Pets Around the District

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A MENAGERIE OF MAMMALS AND REPTILES

While learning about hedgehogs at a science research station, a group of Hillsboro Elementary School (HES) 2nd grade students made the interesting discovery that these spiny mammals can be pets.

So the seed was planted on that day, and HES teacher Danielle Spencer’s students began researching the ins and outs of hedgehog care. A couple of months later, Spencer’s classroom became home to two bristled urchins—Mrs. Prickles and Rowie—or “the girls,” as they’re affectionately known.

Caring for the prickly pets is an all-hands-on-deck effort. Every week, two students are on hedgehog patrol, which means they’re responsible for feeding, watering and caring for the girls. The entire class rotates the duty of cage cleaning.

“Not only do the students enjoy the girls, but they’re learning valuable lessons including responsibility and teamwork,” said Spencer.

Other classrooms around the district host pets as well. Misty Abshire’s junior high classroom is the residence of two guinea pigs (Mr. Biggs and Rusky), a leopard gecko (Zeppelin), crickets and fish.

Abshire’s students are responsible for the care of the classroom pets, from feeding and watering to cleaning the cages—a responsibility that encourages school attendance, pride and discipline.

“Another significant lesson the students are learning is compassion,” said Abshire. “By having responsibility for the care and well-being of the pets, students are better able to extend compassion to people.”

At Hillsboro High School, Michael Chirhart’s 12th grade classroom is well-known for its pet collection—domesticated rats, guinea pigs, a bearded dragon, a leopard gecko, a python, fish and amusing cockroaches.

“The students respond positively to the classroom pets,” said Chirhart. “They’re able to interact with unique mammals and reptiles, which creates learning opportunities and expands their knowledge base.”

By engaging with and caring for these district pets, the students are learning life lessons including responsibility, teamwork and compassion.

A Standard of Excellence

HJHS Again Recognized as School to Watch

A Hillsboro Junior High School (HJHS), teaching is as much about the “what” as it is the “who”—the “who” is the students, and the school is committed to assuring that each student is positioned to excel in both their current grade and high school.

Classroom instruction is provided at an individual level that challenges students, requiring them to work at a deeper, more profound intensity. This student-centered education mentality is the cornerstone of what makes Hillsboro Junior High School a “School to Watch.”

In 2013, HJHS earned a Texas School to Watch designation from the Texas Middle School Association (TMSA). This year the school earned a three-year re-designation based on academic excellence, responsiveness to the students’ needs and interests, and a commitment to see all students perform at a high level.

As part of the review process, a committee from TMSA took a student-led tour of the campus. One of the tour guides, 8th grader Kyle Lincoln said, “We showed them many classrooms from academic to the arts to digital design.”

“It’s an honor to work with such dedicated, creative and engaged students,” said HJHS Principal Cathy Patterson.

HJHS was recognized at the Texas Middle School Association conference in Arlington, TX on March 4, during which time a team of HJHS teachers gave a presentation. In June, a team of teachers will travel to Washington, DC for the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades conference to give a presentation and exchange best-practices with their peers.

“This award acknowledges the innovative and important work happening at HJHS,” said Patterson. “It also creates a sense of pride among the students, teachers, staff and community.”

College Prep Class: Knowledge is Power

Students are commonly asked what they want to do or be when they grow up. That’s a big question, with many options, considerations and possible answers.

With the help of a Hillsboro Junior High School (HJHS) college prep class, students can answer with confidence based on research and knowledge.

Teacher Bill Bates prepares his students to take the ACT and SAT and to complete college applications from essays to scholarships. To help create a complete picture of the importance of college preparation, the students also explore career paths, which opens up a world of possibilities and goals.

“As part of the class, the students identify a career in which they’re interested,” Bates said. “They then research the educational requirements and associated costs, as well as what a ‘day in the life’ in that profession.”

Equipped with the knowledge and skills gained in the class, students are better able to pursue and realize their college and career dreams.
As they walked into kindergarten classrooms this past fall, the Hillsboro Elementary School (HES) 2nd graders swelled with pride, eager to teach their “little buddies” how to make paper turkeys for Thanksgiving. The older students had worked hard to learn the craft inside and out, write down the steps and think about how to explain the process to the younger Eagles.

These students are participating in a program, Students-Teaching-Students, developed by HES teachers Danielle Spencer, Malissa Hawkins and Crystal Buxkemper. These teachers are members of the Hillsboro Elementary’s Campus Design Team, which is tasked with finding ways to make learning engaging for students while meeting Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) requirements.

“Our older students see the value of learning by being able to turn around and teach and inspire others,” said Spencer. “I remind them that it’s important to always do your best in the classroom, whether you’re learning or teaching.”

HES Principal Robin Ralston, who is excited about the new program, said, “It’s helping us to create a greater depth of knowledge for our 2nd grade students, while building relationships between the grade levels. This experience is beneficial to both groups of kids.”

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**HISD Education Foundation Awards Annual Teaching Grant Recipients**

On January 22, the Hillsboro ISD Education Foundation directors and donors, accompanied by members of the Hillsboro Golden Eagle Band, marched the hallways of the Hillsboro ISD campuses to award 19 grants to deserving individual teachers and teams.

The grants, totaling $23,983.88, will be used to purchase technology and tools to continue to prepare HISD students to excel in the workforce including iPads, a 3-D printer, a Swivl Robot and a Yamaha Harmony Director.

“Continued and generous donations from our community members, our business partners and HISD faculty and staff make the Accolade Parade possible,” said Foundation Executive Director Katharine Matthys.

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**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2015–2016 GRANT RECIPIENTS!**

**HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
(Four grants totaling $4,991.64)

- Taylor Sanders — Bouncing into Focus
- Crystal Buxkemper and Melissa Williams — Manipulative Math Madness
- Amanda Owens and Sarah Balser — Math Station Motivation
- Christine Robinson and Pam Hamilton — Library Makerspace: Just Add Kids

**FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
(One grant totaling $1,750)

- Kandy Faris and Ayari Favela — Keep Calm and Pre-K Hands on iPads

**HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**
(One grant totaling $1,750)

- Pam Hamilton and Daisy Abreu — Innovative Learning in 3-D

**HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**
(Seven grants totaling $9,008.60)

- Glann Doyle and Cheyenne Rodriguez — Understanding Music Through Harmony
- Misty Abshire and Laura Moulder — Slam Dunk Discovery
- Cheryl Comer and Patricia Ramos — Reluctant Reader? Not Any More!
- Katherine Polley and Michael Back — Lights, Camera, Activates Glass
- Dayna Marshall, Maegan Vaugh and Jade Hening — PBL Groupy Tammy Fry and Pam Hamilton — iLearning Like it’s 2999
- Patricia Ramos, Courtney Hewitt, Stan McGarvey — I Am George Washington

**HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL**
(Six grants totaling $6,483.64)

- Griff Harris and Lynelle Sparks — Blurred Reality
- Michael Chirhart — More Guts, More Glory
- Jennifer Faulkner — Getting Nerdy in Science
- Jennifer Faulkner and Tabatha Davis — Probing Deeper into Science
- Kyle Bodeker — Broadcasting the Future
- Haley Patterson — iLearn Through iPads (in honor of Kathy & Larry Groppel)

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**Students-Teaching-Students**

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Imagine that you walk into a room and on the table are cupcake wrappers, paper clips, cotton balls and a spoon. Your task is to build a boat out of these materials and present to a panel of judges. This is the first time you’ve been given this challenge, so you have experience. Teams of Hillsboro Intermediate School (HIS) students were presented with challenges like this one at the Greater Fort Worth Regional Destination Imagination (DI) competition on February 27. Regional Destination Imagination presented with challenges like the DESTINATION IMAGINATION WINNERS!

CONGRATULATIONS
to the DESTINATION IMAGINATION WINNERS!

TEAM EXTREME
(Co-ed, 3rd—5th grade)
Caroline Scattareghi, Morgan Ward, Jaya Baladin, Andrew Yarrall, John Stein and Alex Versluis; Coach: Erin Lobato.

2nd place out of 15 teams
Close Encounters
Highest Instant Challenge score in their category

ORB BUSTERS TEAM
(Co-ed, 3rd—6th grade)
Kyle Robinson, Connor Creach, Christian Monroy, Bryn Traegal, Benjamin Johnson, Kalvin Eager and Mekena Villarreal; Coach: Pam Hamilton.

5th place out of 54 teams—
Get A Clue
(Fine Arts Challenge)

In lockstep with the district’s commitment to prepare the students for a successful future, students as young as 1st grade are learning money management skills through real-life scenarios.

The students in Taylor Sanders’ 1st grade class are able to “shop” every Friday with play money they earned during the week for classroom tasks. Every Friday, the students practice their math skills by counting and trading their money. The students can either save their money or shop in the classroom store for an item such as a pencil or toy car, or the distinction of being the leader for a day.

“It’s encouraging to watch the students begin to understand the concept of purchasing power,” said Sanders.

At the same time, Maagahn Hall’s 3rd grade students engaged in a free-enterprise system by developing a business plan for a product based on budget, supply and demand, as well as creating advertisements. Organized into groups of four, the students used a hypothetical $20 debit card to purchase materials for their product such as cotton balls and wooden blocks.

Hall, who was impressed by the students’ commitment and creativity, commented that they started to differentiate between needs and wants—a lesson she believes will serve them well in life.

Laura Moulder’s 7th and 8th grade students participated in “The Game of Life,” an exercise in budgeting. During the game, students first chose a job, and then they created a budget based on the salary, taxes, and even debt.

The students go about “real life,” with responsibilities such as paying for a home, making a car payment and buying groceries, all with different scenarios tossed into the mix such as getting married or changing jobs.

“In another real-life scenario, groups of three students made a meal plan and grocery list and then shopped for the ingredients,” said Moulder. “This was not only a lesson in budgeting, but in cooperation and teamwork as well.”

Another group of junior high students also learned about real

planning, budgeting, business management and teamwork through their thriving catering business. Misty Abshire’s students are responsible for all aspects of meal preparation from planning to cooking for a monthly lunch that is available to teachers and staff across the district for $5.

The students are learning their way around the kitchen, while also gaining valuable knowledge about how to manage a business.

“Running the business has helped the students become more self-assured and self-confident,” said Abshire.

The teachers, Greg Gummelt and Joey Spencer, said the students are learning about different investment vehicles, market behavior and portfolio diversification. “They’re also learning to debate, compromise and work as a cohesive team,” said Gummelt.

“It’s important for these young investors to know their options, so they can make wise financial decisions,” said local financial advisor, Nash Daniels, who has shared his expertise with the class.

Hillsboro ISD is committed to help prepare students for a sound financial future.

Bill Bates’ junior high students also gained business management skills as part of the “Shark Tank” project, which mimics the television show by the same name. The students, who worked in groups of three, were given a hypothetical $150,000 budget to build a business from the ground up.

“Business ideas ranged from a cell phone with an umbrealaable screen to tennis shoes that change colors,” said Bates. “I was impressed by their innovation and business acumen.”
The HHS Varsity Boys Basketball Team placed 3rd in the district. They keep a watchful eye on the general health and welfare of the athletes. This job is a big and important one, and it is not for everyone. Nine freshmen started the program in the fall, but only one remains. Those who stay profess a love for what they do. For the program’s first four-year student AT, senior Alexis Ward, it’s a way to stay involved in sports after being sidelined by asthma. “It’s a unique experience,” Ward said. “I’ve gotten to know more of my classmates, and also learned skills like treating injuries and staying organized.”

Strong organizational skills are key to being a successful student AT. With full schedules and no real summer break to speak of, the program operates very much like a business and helps prepare participants for the future. In fact, some of Robertson’s former students have turned their experiences into careers in the medical field—one even went on to become a heart surgeon.

Next year’s cadre of student ATs starts its labor of love at the beginning of June.

Leadership Hillsboro State Capital Day
Students Spend an Educational Day in Austin

In February, six of Hillsboro Junior High School’s (HJHS) 8th grade students visited Austin on Leadership Hillsboro State Capital Day. The students, Saide Abreu, Toriah Brooks, Daylian Enriquez, Avery Holmes, Emery Leech and Blake Schroeder, were selected based on their top-percentile GPAs. Members of Leadership Hillsboro—a group of local community leaders working collectively to inspire and motivate students—accompanied the students on the trip.

First stop of the day was a tour of the Texas State Capitol and introductions to Lobbyist Neal T. (Buddy) Jones of Hilto Partners, and State Representative Byron Cook’s Chief of Staff and Senator Brian Birdwell. Then the students enjoyed a tour of the Bullock Texas State Museum where they watched the Spirit of Texas. "The trip was designed to help the students understand how the leadership skills they’re currently honing can transfer from the classroom to the campus and, ultimately, to the city and state level, whether in a government position or another career," said Hillsboro ISD Superintendent Vicki Adams and member of Leadership Hillsboro.

Students agreed that the trip was interesting, educational and fun. Blake Schroeder was particularly impressed by the grandeur of the Capitol’s rotunda, while Avery Holmes enjoyed visiting the courtroom. “These students work so hard in the classroom,” said HJHS Principal Cathy Patterson. “I’m excited they were able to participate in a trip that allowed them such a unique and valuable learning experience.”

Photo credit: Art Mann
Hillsboro Junior High School band teacher Glenn Doyle has been with HISD since 1997, but recently he’s marvelled at how Hillsboro’s band program has soared to heights it hasn’t reached in decades.

At the district UIL competition on March 3, the Hillsboro High School (HHS) symphonic bands won what’s known as a sweepstakes—earning the top rating in all three band categories (marching, concert and sight reading). This marks the second consecutive year they’ve achieved this difficult accomplishment. Before 2015, the last time the program earned a UIL sweepstakes was during the Carter administration.

At the junior high school, members of the concert band just notched their first top UIL rating in 27 years, and the 6th grade band earned 16 consecutive top ratings at their recent competition in Sandy Lake.

The program has grown in both size and quality in the past few years and Doyle admits that’s by design. “We’re lucky to have an administration that recognizes the value of fine arts and is committed to giving our students and our staff the opportunities they need to be successful,” he said.

In turn, the students have done their part through hard work and a desire to reach new levels of excellence.

For the past five years, every band instructor teaches at every level, which means students in the 6th grade are familiar with their instructors at the way through their senior year. This staff continuity is one of the changes Doyle thinks has been key to the program’s success. Relationships build and the students know what to expect, so both commitment and retention go up.

Another change has been with the staff itself. HHS Band Director Darrington White joined the district this year. A composer and UIL judge himself, White has been impressed with the administration’s dedication to the program, and the students’ focus and potential.

“We’re lucky to have an administration that recognizes the value of fine arts and is committed to giving our students and our staff the opportunities they need to be successful,” said Hillsboro Junior High School band teacher Glenn Doyle.

“We become a 4A school next year; the music will be more challenging,” mused White. “I’m excited to help our kids meet that challenge.”

**BRAVO! 2015-2016 HISD Band Highlights**

**Students Impress Judges & Spectators**

Hillsboro ISD students were recognized at the 2016 Hill County Fair, with prestigious awards, significant auction earnings and high praise.
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 received three 2015 TSPRA Star Awards presented in February of this year.

- **Gold Star Award & Best of Category**
  Eagle Legacy Awards Banquet Program

- **Gold Star Award**
  Eagle Legacy Awards Banquet Invitation

- **Gold Star Award**
  Capital Corner Club Member Door Placard

**SAVE THE DATE** for the Eagle Legacy Awards Banquet

Don’t miss the annual Eagle Legacy Awards Banquet.

**Thursday, May 21**
6:30 p.m.
First United Methodist Church Family Life Center, 315 Elm Street, Hillsboro

Purchase tickets ($15) from April 25–May 13 at the HISD Annex Office (119 E. Franklin) or Hillsboro High School.