$550,000 between all 11 city council districts. Grant applications from Houston organizations continue to be accepted through April 6, 2015.

The first wave of money awarded to the eight organizations totals \$80,031 of the \$550,000 appropriated for youth. Awards are announced on the first Monday of each month. The final award will be announced May 4. Funds are available for use from January 2015 through June 2015.

City Connections is an innovative initiative spearheaded by Houston City Councilmember C.O. Bradford last summer and CASE for Kids. The out-of-school time funding is intended to help fight juvenile crime and to promote child safety during the hours of 3-6 p.m. during the school year when parents are working and in the summertime. The funding is especially needed due to decreased state and federal funding streams which previously supported afterschool locally.

The following organizations gain the funding this month, along with their locations, award amounts and Houston City Council districts:

Alief Family YMCA (Community Outreach Missions Education Team), \$11,250, District F (77083); Alief Independent School District (Martin Elementary and Miller Intermediate), \$22,500, District F (77072 and 77082); Chinese Community Center, \$11,250, District F (77036); Citizen Schools Texas (Patrick Henry Middle School), \$5,000, District B (77093); College Community Center (Spring Woods and Northbrook high schools in Spring Branch Independent School District), \$5,000, District A (77080); Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (Bane Elementary School), \$5,031, District A (77040); Houston Independent School District (Chavez High School), \$15,000, District I (77017); and Solutions for Better Living (iServe Fifth Ward), \$5,000, District B (77020).

To apply for City Connections funding, go to www.afterschoolzone.org and access CASE for Kids City Connections. Call 713-696-1331 for more information.



Houston Independent School District After School Programs Manager Jonnelle Hollins and Chavez High School Development Coordinator Carolyn Teas accept a check for \$15,000 from City Councilmember Robert Gallegos (District I) and CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. Chavez High School is one of eight organizations awarded the first wave of grants in afterschool funding from the City Connections initiative with the City of Houston and CASE for Kids.

Houston-Area Middle, High School Students Recruited for Energy City of the Future 2050 Competition



Energy City of the Future 2050 will be held this year on February 21. The curriculum introduces students to a variety of career fields in engineering, urban planning, technology, architecture, transportation, science and energy. Students learn about the careers and their connections to urban sustainability. Students connect with industry professionals and potential career mentors through information-gathering activities and onsite tours of destinations essential to the city's infrastructure. They develop communication and marketing skills through team presentations of visionary concepts and scale models of Houston 2050 in a judged competition. The competition is funded by the Education Foundation of Harris County. **CASE for Kids** implements and staffs the program and organizes the culminating event. Go to <http://www.energycityofthefuture.com> to join the competition or learn more.

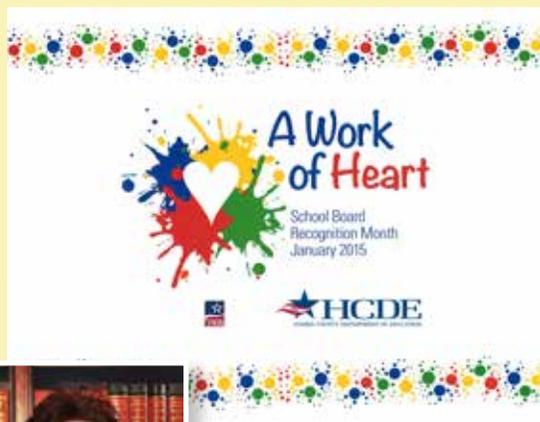
BOARD SPOTLIGHT



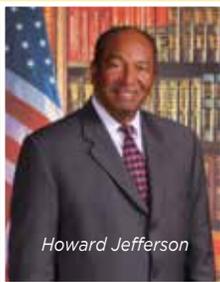
Angie Chesnut
Board President



Diane Trautman
Board Vice-President



Erica Lee Carter



Howard Jefferson



Debra Kerner

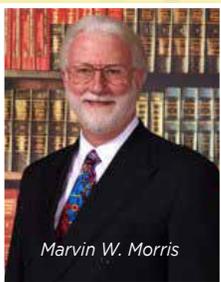
January is School Board Recognition Month

Theme: A Work of Heart!

We honor you
Thursday, January 22
at noon, Conference Center

All members of the **HCDE Board of Trustees**
are encouraged to submit your highlights and
tidbits to boardhighlights@hcde-texas.org.

Let's get to know each other even better!



Marvin W. Morris



Kay Smith

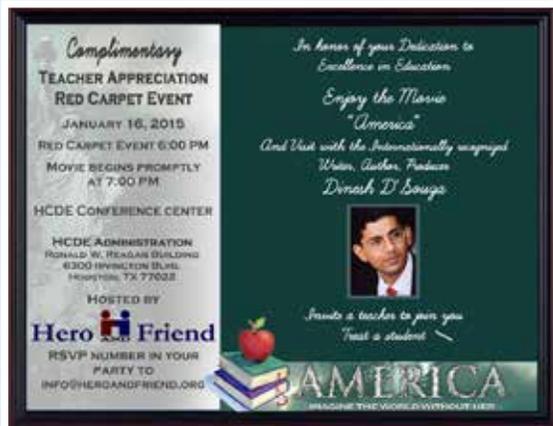
Thank you, Trustee Debra Kerner and Trustee Howard Jefferson, for your support for HCDE programs, students and staff over the years. You are crusaders for public education, and you will be missed!

TRUSTEES ON THE MOVE!

HERO AND FRIEND,
KAY SMITH HOSTS
DINESH D'SOUZA



Kay Smith



HCDE BOARD

BOARD PRESIDENT
POSITION 2, PRECINCT 4
Angie Chesnut

BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
POSITION 3, AT LARGE
Diane Trautman

Erica Lee Carter
Position 6, Precinct 1

Howard Jefferson
Position 7, At Large

Debra Kerner
Position 5, At Large

Marvin W. Morris
Position 1, Precinct 2

Kay Smith
Position 4, Precinct 3

Upcoming Board Events:

Regularly Scheduled Board Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2015
1 p.m. | 4th Floor
(Board Appreciation reception
begins at noon, Conference Center)

**Welcome Mr. Don Summers
and Mr. Michael Wolfe,
incoming trustees!**



Don Summers
Chron.com file photo



Michael Wolfe