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Alamo Convocation Center set for Jan. 7 tip off

Good news for SAISD basketball fans. After sitting out the entire 2012-13 season and fall 2013, the Alamo Convocation Center will be back in action

after the winter break.

A Jan. 7 triple-header will provide spectators with a first public look at the 64-year-old center's interior

featuring a complete overhaul.

This includes an all-new modernized stainless steel concessions area, restroom facilities, locker rooms and showers, ADA access, lighting, windows, awnings and parking lot.

The media will get a Jan. 6 sneak peek and tour, while a community ribbon-cutting ceremony is set for Jan. 15.

The long-anticipated re-opening will precede that of its neighbor, the historic Alamo Stadium, scheduled to be ready by the end of May 2014.

Both are among projects across the District funded through the \$515 million SAISD Bond 2010.

First games on tap

Alamo Convocation Center Jan. 7 (Tues)

- Highlands vs. Burbank 5 p.m.
- Lanier vs. Jefferson 6:30 p.m.

Bovs

• Edison vs. Brackenridge - 8 p.m.



Fans and student athletes soon will be enjoying sporting events in the restored Alamo Convocation Center.

SAISD to be featured in 'One Square Mile: Texas'



Come January, check the KLRN-TV schedule and set your DVR for the Alamo City's and the District's opportunity to shine in a PBS documentary series.

San Antonio's segment on "One Square Mile: Texas," which portrays the Lone Star State's culture from the perspective of distinct square miles, captures life in the Southtown community.

STAY TUNED!

'One Square Mile: Texas' Airing Thursdays, starting Jan. 16 For more information visit:

www.osmtx.com www.facebook.com/OSMTX

Featured SAISD residents are a Bonham Academy teacher whose child also attends the school and a Brackenridge HS Media Productions Magnet student and award-winning artist who works at the neighborhood's The Monterey Restaurant.

In addition to San Antonio, the other square miles portrayed in the half-hour series are in Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Midland, Nacogdoches, Port Isabel and Silverton.

Irving MS teacher wins 'Teen Wolf' walk-on part

When Kathryn Myers' 7th-graders selected a wolf pack class theme in honor of her favorite television program, they probably never dreamed this choice would lead to the opportunity of a lifetime for their language arts teacher. For them, it was a fitting expression of camaraderie.

"The show ('Teen Wolf') has a strong underlying theme of a 'found family,' of a group that functions together out of choice and love, "Myers explained.

"I felt that was such a strong and important message I could bring to my classroom - building up our room as a place of safety and solidarity."

After suggesting she enter the MTV supernatural drama's nationwide "Die on Teen Wolf" contest which included her submitting a 15-second audition video on Instagram - it was that solidarity through

massive online support that helped her score enough votes to come out the victor over some 5,000 others.

During a recent long weekend in Los Angeles, Myers enjoyed the star treatment including her own trailer and hair, makeup and wardrobe sessions. She also hobnobbed with the show's cast and crew, all of whom were warm, welcoming and excited to receive the letters and artwork her students sent with her.

Myers, who has a theater background and some on-camera experience in college, performed her scenes on a Friday and Saturday. The air date is not yet available, but is expected to be in February.

"As an educator, this has been an opportunity, not only for me to represent the 'Pack' my students and I have built, but also to show them that overcoming incredible odds is not impossible," she said.

"My students (in fact, my entire SCHOOL) banded together to make this amazing thing happen.

"It allowed me to teach my students the importance of never giving up; of believing you can accomplish something no matter the obstacles."



Kathryn Myers on the "Teen Wolf" set with Tyler Posey, whose character Scott McCall is forced to lead a secret life after being bitten by a werewolf.

SAISD's Irma Hernandez to assume Texas PRIMA presidency



The New Year will bring a new role for the District's director of Employee Benefits, Risk Management & Safety. Effective Jan. 1, Irma Hernandez will take over the office of president of the Texas Public Risk & Insurance

Manager's Association, the largest state chapter for National PRIMA.

"As incoming president for 2014, it will be my responsibility to assign chairpersons to the various

association committees, as well as appoint a new editor," Hernandez, who served two years as the group's newsletter's editor, said. "This is an incredible honor and a great deal of confidence is bestowed on me by the membership as a credible and reputable employee benefits, risk management and safety leader in the industry for the entire state of Texas. Personally, I am honored to represent SAISD in this capacity both on the state and national stage.

"Next year's annual conference will be in our beautiful city in the Grand Hyatt downtown just a stone throw away from us. It will be the association's 25th state conference anniversary. I am very excited!"

Among the Texas PRIMA's purposes for the diverse organizations it serves are: increasing the proficiency of risk management; strengthening the quality of risk management through continuing education; serving as an educational and research organization; providing members the opportunity to exchange ideas, consult with

persons in or associated with public risk management; and acting in any manner to further industry best practices.



Code is spoken here! Club teaches computer language and more

A group of Hillcrest ES students is learning the basics of computer programming, thanks to the school's new Coding Club, where 4th- and 5th-graders are exercising their critical-thinking skills and channeling their creativity to give life to digital characters on a computer screen.

The club's founders, 5th-grade bilingual teacher Gisella Calejo and librarian Jennifer Grimes, say students are learning important 21st-century skills and having fun in the process.

"The students always have a lot of fun because each of their projects is personalized and allows them to express their creativity, all while learning the fundamentals of computer programming," Grimes said.

"It also reinforces critical-thinking and problemsolving skills taught in the classroom."

With computer programming being a fast-growth field – jobs are growing at twice the national average, according to Code.org – computer science in K-12 education is getting national attention, including with events such as the Hour of Code, held the week

of Dec. 9 to provide an opportunity for every student to try computer science for one hour.

While the computer programming Hillcrest students are learning is optional through the club, Highlands HS began this year requiring all freshmen to learn computer coding through the online CodeHS program.

The Hillcrest students are learning coding through Scratch, a free online program designed by MIT students that allows users to give their digital characters, called sprites, movement commands using pre-coded blocks that interlock on screen.

Students can choose backgrounds, make their sprites dance, spin or twirl, and music can be assigned to their projects.

Calejo came up with the idea for the club when she and Grimes were brainstorming a stewardship project for the Education Service Center Region 20's Cohort of Leadership Associates program. They wanted a project that would be fun for and beneficial to students.

In addition to sharpening their critical-thinking



At the Scratch website are teachers Gisella Calejo (left) and Jennifer Grimes.

skills and promoting creativity, the coding lessons also have fostered teamwork, with students helping one another when they hit roadblocks.

"The students came in thinking they would be creating apps and games on Day 1," Calejo said.

They soon realized that it was going to take more than one day to learn the skills necessary to code."

New strings program puts 5th-graders in the key of success

The Hills are alive with the sound of music - Highland Hills ES that is!

Through a \$5,000 SAISD Foundation grant to purchase string instruments and the dedication of teacher Jacqueline Martinez, 20 5th-graders have the opportunity to get their minds tuned for academic success, along with a head start on prospective orchestra competitions and careers.

Participating students, which includes anyone with a true desire to learn a stringed instrument, must be dedicated too. Rehearsals are before school and run from 7:15 to 8 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Martinez, who is assigned to Rogers MS and Highlands HS, said she sought the grant for the

strings program because she wanted SAISD 5thgraders to have the same advantage of learning a stringed instrument prior to middle school that those from some of the city's other school districts have.

This includes competing as 6th-graders at an annual regional fall orchestra competition.

"The kids who try out and win are the kids in other districts who have had 5th-grade strings. They are ready, able and prepared to learn and read music and win because they had the 5th-grade advantage."

Martinez noted that although she lived in a lowincome neighborhood, she was within the Alamo Heights ISD boundaries where she benefitted from an orchestra program and training for orchestral skills free at an early age.

The fine arts education advocate said music provides students an academic edge.

"On average, musical students score about 200 points higher on the SATs," she said of the standardized test for most college admissions.

Other advantages of a fine arts education she cited include higher graduation and attendance rates and social skills such as good manners and reliability.

The Highland Hills young virtuosos will have public opportunities to showcase their talents before the school's PTA in April and at a May talent show at Highlands HS.

Students aren't the only beneficiaries. PE teacher Paula Hade also is learning strings through the program.

Besides the SAISD Foundation, Martinez voiced appreciation to Terra Nova Violins for working with her on pricing in order to get the best deal on a bass, two violas, two cellos and nine violins.

Jacquelyn Martinez (photo left) shows Highland Hills ES students proper positions for their violins, while choral music teacher Jason Jones (at the piano) helps them tune up.





Jefferson in the running for its second GRAMMY award and grant



Music program students and staff at Jefferson HS have been on a high note since learning

their campus again has been chosen a finalist for the national GRAMMY Signature Schools Award.

In 2010 Jefferson garnered \$5,000 as an Enterprise Award winner.

Selection recognizes top U.S. public high schools making an outstanding commitment to music education.

"We believe that the value of a good music education reaches far beyond the concert hall but

into other curricular areas, as well," said choir director Ronnie Sanders.

"Training in music and the arts has long been associated with higher academic performance."

Winners are determined by a panel of top music educators and professionals who assess music programs on documentation, such as recordings of school concerts and repertoire.

Should Jefferson be a recipient, Sanders said the funds will be used for musical instruments, sheet music and other needed accessories.

Top prize winners will be announced in March.



Proud of Jefferson's second GRAMMY nomination are music students and (back row, I to r) Jean Pierre Rominger, orchestra teacher; Jonathan Mireles, assistant band director; Ronnie Sanders, choir director and Roger Duran, head band director.

Mandatory grant workshop set

District employees interested in applying for a 2014-15 school year grant from the SAISD Foundation must attend a:

Grant workshop
Jan. 14 (Tues) - 4 p.m. or 5:30 p.m.

Travis Early College HS, 1915 N. Main Ave.

Prospective applicants may attend the one most convenient. For more information visit:

http://saisdfoundation.com/innovative-grants.php



Award-winning mariachis

Celebrating placing second among middle schools at the 19th-annual Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza competition are members of the *Mariachi Juvenil de* Irving MS. Their director (not shown) is Cirilo Campos.

Making the season bright

Spreading good cheer throughout the SAISD community through acts of kindness, festive performances and celebrating holiday traditions are the District's staff, students and partners. Here are just some examples.

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After delighting Bonham Academy students (left photo) with his annual visit to their school, Kriss Kringle (aka Santa Claus) is hauled away by San Antonio Police officers in front of principal Will Webber. His charge: violating the separation of church and state for handing out Christmas gifts. Although he would be tried in federal court before

U.S. District Court Judge Ed Prado, Kringle had every confidence in beating the rap as he had 19 times before. Plus, he had the jury, Bonham 4th-graders, on his side. As always, Kringle's certain acquittal was followed by a victory party. Inspiration for this event providing students with realworld lessons in the judicial system is the

beloved holiday classic movie "Miracle on 34th Street." The trial is a community service project of the United States District Court Committee in conjunction with the San Antonio Bar Association, Boy Scouts Troop 285 and Bonham. This year Santa's portrayer was SAISD Foundation Treasurer Bob Raymond.



In preparation of performing "Yes, Virginia The Musical," Longfellow MS theater arts teacher Elise Lopez directs Scraggly Santa (played by Victor Sanchez) in trying to convince the New York Sun editor (Chase Gomez) to reply to the title character's inquiry. Longfellow was one of 100 schools nationwide to receive a \$1,000 grant as part of Macy's "Believe" campaign to stage this original production. It is based on the famed 1897 letter 8-year-old Virginia O' Hanlon wrote to the newspaper asking about the existence of Santa Claus.



Dressed in seasonal red and white are members of the Edison HS dance troupe. They were among students throughout the District performing at the annual SAISD Holiday Dance Extravaganza.

Overseen by De Zavala ES 3rd-grade bilingual teacher Martha Valencia, students get a tasty math and science lesson by learning how these skills are key ingredients in cooking at the school's 20th-annual *tamalada*. A morning of making tamales is followed by the fun of eating them that afternoon.



LOOKING AHEAD TO NEW YEAR'S DAY

Humana Vitality members are invited to join Life Time Fitness for:

Commitment Day 5K • Jan. 1 (Wed) - 10 a.m. Life Time Fitness San Antonio, 18510 U.S 281 N

This nationwide, family-friendly New Year's Day 5K Fun Run/Walk is free and dedicated to starting a national conversation on healthy living.

Participating Humana Vitality members can earn 250 points. Register at:

http://www.commitmentday.com/san-antonio/.

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