Onward and Upward
HHS Class of 2014!
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Photo by Sheri Hemrick
Learn & Serve: A Winning Combo

In 1996, Hillsboro High School (HHS) paraprofessional Sherrie Thomas pitched the idea of allowing students to partner volunteer service with learning a job skill to then HHS Principal Diane Innis. Learn & Serve was born that year, with Thomas serving as program coordinator—a position she held through the 2013-14 school year before retiring.

Through Learn & Serve, students are matched with one of the approximately 50 participating community partners, which include local small businesses, professional law practices, dental offices, city and county government offices and schools in the Hillsboro district. Other way students can participate in the program are to “Adopt a Grandparent” which features activities at Hillsboro ISD’s campuses.

Learn & Serve, which piloted with 18 students, now averages 70 to 80 students each school year. “It’s been an exciting and rewarding experience to help students discover talents and abilities they can use to serve others,” said Sherrie Thomas, HHS paraprofessional.

YOU HELPED US SOAR!

The students and staff of Hillsboro Elementary School (HES) want to thank the community for the more than 3,000 volunteer hours donated at their campus this year!

There are many opportunities to positively impact a child’s life at HES. If you’re interested in learning how to get involved in the fall, please contact:

Christine Robinson, Librarian
robinsonc@hillsboroisd.org
(254) 582.4140

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HISD Students Spread their Wings at District-Wide Learning Expo

On May 5, Hillsboro High School was abuzz with students from each of the district’s campuses presenting exhibits and performing fine arts productions during the 2nd annual Eagle Expo of Excellence known as E3.

Students work hard throughout the school year gaining new skills, creating challenging projects and discovering different ways to innovatively express their learning.

“E3 is a platform for students to showcase these accomplishments for members of the community,” said HISD Executive Director of Curriculum Services Sheila Bowman. “The community support was tremendous this year, with close to 2,700 adults and children joining us for the evening.”

Among the impressive exhibits and performances were:

• Civil Rights in Birmingham and Hillsboro, “1963:” A class of seniors explored and presented the way Hillsboro responded to the Civil Rights Movement.

• SkillsUSA Team: Students in grades 9 through 12 presented and discussed their hand-crafted, award-winning furniture.

• Rhythm Rascals: A group of 2nd graders wowed the crowd with an energetic musical routine.

A student-led event, E3 allows students to not only display their projects, but to also discuss them in detail. “The students truly are on the front line, explaining their projects and answering questions,” commented Bowman. “Many students are even involved in multiple projects.”

“This expo highlights HISD’s commitment to help students discover and refine talents and learn important skills, which will enhance long-term success in their lives and careers,” said Bowman.

Volunteers are the Stars of the HISD Show

To say thank you to the legion of volunteers who gave tirelessly during the school year, the district held its annual luncheon on April 10, complete with accolades and homemade peach cobbler.

Volunteers contribute in significant ways to the lives of HISD’s students through selfless acts of serving. PTA officers raised money to buy new playground equipment, computers for classrooms, as well as treat teachers to the occasional lunch or dessert. This year’s five Eagle Mentors met with their HIS protégés once a week to help with assignments, go for a walk, have lunch or just lend a friendly ear.

Students got in on the act, too. Members of the Peer Assistance and Leadership Program (PALS) went to a campus every day to help teachers, and those in the Learn & Serve program worked at businesses within the community and assisted in classrooms as well.

Regardless of who they are and how they volunteered, all are shining examples of how a single person can make a big difference in the lives of others.
CONGRATULATIONS
2014 HISD Teachers of the Year

Every year the district selects two district teachers of the year—one elementary and one secondary—from a pool of nominees. These teachers, who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and excellence in the classroom, will be considered for Texas Teacher of the Year.

Elementary Teacher of the Year: Donovan Scott

In any given school day, Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) teacher Donovan Scott’s students can be found working in a garden at the school. Scott created the garden to help his students not only learn to tend to vegetables, but to gain individual skills, practice teamwork and understand commitment.

A Tarleton State University graduate with an elementary education degree, Scott has spent fifteen years in the classroom, six of those in the Hillsboro ISD (HISD). He joined HIS this year after teaching at the junior high school.

“Mr. Scott brings innovation into the classroom, creating environments where at-risk students can excel by learning both academic lessons and social skills,” said HISD Superintendent Dr. James “Buck” Gilcrease.

A model teacher and employee, Scott is well respected by the HISD staff. Whether greeting students in the hallway, collaborating with colleagues or driving a bus on a field trip, Scott has a smile on his face.

“I’m honored to be part of the HISD staff,” said Scott. “I enjoy my students, and I aim to cultivate an engaging classroom experience with reliable cultural references, hands-on learning and positive reinforcement.”

“Mr. Scott deserves recognition for his valuable contribution and dedication to our students and staff,” commented Gilcrease.

Secondary Teacher of the Year: Stan McGarvey

Professional, passionate and wise are words colleagues use to describe Hillsboro High School (HIS) teacher and coach Stan McGarvey. And he’s equally popular with his students.

A regular attendee at his students’ events, McGarvey was pulled onto the dance floor at the HHS 2014 prom by students affectionately chanting “Coach McGarvey, Coach McGarvey!”

McGarvey’s teaching and coaching career began twenty-five years ago, following graduation from William Jewell College with a double major in physical education and social studies. While he’s been at HIS just two years, his impact has been significant.

“Mr. McGarvey has earned the reputation as someone committed to and passionate about student success,” said HISD Superintendent Dr. James “Buck” Gilcrease.

A 12th grade government and economics teacher, McGarvey believes it’s important that students are “armed with skills to help them achieve their goals, educated about business, economics and government, and primed to be responsible citizens.”

McGarvey’s students are aware that they’re about to enter the next life phase, so he does his best to leave a lasting impression on them. “I try to incorporate lessons that will serve them well in life. This year, I invited two members of our community to speak about their experiences during the civil rights campaigns.”

“Mr. McGarvey has made a profound impact to our campus and students, and I’m honored to acknowledge his efforts,” said Gilcrease.

Eagle Awards Banquet: A Night of Graduates and Gratitude

On Saturday, May 17, members of the Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation honored the top ten percent of the 2014 HISD high school graduating class—ten students whose hard work and determination to succeed set them apart.

Kicking off the evening in rousing fashion were the Hillsboro Intermediate School players, who performed the “Getting to Know You” scene from the musical The King and I. Then the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Glenda Brown (see sidebar).

Jennell Benson, Dewey Brannan, Chandler Gordon, Mara Mendiesta, Susana Perez, Mckensie Piar, Alondra Pineda, Rebecca Ramirez, Shelby Siddons, and Abigail Wilson were each presented with Dell tablets—a gesture that Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation Director Katharine Matthys says represents one of its main priorities.

“One of the Foundation’s goals is to provide the tools to prepare students for future success. We are so pleased to send them off with a gift to help them work at their highest potential,” Matthys said.

These super students then recognized their favorite district employees in return, honoring their role models with remarks of thanks for all they did to help shape the futures of these bright young adults.

Jennell Benson
College: University of Texas at Austin
Major/Career: Business Management
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Michael Chirhart

Dewey Brannan III
College: Panola Community College
Major/Career: Biology
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Joseph Spencer

Chandler Gordon
College: Tarleton State University
Major/Career: Kinesthetics
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Donald Gordon

Mara Mendiesta
College: McLennan Community College
Major/Career: Business
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Kenneth Pointer

Susana Perez
College: Hill College
Major/Career: Nursing
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Robert Perkins

Mckensie Piar
College: University of North Texas
Major/Career: Journalism and Theatre
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Tarri Curry

Alondra Pineda
College: University of North Texas
Major/Career: Mechanical Engineering
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Diana Holley

Rebecca Ramirez
College: Hill College
Major/Career: Nursing
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Jesse Hayes

Shelby Siddons
College: Texas A&M University
Major/Career: Allied Health
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Aubri Brock

Abigail Wilson
College: Hill College
Major/Career: Technical Theatre
Most Influential HISD Educator/Employee: Michelle Stanea

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: GLENDA BROWN

In her 38 years of teaching in HISD and continued service as a substitute teacher and school program participant, retired music teacher Glenda Brown has touched the lives of generations of Hillsboro students.

A graduate of Hillsboro schools, Brown attended Hill College before earning a bachelor’s degree in music and a master’s degree in education from Tarleton State University.

Knowing she wanted to make a difference in her hometown, she returned to Hillsboro and taught music at Franklin Elementary, Harris Elementary and Hillsboro Elementary schools, helping children learn to love and appreciate music.

She continues to give selflessly to the community and to her church, Mt. Monah Baptist, where she serves as the music director.

Thank you for a lifetime of service, Mrs. Brown!
Beaming family members looked on with pride as the familiar strains of “Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1” filled the air, announcing the arrival of the members of the 2014 graduating class of Hillsboro High School (HHS).

On the evening of Friday, May 30, students, families, administrators, teachers and other distinguished guests gathered at Baylor University’s Waco Hall to honor the achievements of the 98 seniors and to wish them well in their future endeavors.

One person, who has no doubt they will go far, is HHS & District Lead Counselor Robin Ralston. When the members of this class were freshmen, the high school was implementing many positive changes throughout its program. The district’s challenge to them was to make the most of their opportunities and to take ownership of their education.

“[This class] embraced the district’s new direction and really stepped up to become leaders,” said Ralston. “We encouraged them to make things happen for themselves, and I think this group has risen up and done exactly that.”

Ralston gets emotional talking about this class because of their many accomplishments. Among their myriad of triumphs are:

- Leading the Eagles football team to its first playoff game in years
- Advancing the One-Act Play to regional competition all four years
- Participating in the SkillsUSA competition all four years (Best in Show in Texas 2010, 2014)
- Accelerating the track and field team to district championship and 2nd place in area competition
- Earning twenty-six blue ribbons from major agricultural mechanics shows
- Sending student council members, two of which were seniors, to the state council convention where they gave a presentation and also won an award

Throughout the evening, honor graduates led the ceremony, and the crowd enjoyed the thoughts shared by valedictorian Jennell Benson and salutatorian McKensie Piar. And just before the closing benediction, the 2014 class song, “My Wish” by Rascal Flatts, was played to send these newly minted graduates out into their bright new worlds humming a tune of optimism.
MY FONDEST MEMORY IS...

- Playing sports and being in theater
- My classmates
- Being in athletics and being part of my community
- Meeting great teachers
- Being in student council
- One-Act Play
- Being in SkillsUSA...it was the best thing ever
- Having a good time in wood shop
- Being in band
- Having the chance to do what I love in welding class
- Going to math class
- Being involved in many different organizations

MY NEXT STEP IS...

- Community College: 66%
- 4-Year University: 13%
- Technical College: 12%
- Military: 1%
- Career: 5%
- Undecided: 3%
Hillsboro High School's salutatorian McKinzie Piar believes it's important to look to the future, but to also remember where you've come from and where you've been.

Looking back at her school years, Piar gained study and leadership skills, discipline, and knowledge about many subjects that she'll remember and draw from throughout her lifetime.

Piar attended schools in Michigan and Nevada before joining Hillsboro Junior High School in the 7th grade. Always a star pupil, Piar loves English, “especially creative writing because you can express yourself, and there’s no right or wrong.”

Outside the classroom, Piar kept busy with cross-country, power lifting, track, UIL, National Honor Society and theater.

She traces her love of writing back to her early childhood. “I remember being transported to a magical place when I read my first book,” said Piar. “I was amazed that words had such power, and I knew I wanted to be able to write like that.”

With dreams of being a journalist, writing a book and/or a play, and being involved in theater, Piar is heading to the University of North Texas.

Piar is thankful for the support of her parents and two younger sisters. “I’m also grateful to my 10th grade teacher Mrs. Curry, who was available when I needed guidance, comfort or a laugh.”

Jennell Benson, Hillsboro High School’s (HHS) valedictorian, draws inspiration from the University of Texas at Austin’s (UT) motto: What starts here changes the world. Benson, who will attend UT this fall, is on a trajectory to make a significant impression on the world, just as she did at HHS.

Benson credits the support of her parents, brother and sister for much of her success in school. “I also focus and work hard, without worrying about the outcome,” said Benson.

Science, biology and anatomy were her favorite subjects, as they “came naturally because I can relate the concepts to life.”

When not studying, Benson could be found practicing for a One-Act Play performance, serving as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes’ Captain or painting and drawing.

“I’ll miss high school, although I’m excited to head to college to meet new people and to pursue a degree in business administration,” said Benson.

Born and raised in Hillsboro, Benson’s long-term goal is to return to her hometown as a healthcare administration professional. “Mr. Chirhart, my senior biology teacher, influenced my career path by helping me think about ways I can combine my love of science and serving people with my leadership skills,” said Benson.

While Benson’s family is close-knit, her decision to head to UT has created a friendly rivalry with her brother, a Texas A&M University graduate. “Hook ‘em Horns!” laughed Benson.

Top Graduates Honored

Jennell Benson, Valedictorian

What Starts Here Changes the World

McKensie Piar, Salutatorian

Look to the Future, but Don’t Forget Where You’ve Been

Field Days & Water Parties
Thank You For Your Dedication, Service and Influence, 2014 HISD Retirees

Becky Blair, 3rd–6th grade ESL Teacher
Hillsboro Intermediate School

30 Years Teaching and Inspiring
Three decades of teaching took Jeff Crafts to classrooms around the world from Columbia to New York to Wisconsin to Texas. Crafts, who spent the last two years at Hillsboro High School teaching junior and senior Spanish, closes this life chapter with fond memories and the hope that he’s helped students achieve their goals.

“One of the best feelings as a teacher is to know you’ve made a positive impact in a student’s life,” said Crafts. “It’s a real honor to watch them make progress.”

Crafts’ retirement plans will take him on the road to visit relatives in Canada, Houston and the Midwest, visiting his three daughters, a grandson and relatives—and to Brazil where he plans to learn Portuguese. “I also want to practice meditation and to spend time writing,” he commented.

A University of Texas at Austin graduate, with both BA and MA degrees in Latin American Studies, Crafts loves both learning and teaching. Even retirement can’t keep him out of the classroom.

“Ultimately, I’d like to teach adult English as a second language or GED classes in either McAllen or overseas,” said Crafts.

Denise Doyle, Life Skills Teacher
Hillsboro Intermediate School

Love of Special Ed and Music
During her 23-year career, Denise Doyle blended her love of teaching special education and music. Before joining Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) as a life skills teacher one year ago, she worked in Midway ISD as assistant band director and Killean ISD as a special education facilitator and communication resource teacher.

Doyle, who is new to the Hillsboro area, enjoyed her time at HIS. “While I was only at the district a short time, it was a wonderful experience,” said Doyle.

Although Doyle is transitioning out of the classroom, she’ll use her life skills knowledge to facilitate her deaf and autistic son’s integration into the community. Other plans include continuing her education through enrichment classes and perfecting the art of healthy cooking.

Music will also be part of Doyle’s retirement. A trumpet player, who has the distinct honor of being the first woman in the Dallas Cowboys Band, she’s currently a member of the Temple Jazz Orchestra and Temple Symphony Orchestra.

Married to Glen Doyle, HIS’s band director, Doyle said the couple looks forward to enjoying their time “cycling, swimming and traveling.”

Veronica Garcia, Instructional Aide
Franklin Elementary School

A Heart for Helping and Serving
It’s better to give than to receive. This common saying resonates with Veronica Garcia, who has spent her career helping others. A nurse aide for 10 years before transitioning into the classroom as an instructional aide, Garcia is happiest when she’s serving others.

Before joining Franklin Elementary School (FES) in 2008 as a bilingual instructional aide, Garcia was a substitute teacher at Hillsboro Elementary School and a teacher’s aide at Matone School.

“For the past five years, I’ve worked with the district’s youngest kids,” said Garcia. “I’ve enjoyed watching them learn, grow and gain confidence.”

“Not only will I miss my students, who are like my own children, but I’ll also miss my co-workers,” commented Garcia. “We really are like one big, happy family.”

Outside the classroom, Garcia knows something about big families. A mother of four children, she has fifteen grandchildren and one the way.

Wading into her FES family, Garcia is looking forward to this next phase of her life. Moving to Georgia to be near her oldest son, she’s excited to spend more time with her family, sew and garden.

Kathy Groppel, Special Education Director
Hillsboro ISD

Born to Teach
Kathy Groppel’s 2nd grade teacher Helen Anderson sensed her student would be a teacher. “When Mrs. Anderson stepped out, I’d take worksheets out of the trashcan and pass them out to my classmates,” laughed Groppel. All laughing aside, Mrs. Anderson was right.

Groppel earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and East Texas State University, respectively, and in 1997 she obtained a Diagnostician Certification.

During Groppel’s 24-year career, she spent time in Hearne, Lancaster, Cedar Hill, Dallas and Grapevine Colleyville ISDs in roles including coach, and music and adaptive P.E. teacher. In 1998, she joined Hillsboro Elementary School as a resource teacher and later became a life skills teacher at the intermediate school.

Her favorite aspects of teaching special education are engaging with the students and forming lasting relationships with their families.

Ten years ago, Groppel transitioned from the classroom to HISD Special Education Director, a position she currently holds part-time. “It’s fun to watch the new teachers develop a passion for the students, who I feel are like my own kids,” said Groppel. “I hope to continue in this position for many years.”

In part-time retirement, Groppel spends time with her family, especially her two grandsons.

HISD Graduate Gives Back
Becky Blair felt a calling to make a difference in the world, and when better to spend 26 of her 35-year career than in her hometown of Hillsboro.

After earning an AA degree from Hill Junior College and an elementary education degree with a specialization in reading from Texas A&M University, Blair spent time at Frost ISD and First Baptist Christian School. Then she joined Franklin Elementary School, and in 2002, transferred to Hillsboro Intermediate School as an ESL (English as a second language) teacher.

Influential teacher.
Kate Ortega graduated from HISD, and are all currently pursuing master’s degrees—a lifetime chapter with fond memories and the hope that he’s helped students achieve their goals.

A heart for young children and ESL, Blair “loves being a student’s first teacher because of the privilege of seeing the spark in their eyes when they learn something new.”

Many of Blair’s students have been recognized in the top ten percent of their graduating class. One of which, Hillsboro High School’s class of 2010, Maria Librado, acknowledged Blair as being her most influential teacher.

Blair’s children Clint Blair, Grant Blair and Kate Ortega graduated from HISD, and are all currently pursuing master’s degrees—a second for Clint.

“In retirement, I plan to spend time with my family, travel with my husband Chuck, entertain, and enjoy time in the garden,” said Blair.

30 Years Teaching and Inspiring
Jeff Crafts, Spanish Teacher
Hillsboro High School

Denise Doyle, Life Skills Teacher
Hillsboro Intermediate School

Veronica Garcia, Instructional Aide
Franklin Elementary School

Kathy Groppel, Special Education Director
Hillsboro ISD

Faithful Service with a Smile
Kay Honeycutt, Food Service Liaison
Hillsboro ISD

In part-time retirement, Groppel spends time with her family, especially her two grandsons.

Influencia, 2014 HISD Retirees

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Alberta Immel, 11th Grade Teacher 
Hillsboro High School

Three Faithful Decades Teaching
Alberta Immel retires this year, having devoted 30 years to teaching students to be better readers and writers—skills they will use throughout their lifetime. Immel, who spent the past 14 years at Hillsboro High School, concluded her career teaching English to juniors and seniors.

Over the years, she taught students ranging from the 4th to 12th grades in a variety of English classes including advanced and special education.

Teaching multiple classes across grade levels, Immel noted that her “favorite memories are the ‘ah-ha’ moments when a concept clicked for the first time or conversations about life sparked by studying literature.”

“My career has been extremely rewarding,” said Immel. “Every year for the past 30, I’ve greeted strangers at the beginning of the school year who became like my own children.”

While Immel acknowledges that retirement will be an adjustment, she’s looking forward to spending time with her husband, daughter and two grandchildren. “My husband has been retired for a while, so now we get to spend more time together. We’re planning to travel to the East Coast, England, Ireland and Scotland.”

Rosa Lopez, Instructional Aide 
Franklin Elementary School

HISD Graduate Gives Back
Born and raised in Hillsboro, Rosa Lopez was educated in Hillsboro’s school district and graduated from Hillsboro High School (HHS). A pre-K instructional aide at Franklin Elementary School (FES) for the past 20 years, Lopez’s career began as a teacher’s aide at HHS.

“It’s been a privilege to be part of continuing HISD’s tradition of a high-quality education, fun learning experiences and creative teaching,” said Lopez.

Watching her students discover new words, concepts and skills has been a highlight of her time in the classroom. “At this young age, the kids are attentive and eager to learn,” commented Lopez. “It’s exciting to watch them respond positively to lessons and directions.”

During her time at FES, Lopez has taught first- and second-generation students, underscoring the importance of a strong education. “I’ve actually taught children of former students,” said Lopez. “It’s encouraging to know that students who’ve come through my classroom have gone on to be successful in the real world.”

Lopez, who is happily in the process of adopting a 16-month-old girl, doesn’t see much rest in her retirement. “I’m expecting her to keep me busy and young at heart,” beamed Lopez.

A Legacy of the Love of Reading
“Pam Jones’ love of reading dates back to her childhood when her mom and grandmother read to her.”

Jones earned an elementary education degree from Baylor University and a Certified Reading Recovery Coach designation from Texas Woman’s University.

During her 28 years at Hillsboro Elementary School (HES), she’s enjoyed sharing the joy of reading as a reading recovery specialist for at-risk students, a 4th grade teacher and a literacy coach.

Reflecting on her career, Jones is “grateful for the deep friendships I’ve made, thankful to the staff for supporting my professional growth and inspired that I’ve made a difference in the lives of students.”

“Students are the highlight of my time in the classroom. I’m also looking forward to spending time with my husband, daughter and ‘grandtwins,’ as she affectionately calls them. I’m also looking forward to diving into some home improvement projects!”

Lenda Palmer, 5th Grade Teacher 
Hillsboro Elementary School

Lessons from the Corporate World
Students who have spent time in Linda Palmer’s 5th grade class learn lessons and participate in exercises that help them begin to understand real-world business concepts. Palmer, who was a corporate logistics manager before transitioning into teaching, drew from her experience to teach students about applying their learning to situations outside the classroom.

Palmer returned to her alma mater Tarleton State University to earn a teaching certification after her daughter graduated from college, which launched her 13-year teaching career. Prior to joining Hillsboro Intermediate School five years ago, Palmer taught in the Malakoff and Fort Worth districts.

“My years as a teacher have been very rewarding,” said Palmer. “I’ve enjoyed the relationships I’ve developed with my students and the opportunity to watch them grow into young adults.”

Palmer’s retirement plans include spending time with her husband, daughter and “grandtwins,” as she affectionately calls them. “I’m also going to start sewing and embroidering now that I’ll have more spare time.”

Jennifer Sanders, 3rd Grade Teacher 
Hillsboro Intermediate School

A Heart for Special Education
Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) 3rd Grade Special Education Teacher Jennifer Sanders loves being around people, particularly her students.

Following graduation from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, elementary education degree in hand, Sanders was a paraprofessional with special education children. Immediately after, she knew she wanted to obtain a special education teaching certificate as “she fell in love with the kids.”

A teacher for eighteen years, Sanders taught in Jacksonville ISD and at Jane Long Middle School and Temple High School before joining HIS seven years ago.

“Teaching special education students has been so fulfilling,” said Sanders. “It’s always a joy to see their faces light up when they learn a new word, concept or skill.”

While Sanders will miss her students and HIS colleagues, she’s looking forward to moving to be closer to her two children, relaxing and enjoying retirement.

“I’m excited to spend more time with my children. And I plan to stay busy country dancing and traveling,” too said Sanders. “I’m also going to start sewing and embroiderying now that I’ll have more spare time.”

Sherrie Thomas, Service Coordinator 
Hillsboro High School

A Heart for Special Education
In 1992, Sherrie Thomas joined Hillsboro High School (HHS) as a paraprofessional, and four years later, she approached former HIS Principal Diane Inmis with the idea of helping students gain volunteer experience while learning a job skill. That year, Learn & Serve launched and Thomas was named program coordinator—a role she held until retirement.

Every year 70 to 80 students are matched with approximately 50 community partners through Learn & Serve. “It’s been an honor to teach students the importance of volunteerism, while they gain hands-on experience and develop skills that will help them in both life and career,” said Thomas.

Serving as Hillsboro High School coordinator for the past 10 years, Thomas has been instrumental in the after-school program designed for students to receive tutoring and complete missed assignments.

While Thomas is excited about retirement, she’ll “miss the students who have been her ‘school family’ for the past 22 years.” She’s also grateful to the past and current HISD staff for their support.

A co-owner of an antique, used books and collectibles shop, Thomas plans to stay busy in retirement. “I’ll spend time with my three, soon to be four, grandchildren and my mother,” said Thomas. “And I plan to enjoy volunteering, gardening, boating, fishing and camping.”
Big Dreams & Aspirations

“My goal is to be an amazing teacher.”

“I plan to be an engineer and to do something that is interesting and innovative.”

“I want to be the best I can be and follow in my parents’ footsteps.”

“My dream is to contribute positively to society.”

“I’m going to be a lawyer.”

“I want to have an amazing life with my family.”

“I’m going to be a doctor.”

“My dream is to be a dentist and run my own business.”

“I plan to work as a chef on a cruise ship.”

“Enjoy life and travel the world before I settle down.”

“My goal is to open my own mechanic shop.”

“I want to be a certified welder.”

“I want to be a fireman.”