Reading Rascals: Bringing Stories and Smiles to Hillsboro

story on page 5

this issue

AGRICULTURE MECHANICS STUDENTS BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURE - PAGE 1
HJHS TOP STUDENTS EXPLORE AUSTIN - PAGE 4
HIS STUDENT SPELLS HER WAY TO THE TOP - PAGE 9
Students Building a Bright Future for Themselves and Others

Any given school day, Hillsboro High School’s (HHS) agriculture workshop is buzzing with students working, building, and strategizing on projects led by Jeff Reed, agricultural science teacher.

Project by project, students are building themselves a bright future, learning and applying knowledge in ways that have earned them recognition around Texas.

This season, Hillsboro students submitted projects in several major livestock shows, with every one earning a blue ribbon and qualifying to place and compete for prizes. The success of these projects is the result of countless hours making other changes in order to run their tractor.

“I was impressed by their commitment to the projects,” she commented. “They showed up ready and willing to work hard every day.”

Agriculture mechanics (ag mechanics) gives students an opportunity to apply the lessons they’ve learned in math and science outside of the traditional classroom setting. For some, seeing the courtroom processes and procedures they learn in the classroom with their practical application in an actual courtroom was a very interesting and motivating opportunity. Let me interject that this form of learning was refreshing, and I am looking forward to other field trips that enhance my educational experience.

San Angelo Livestock Show & Rodeo
1st place, Hydraulic Hay Fork
Seniors: Joe Moreno, Chandler Gordon and Marco Gonzalez
Junior: Jake Hudson
2nd place, Wine Rack
Junior: Taylor Fain

San Antonio Livestock Show & Rodeo
3rd place, Hydraulic Hay Fork
Seniors: Joe Moreno, Chandler Gordon and Marco Gonzalez
Junior: Jake Hudson

3rd place, Hydraulic Demonstration Table
Juniors: Grant Galle, Ethan Connor, David Saldana, Blake Divin and Wagner Nors
5th place, Gooseneck Trailer
Seniors: Josh Griggs and James Saldana
Juniors: Taylor Fain and Harrison Bailey

Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo
2nd place, 16-foot Entrance Gate
Junior: Wagner Nors

Texas State University Invitational FFA Career Development Event
6th Overall, HHS Ag Mechanic team
Juniors: Blake Divin, Ethan Connor, Davis Watson and Wagner Nors

Hillsboro High School students learn about the American judicial system including the Federal and Texas court systems and the Texas Supreme Court in economic and government teacher Stan McCarvey’s class. Earlier this year, 20 seniors were able to connect the dots between the courtroom processes and procedures they learn in the classroom with their practical application in an actual courtroom.

“The students spent the day observing the Texas Supreme Court at the pristine Hill County Courthouse,” said McCarvey. “Combining classroom learning with real-life experience is definitely a powerful teaching tool.”

This was a great opportunity for the students. They were excited and honored to sit just a few feet away from the judges and to witness our judicial system in action,” commented McCarvey.

Both impactful and meaningful, the students walked away with both a new respect for and greater understanding of our court system. “One of the students, Sunshine Cuminis, was even motivated to submit an article about her experience to The Hillsboro Reporter,” said McCarvey. “Her article captured the day perfectly.”

The following article by HHS senior Sunshine Cummins was published in The Hillsboro Reporter on April 27, 2014.

Opportunity To Visit Supreme Court

A few of my classmates and I were recently given the opportunity to attend the State Supreme Court here in our hometown of Hillsboro to hear two court cases. This was a historic opportunity. I was both excited and apprehensive.

When we walked into the Hill County Courthouse, I was amazed by the beautiful structure that I had never really noticed. The architecture was breathtaking and reminded me of other great structures that I have seen in books, movies and in neighboring towns. The Star of Texas was very prominent and gave me a sense of pride in my state and country.

Our teachers had prepared us and told us that this was a privilege to attend and to be respectful. The atmosphere was one of reverence and duty. We all seemed to sense that this was what our forefathers had in mind.

Listening to the judicial system at work and watching the lawyers and judges follow a procedure that was steeped in tradition was invigorating! Professionalism was evident at all times; the court fulfilled its judicial responsibilities, and I was very impressed with the dialogue between the lawyers and judges.

I think I can speak for all my fellow classmates in saying that the judges’ and lawyers’ abilities in mastering the language of the law was impressive and thought-provoking.

I was invited to ask a question to the Supreme Court judges, who were kind and gracious and made me feel very welcome and comfortable.

I asked, “How many court cases have gone on from the State Supreme Court to the Federal Supreme Court?” Judge Justice Nathan Hecht addressed my question and told us that two, possibly three cases, have advanced to the Federal courts.

As the session ended, I realized that my feelings of apprehension were unfounded and the experience was very interesting and motivating opportunity. Let me interject that this form of learning was refreshing, and I am looking forward to other field trips that enhance my educational experience.
Hillsboro High School's (HHS) theater department upheld its tradition of “breaking a leg” at the University Interscholastic League’s One-Act Play Contest on April 12, capturing Area 3 with their performance of The Marriage of Bette and Boo by Christopher Durang.

Talented and dedicated, the HHS theater department earned a spot in the Region One-Act Play Contest following powerful performances at both the District 7 and the Area One-Act Play contests.

“The Marriage of Bette and Boo is a dark comedy that tackles difficult real-life issues,” said Theater Arts Director Aimee Kasprzyk. “These kids worked very hard to bring both deep emotions and well-crafted humor to the stage.”

Kasprzyk is proud of her students and thankful for the support of HISD’s administration, staff and faculty, and the Hillsboro community. “Pulling off a production of this caliber is definitely a team effort,” acknowledged Kasprzyk.

During their journey, the students earned 11 awards:

**Area Awards**
- McKensie Piar, Luke Steele and Jordan Easterling – All-Star Cast
- Keirah Shaw and Alexas Dickinson – Honorable Mention All-Star Cast
- Abigail Wilson – Outstanding Technician

**District Awards**
- during their journey, the students earned 11 awards:

- The students, selected by Hillsboro’s Chamber of Commerce for the Leadership Hillsboro program, represent those with top-tier grades, impressive leadership skills and extensive school involvement. This year’s Leadership Hillsboro team included Brianna Cheek, Ross Gilcrease, Colton Pace, Bhakti Patel, Autumn Snider and Philip Turull.

The students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.

Patel also enjoyed the U.T. campus tour, as she “gained a new perspective of college life on a large campus. I used to think college would be somewhat intimidating, but now I’m excited about continuing my education to become a physician.”

Cheek and Pace appreciated the Capitol Building for its history and significance. Both students, who have aspirations to be a criminal lawyer and politician, respectively, valued seeing the place where important decisions are made.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the day, the students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.

Patel also enjoyed the U.T. campus tour, as she “gained a new perspective of college life on a large campus. I used to think college would be somewhat intimidating, but now I’m excited about continuing my education to become a physician.”

Cheek and Pace appreciated the Capitol Building for its history and significance. Both students, who have aspirations to be a criminal lawyer and politician, respectively, valued seeing the place where important decisions are made.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the day, the students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.

Patel also enjoyed the U.T. campus tour, as she “gained a new perspective of college life on a large campus. I used to think college would be somewhat intimidating, but now I’m excited about continuing my education to become a physician.”

Cheek and Pace appreciated the Capitol Building for its history and significance. Both students, who have aspirations to be a criminal lawyer and politician, respectively, valued seeing the place where important decisions are made.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the day, the students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.

Patel also enjoyed the U.T. campus tour, as she “gained a new perspective of college life on a large campus. I used to think college would be somewhat intimidating, but now I’m excited about continuing my education to become a physician.”

Cheek and Pace appreciated the Capitol Building for its history and significance. Both students, who have aspirations to be a criminal lawyer and politician, respectively, valued seeing the place where important decisions are made.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the day, the students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.

Patel also enjoyed the U.T. campus tour, as she “gained a new perspective of college life on a large campus. I used to think college would be somewhat intimidating, but now I’m excited about continuing my education to become a physician.”

Cheek and Pace appreciated the Capitol Building for its history and significance. Both students, who have aspirations to be a criminal lawyer and politician, respectively, valued seeing the place where important decisions are made.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the day, the students were eager to share the many highlights, with the Bullock Texas State Museum being a crowd hit particularly with Gilcrease and Turull.
Reading Rascals: Bringing Stories and Smiles to Hillsboro

A reader lives a thousand lives...The man who never reads lives only one.” Author George R.R. Martin

For some children, the opportunity to choose a new book from the library or bookstore and then spend hours enjoying the adventures of their favorite characters is positively thrilling. But for others, reading may be less exciting or even a little frustrating.

Enter Hillsboro Elementary School’s (HES) new program, Reading Rascals, designed to improve reading ability, cultivate a love of books and learning, and foster interpersonal skills. Once a month, each HES teacher chooses a student to take a field trip to a place in the community, such as a nursing home or hospital, to read a short story or poem to a group of adults.

Conceived and managed by HES kindergarten teacher Crystal Buxkemper, the program has generated quite a buzz. The budding readers are anxious to hear their names called over the announcements as one of that month’s chosen Rascals. And they’re not the only ones having fun with the new program.

“I come back to school after our outings with a huge smile on my face,” beamed Crystal Buxkemper, HES kindergarten teacher. “It’s so exciting to listen to the students read and to see them interact with adults in the community.”

Each month, 24 students visit members of the community to share the short story or poem of their choice. So far this school year, these kids have impressed folks at Town Hall Estates Nursing Home, the Senior Circle at Hill Regional Hospital, the Hillsboro Fire Station, the Hillsboro Lion’s Club, and a group of retired teachers who visited the Rascals at HES.

These opportunities reinforce reading skills and boost their confidence.

Both Buxkemper and HES Principal Melissa Cox believe learning to read is crucial for long-term success, not only in school, but also in life.

“Reading is the foundation of all future learning,” said Cox. “We want our students to enjoy reading at this age, to become better readers and learners as they move through school, and to go on to achieve great success in their lives and careers.”

“I come back to school after our outing with a huge smile on my face,” beamed Crystal Buxkemper, HES kindergarten teacher. “It’s so exciting to listen to the students read and to see them interact with adults in the community.”

“I like to read because reading makes us smarter, and I want to be smarter.”

Hannah Abrego, 2nd grade

“I liked reading to the police officer, who let me wear his hat. And I liked to pet the fire dog.”

Andres Cruz, Kindergarten

“It made me feel happy and excited because I’ve never gotten to read to people in public before.”

Kimberly Garcia, 1st grade
The National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) recognizes outstanding students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service and citizenship. In February, a group of 29 deserving Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) students were inducted into NJHS.

“I believe it’s important to recognize academic success and to motivate our students to perform at the highest level possible,” said Pamela Hamilton, HIS gifted and talented education and art teacher.

To be considered for inclusion in the NJHS, a student must first maintain a 92 percent average for the both the 5th grade and the first-half of the 6th grade. Then a teacher committee reviews the nominees and selects those for induction based on the NJHS criteria.

“I’m honored to teach at Hillsboro ISD, where the administration and teachers are committed to provide a superior classroom experience and to cultivate skills that both serve our students well in school and enhance their long-term success,” commented Hamilton.

We are proud of the NJHS Inductees!

HIS Students Exercise Their “Green Thumbs”

P op quiz! Can you name the four things plants need to survive? If you can’t, just ask a student at Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS), and they’ll tell you water, air, nutrients and sunlight.

Earlier this spring, HIS students were visited by the Seed Survivor Mobile Classroom. For one week, kids from each grade level spent a day learning how to nurture and grow the plants we depend on every day.

Inside the trailer, students visited five different stations to play interactive games about water, light, soil, nutrients and plant growth. They also spent time outside where they discovered three of the key nutrients in soil that are vital to plant survival. HIS Assistant Principal Jo Hayes said at the end of the lesson “each student planted a sunflower seed to take home to nurture and grow, putting their learning to practical use.”

“The kids were so excited and engaged. They hadn’t previously thought about how our clothing is made from crops and how important they are to us,” said Hayes. “The students were very impressed. And I enjoyed watching them discover and process new facts in such a creative, interesting way.”

CONGRATULATIONS NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

Joe Abrego
Saide Abreu
Jasmine Ayala
Jakobe Blacknall
Toriah Brooks
Madalynn Charles
Christopher Contreras
Joe Cruz
Alyndra Davalos
Daylan Enriquez

Kobe Fleming
Marco Fuentes
Elizabeth Gonzalez
Avery Holmes
Emery Leech
Humberto Mancilla
Judith Marcos
Treasure Mozon
Samuel Patton
Yoanna Quiros

Samantha Rodriguez
Jacqueline Rojas Becerra
Blake Schroeder
Blaine Sherrin
Karina Trejo
Ruby Vasquez
Abigail Waits
Tracy White
Marcos Valencia
**HIS Student Spells Her Way to the Top**

"PH-O-T-O-G-N-A-M-E. Photogenic," said Saide Abreu, a 6th grade Hillsboro Intermediate School student, stated confidently. With that correctly spelled word, Abreu captured 1st place in the Hill County Spelling Bee in February, advancing to the North Texas Regional Scripps Spelling Bee in March. Competing against students from 24 counties, Abreu earned 2nd place in the regional competition.

Abreu’s journey to the regional competition started back in October of last year, with the Hillsboro Intermediate School Spelling Bee, where she won 1st place at both grade-level and campus-wide competition.

"Saide faced tough competition in each of these spelling bees," commented Pamela Hamilton, HIS gifted and talented education and art teacher. "Her work ethic, determination and focus really paid off."

Preparing for spelling bees is a family affair for Abreu, who studies with her mom and sister every day. And she attributes much of her success to her parents’ prayers.

Logging about 90 hours of study time to prepare for the Scripps competition, Abreu’s study regimen included “learning root languages and practicing memorization.”

Looking beyond spelling bees, Abreu aspires to be a neurosurgeon. "I want to be able to help people," said Abreu. "Whatever I have done—and will do in my life—I credit to my faith in God."

"I’m very proud of Saide’s accomplishments, and I’m excited to see what the future holds for her," said Hamilton.

"Whatever I have done—and will do in my life—I credit to my faith in God."

---

**District and Foundation Honored for Outstanding Communications**

Each year, the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA) recognizes individuals, school districts, education foundations and others for their outstanding contributions in school communications.

HISD Education Foundation and Hillsboro ISD received eight 2013 TSPRA Star Awards presented in February of this year.

**GOLD STAR AWARD AND BEST OF CATEGORY**

HISD Education Foundation Get on the Bus! Campaign Flyer

HISD Education Foundation Eagle Legacy Awards Banquet Invitation

Hillsboro ISD Inspiring Future Ready Students Billboard

**SILVER STAR AWARD**

Hillsboro ISD Volunteer: Make a Difference... in a Child’s Life Brochure

Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation Partners in Excellence Gala Invitation

---

**HIS Campus Design Team Wins Region 12 Technology Foundation Award**

The Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) Campus Design Team led by resource/inclusion teacher Jessica Lee submitted the winning grant, which will help equip classrooms with Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education, providing students the tools necessary to build 21st century learning skills.

"This technology will increase collaboration among students, both locally and around the globe, on projects, lessons and real-life problems," said Lee.

Hillsboro ISD was one of six school districts awarded a grant to support educational technology programs. "I’m honored that our district was among the award recipients," commented HISD Superintendent Dr. James “Buck” Gilcrease.

"Mrs. Lee and the campus design team are committed to continue to foster a creative, hands-on classroom experience through the use of technology," said Gilcrease. "I’m proud of their hard work and dedication to our district and students."

---

**HIS Teacher Receives Prestigious Grant Award**

Students at Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) will both enjoy and benefit from eight new Chromebooks and two storage units. This purchase is made possible by the 2014 International Reading Association (IRA) Regie Routman Teacher Recognition Award, with a $2,500 grant, awarded to Tiffany Mercer, HIS 5th grade English Language Arts and Reading teacher.

"I’m proud of Ms. Mercer," commented HISD Superintendent Dr. James “Buck” Gilcrease. "She exemplifies our district’s commitment to elevate the innovative use of technology to educate our students."

The grant honors an outstanding teacher dedicated to improving the way reading and writing are both taught and learned in kindergarten through 6th grade, which is a passion of Mercer’s.

"Technology promotes student collaboration and communication, and creates opportunities to learn important skills," said Mercer. "In our dynamic world, it’s critical we equip our students with necessary 21st century technology acumen."

This new technology will provide students with additional outlets for reading and writing, helping to prepare them for high school and beyond.

"I’m proud of Ms. Mercer," commented HISD Superintendent Dr. James “Buck” Gilcrease. "She exemplifies our district’s commitment to elevate the innovative use of technology to educate our students."
On February 7, the Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation directors, superintendent of schools, donors and members of the Hillsboro High School band marched the hallways of four Hillsboro ISD campuses to surprise seventeen very deserving grant recipients, both individual teachers and teams.

The grants, totaling $17,615.95, will be used to purchase technology and tools to further enhance the classroom experience for HISD students, including iPads, Chromebooks, hands-on lab experiments, a LEGO education center pack and books for a classroom library.

“The Foundation is grateful for the generous support of our community members, business partners and HISD employees,” commented HISD Education Foundation President Roberta Skelton. “The district’s students are positively impacted by our donors’ commitment to help advance our goals to enrich teaching and inspire learning.”

CONGRATULATIONS
HISD Education Foundation Teaching Grant Recipients

HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
(Eight grants totaling $8674.74)
Christine Robinson – “Making 21st Century Connections”
Christine Robinson and Pam Jones – “Eagle Eyes & iPad”
Amanda Haley – “iSeek and I Learn”
Amanda Haley & Alex Turner – “iRespond & I Learn”
Amanda Haley, Kenna Marek and Malissa Hawkins – “Making Math Meaningful”
Susan Cox and Crystal Buxkemper – “SnapWords”
Stephanie Wolfe – “There’s an App for That”
Pam Hamilton – “Tinkering with Robotics”

HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
(Three grants totaling $2965.38)
Pam Hamilton – “There’s a New Robot in Class”
Tiffany Mercer and Jessica Stephens – “Classroom in the Cloud: Chromebooks in the Classroom”
Tiffany Mercer – “Literature Circles: A Novel Idea!”

HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
(One grant totaling $750)
Holly Henderson – “The Eyes Have It”

HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL
(Five grants totaling $5255.83)
Jennifer Faulknor – “Lots of Labs”
Michael Chirhart – “Lions, Tigers, and Bears….Where’s Mine??”
Jeff Reed and Laura George – “Start Your Engines”
Jeff Reed – “Start Your Engines, Part 2”
Griff Harris and Lynelle Sparks – “Shattered Dreams : Sparkles”