

The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF DECEMBER 12, 2016

VOLUME 3 / ISSUE 17



FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

We are just a few days away from the start of Winter Break. As always, I began the week with the members of my Executive Leadership Team. The campuses, programs, and divisions are winding down as we prepare for the holidays. We had productive PFC and Board Meetings this week. I appreciate your attendance at those meetings and I thank you for your service to HCDE.

Last week was an exciting week in the lives of our students. As I mentioned in the last issue of **The Connector**, I attended the holiday performances on our AB-East and Highpoint-East locations. I am proud of the students' outstanding performances and the preparation our faculty and staff invested for the success of both programs. Incoming trustees George Moore and Eric Dick accompanied me to both campuses, as well as to the North Post Oak location. I believe that these experiences were informative as they prepare to be seated on our Board.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the Department celebrated the upcoming holiday season with staff at both the Irvington and North Post Oak locations, respectively. Receptions were held from 2:00-3:00 p.m. on each day. I extended well wishes to the staff for a happy holiday season and employees enjoyed the camaraderie. Events such as these obviously enhance employee morale.

Also on Wednesday and Thursday, I attended the Bates Custom and Collision Car Give-away events in both Channelview and Baytown where two Head Start families received refurbished vehicles chock-full of Christmas gifts for their children. They also received temporary insurance coverage, resources for gasoline, and other gifts. These heartwarming events change the lives of deserving Head Start parents. This is an annual event and HCDE

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is grateful for this continued partnership with Bates Custom and Collision.

News coverage included the Baytown Sun, the Houston Chronicle, KTRK-13 and Telemundo 47, in addition to more than 6,000 views of the livestream video on HCDE's social media.

This week also concluded HCDE's "Time for Toys" gift drive benefiting Head Start children in need. With the help of the Human Resources division, all of the gifts were wrapped and delivered to students at the Compton and Fifth Ward Head Start centers on Wednesday. Dr. Jesus Amezcuia, assistant superintendent for Business Services, dressed as Santa Claus to deliver the gifts and make the holidays brighter for our students.

Please be reminded that Winter Break begins Wednesday, December 21, 2016. The Department will resume normal operating hours on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. **The Connector** will resume during the week of our return from the Winter Break.

Also, January is Board Appreciation Month. The January Board Meeting will take place Thursday, January 19, 2017. A reception will be held immediately before the meeting. Additional information will be forthcoming on this matter.

In closing, I take this opportunity to thank you again for your service to HCDE and I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I look forward to a great 2017 for HCDE.

Upcoming Events:

- School Board Appreciation Month
- Early Childhood Winter Conference – Jan. 28

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Time for Toys: A Time for Giving Back for Adult Learners at HCDE



Adult learners bring toys to donate for needy Head Start children.

A holiday toy campaign called “Time for Toys” launched by Harris County Department of Education employees grew into a community giving campaign for adult education students attending classes through the department. The students are learning English, working on academics to pass their GEDs and gaining workplace skills. They’re also getting life lessons about being model citizens by giving back through the toy drive.



Santa Claus Jesus Amezcuia delivers gifts to Compton Head Start students.

Hilda Ramos, program assistant for HCDE Adult Education promoted the toy campaign originally organized by HCDE Human Resources to her teachers and students enrolled in night classes. The notion of giving toys to needy Head Start children grew like wildfire.

Once tallied, the students enrolled in four GED and English as a second language evening classes collected

300 cars, dolls, puzzles, books, stuffed animals and other items for 3- to 5-year-olds.

“Most of our students are working students, trying to improve their lives to get better jobs,” said Ramos.

“They want to be better citizens in the community and to be role models for their children.”



Superintendent Colbert wraps gifts for HCDE Head Start students.

HCDE County School Superintendent James Colbert said he is humbled by the generosity of the adult learners, the teachers and staff.

“Many of our students struggle financially, yet they find the resources to give back,” Colbert said.

Student Salvador Cardenas, 45, a student enrolled in Monica Hampton’s ESL class, remembers a time when he was 12 and received a toy truck when his family needed help at Christmas.

“I now have the opportunity to share something with kids in need,” said the father of three. “People helped me when I was a kid, and I was happy because of it.”

A pizza party was organized by Ramos for the top two winning classes. Although the incentive of food helped, ESL teacher Lucinda Guevara says her students participated because the campaign is about feeling good about giving. She recently took her students to the Houston Food Bank to volunteer to reinforce good citizenship.

“It’s the attitude of helping people out there,” Guevara said. “I have been enjoying it, and my students enjoy it too.”

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Head Start Policy Council Combines Business with Holiday Celebration



Head Start Policy Council combined business with a holiday celebration as adults met to talk about Frog Street Press Curriculum, while students focused on a holiday puppet show. The puppet show is showcased on HCDE's Facebook account through Facebook Live.

Holiday Receptions Held at Irvington, NPO



HCDE staff decked the halls with conversation and holiday sweets as two receptions were held for HCDE employees. Cookies, coffee and other treats were served on Wednesday afternoon at Irvington and Thursday afternoon at NPO.

"It's great to have staff share good news about their services and program, as well as the joy of the season," said Superintendent James Colbert. "This event has become a welcome tradition among our employees."



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Living to Give: Bates Collision Centers Staff Gift Two Rehabbed Cars to HCDE Head Start Moms for 18th Year



Not having a car to get to work, shop and take children to the doctor or extracurricular activities sets up hardships and road blocks for two single-parent, HCDE Head Start mothers. Due to the kindness of Bates Collision Centers owners Lee and Leila Bates, their staff and the community, the two young women drive away with rehabbed cars December 14 and 15.

"As we celebrate 18 years of the Bates gifting cars to needy moms, we know they truly live to give," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert. "We are blessed to have the Bates as our Head Start community partners."

Head Start mothers Ashley Henderson and Selina Elias were selected for the Responsible Parenting Award based on criteria like dedication to their children's education and self-improvement, said Venetia Peacock, senior HCDE Head Start director.

Leila Bates, vice president of Bates Collision Centers, said the staff presents cars number 31 and 32 this year, and they have no plans to slow down.

"It's an 18-year-old Christmas tradition that gets all our staff involved in the spirit of giving," Bates said. "It can change a life, and it has changed our lives. Seeing the joy on the faces of the receiving family, especially the children when they see the car chock-full of beautifully wrapped gifts is priceless."

The year, model and make of the two cars remain a surprise, which will be revealed through the unveiling and

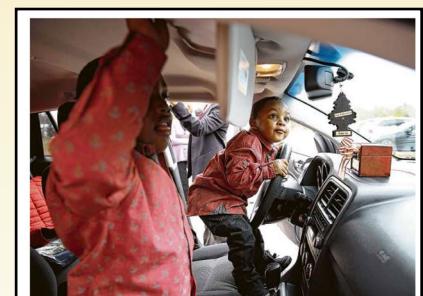
gifting of the cars. Cars are traditionally filled with gifts from Bates Collision, and community members donate gas, insurance and materials needed to rehab the cars.

"It's not what you say, it's what you do," said Lee Bates, president of Bates Collision Centers. "We've found a way to take what we 'do' every day and use it to help change the lives of deserving, hard-working families each year."

Henderson received her car on December 14 at Bates Collision Center North Channel location, 15532 I-10 East, Channelview, Texas. The Galena Park resident is mother to HCDE Head Start Fifth Ward student Kaysin, 3.

Elias and daughter Camile, 3, got keys to their car on December 15 at the Bates Collision Center Baytown location, 3219 N. Main, in Baytown, Texas. Camile attends the HCDE Baytown Head Start Center.

News coverage included the Baytown Sun, the Houston Chronicle, KTRK-13 and Telemundo 47. View the Chronicle photo: http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4393/houstonchronicle_121416.pdf



In the driver's seat

Brothers Kaysin Brake, 4, and Camile Elias, 3, sit inside the rehabbed car donated from Bates Collision Centers and the City of Baytown to their single-parent mother Ashley Henderson, a Harris County Department of Education Head Start teacher. Kaysin takes two buses to work at Hobby Airport, said the car would allow her to drive to work days and she could use the time to spend with her two sons or study. A representative from the City of Baytown presented the vehicle to Henderson who thanked owners Lee and Leila Bates for the car.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Head Start Children Benefit from Houston CPA Society's Massive Goody Bag Assembly, Distribution December 9



The 46th Annual Santa Houston CPA Goody Bag Stuffing Campaign is providing 7,600 extra stocking stuffers for children enrolled in Head Start Centers throughout Harris County. The bags filled with apples, books, dental kits and healthy snacks were assembled by an army of volunteers on December 9 from 8:30 -10:30 a.m. At 11:30 a.m., Houston CPA volunteers, plus Santa, visited the HCDE Pugh Head Start Center located at 1042 Henke in northeast Houston to make one of several holiday deliveries to 1,200 HCDE Head Start students.

Partners in the program are the Houston CPA Society, South Texas Dental, ABC Dental, The Ripley House and the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston. At Harris County Department of Education, 1,200 students benefit from the donations.

The Houston CPA Society has 8,000 members who represent 13 area counties surrounding Houston, according to Jennifer Poff, the organization's executive director. The event is a signature event for the organization.

Head Start programs are federally funded and provide educational services for low-income families of preschool children, including those with disabilities.



"HCDE Head Start is thankful for these community members for providing these extras for our families during the holidays," said Venetia Peacock, HCDE Head Start senior director.



HCDE Delivers Holiday Cheer to Head Start Students

Head Start students at HCDE's Compton and Fifth Ward locations received a very special surprise on Wednesday, December 14 – a visit from Santa!

Dr. Jesus Amezcua donned the red suit and fluffy white beard to deliver toys to classrooms full of eager Head Start children. The toys were donated by HCDE staff and Adult Education students.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE CASE for Kids, Pasadena ISD Afterschool Programs to Host Traditional Tamale-Making Party at South Houston Elementary and Intermediate Schools



Every year at this time, many Latino families gather to celebrate a fragrant tradition: the tamalada, or tamale-making party. These family gatherings serve as social affairs where members of the extended family get together to prepare food, catch up on family news and just enjoy spending time together.

This year, the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids) Texas ACE 21 Century afterschool programs at South Houston Elementary and South Houston Intermediate host a Tamalada Party on Friday, Dec. 16. The

day's festivities will kick off with the making of tamales from 9 a.m. to noon at South Houston Elementary, 900 Main St. in Houston. Sharing of community resources and games will take place in the afternoon until 4 p.m. and will be followed by a celebration and dinner lasting until 6 p.m.

"This is an innovative way that both schools will be promoting their afterschool programs and their family engagement component to the families and the community," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education.

Rich with Latino culture, these two campuses sit a couple of miles from each other. The elementary feeds into the middle school in Pasadena ISD. Parents are familiar with each other, and some even have children that attend both elementary and intermediate afterschool programs. Like many of the families that benefit from HCDE-CASE for Kids Texas ACE Programs, however, many work and have busy schedules that might keep them from participating on campus.

Parents from both campuses, under the leadership of HCDE CASE for Kids' Family Engagement Specialists, have come together to host their children's first tamalada. Two types of tamales will be made Mexican and Central American Tamales. Families will be sharing recipes and learning from each other's culture.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



taken to the Houston Food Bank. AB West students and staff always enjoy this annual tradition of giving back during the holiday season!

AB School West Gives Back During 'Share Your Christmas' Event

AB School West students and staff participated in their ninth annual "Share your Christmas" field trip this week. Every year in November, the entire student body, along with help from staff, holds a clothing and canned food drive. At the end of the drive, AB School West students deliver the clothes to the Star of Hope Family Center for women and children. The canned goods are

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

MERRY & BRIGHT

Incoming HCDE Board Members Join Superintendent Colbert for AB School East's Annual Student Holiday Program



Three special guests attended performances at HCDE's Academic and Behavior School East on Friday, December 9, 2016. Incoming HCDE board members George Moore and Eric Dick joined HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr., for the festive Annual Student Holiday Program, which included musical and dance performances by students.

"I think it's important for any child to participate in the Christmas season," said Dick.

"Harris County Department of Education does house students who have special needs," Dick went on.



"It's important that every child, whether special-needs or not, gets to participate in Christmas."

"I'm happy for everyone here. I'm happy that we continue to do this," Dick said.

HCDE Academic and Behavior Schools provide an enriching and supportive learning environment for students aged 5-22 with intellectual or developmental disabilities. With low student-to-teacher ratios, many Harris County students receive the support they need to reach their goals.



AB School West staff and students celebrated the holiday season with a program, a visit from Santa and lots of tasty holiday food.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

In keeping 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, affecting 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

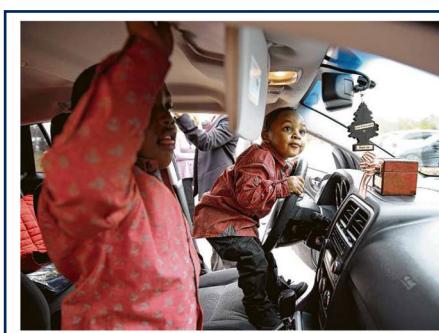


This week, Bates Custom and Collision held its annual car give-away where two deserving Head Start families were gifted with

refurbished cars filled with Christmas gifts and they also received temporary insurance coverage, resources to purchase gasoline, and other valuable gifts—just in time for the holiday season. This event enriches the lives of our parents and expands their potential in so many ways.

Through this event and my participation at such events, I am continuing my work towards achieving the Board's goals for me

to function as the primary ambassador for the Department; present a positive, professional image of myself and the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business, and board; maintain visibility and involvement in the community with ISD Superintendents, elected officials, community leaders, and the HCDE Board; and be open to the ideas and needs of those, listening and accepting criticism.



Coverage of the Bates Custom Collision Car Give-away in the Houston Chronicle

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

January Board Meeting
January 19, 2017
1:00 p.m.
Room 400

