

December 13, 2012

Student artwork beautifies Tobin Center during construction

Art patrons need not wait for the 2014 opening of The Tobin Center for the Performing Arts to experience the culture yet to come.

Now on exhibit are three dozen 4-by-4-foot panels of artwork created by nearly 300 SAISD students from 28 schools. Their masterpieces appear on the fence surrounding the former Municipal Auditorium, and will remain throughout the facility's transformation into a world-class venue.

The panels - created to answer the question "What does the performing arts mean to me?" - were unveiled at a Dec. 12 ceremony. SAISD was the only school district invited to participate.

"We want to expand access to the performing arts for students in all grades through what we do at The Tobin Center. So, it was a natural to start the ball rolling by asking students in our 'home' school district," said David Green, interim managing director of the Bexar County Performing Arts Center Foundation.

"The response from SAISD has been wonderful, and the talent of these student artists is extraordinary."

Among those delighted for this opportunity afforded District student artists is Omar A. Leos,

SAISD coordinator of visual and theatre arts.

"Thousands of people work in the downtown area, not to mention all the tourists that are here for the holidays.

"This art display is a great opportunity for the people of San Antonio, visitors alike, to see the outstanding work that comes from SAISD and its students," Leos said.

Once construction of the facility is completed, the panels will be returned to the participating schools.



School Board President Ed Garza addresses audience members at a ceremony for the unveiling of SAISD student art. He is joined on stage by J. Bruce Bugg Jr., president and chairman of the Bexar County Performing Arts Center Foundation and District Attorney Susan Reed, who also represents the foundation. Behind them is the YWLA choir and director Jessalyn Bernhard.

Hawthorne Academy art club sponsor Laura Schultz and students pose with their contribution to the wall of art. Hawthorne is one of 28 District schools whose work is being exhibited at The Tobin Center for the Performing Arts site during the facility's construction phase.

Herff principal and others play Santa for special delivery



Dr. Traci Smith (top photo) sets up 2nd-grader David Cortez for the surprise he is about to receive. Afterward, David couldn't wait to test drive his special bike.

When one of Dr. Traci Smith's students told her he wanted to ride a bike, she didn't appeal to St. Nick to help make the 7-year-old's wish come true this holiday season.

For fulfilling this request would require far more than securing a set of wheels similar to what most other boys and girls his age will be receiving. David Cortez was born with no arms, ruling out standard bicycles with handle bars.

"I immediately thought of the Banana Peel bikes I've seen at rental places, did some research and they're about \$600," the Herff ES principal said.

Smith immediately sprang into action, planning to hold a fundraiser to purchase this three-wheel, low-to-the-ground ride named for its yellow, recumbent canvas seat.

Then she found out that a friend in Ocean City, Md., had one her children no longer used, and offered to donate it if Smith could cover the shipping charges. A fundraiser for this expense already was under way when YRC Freight offered to waive the entire cost.

Faster than Santa's fleet of eight flying reindeer,

the company delivered David's bicycle to the school on Dec. 6.

Already there was a bike helmet that had been provided by another of Smith's generous friends.

As a bonus, the gifts were to be a surprise. While David was kept occupied elsewhere, his classmates clandestinely gathered outside where the delivery truck, his family and media camera crews all awaited his arrival.

To keep the reason a secret, David was told everyone was there for a bike helmet drawing, which he promptly won. But David didn't have to wait long to know his was the only name entered and why the contest had been rigged.

Unbeknownst to him, David also had a gift to share for all of his assembled well-wishers. It was the look of joy on his face when he saw his special bike for the very first time.

Making the occasion even more joyous for Smith was how it all came about.

"It makes my heart smile to think of how many people who don't even know David came together to make this happen for him."

District campuses earn 2012 College Readiness Award

Four SAISD high schools rank in the top 9 percent statewide for increasing the number of students taking the ACT and significantly raising test scores over the past five years.

This distinction earned Burbank, Fox Tech, Sam Houston and Lanier the Texas ACT Council's 2012 College Readiness Award. They were among only 170 high schools in the state to qualify for

this honor.

Nearly 40 percent of Texas high school seniors took the ACT college entrance exam in 2012, an all-time high.

The Texas ACT Council comprises secondary and post secondary educators who advise ACT Inc., on utilizing ACT programs and services in schools and colleges statewide.



Message of Longfellow's AVID success to go worldwide

Educators seeking expert tips on implementing the Advancement Via Individual Determination college-prep program at their own schools no longer are limited to making the trip to SAISD; they can learn through a video including the Longfellow MS AVID coordinator.

By special invitation, Rolando Ruvalcaba was part of this professional learning tool to be shared internationally with educators wanting to improve their school's existing AVID programs.

The video was produced during the recent AVID National Conference in San Diego, Calif., and participants spoke on AVID's work in the community.

"Longfellow has been very successful in implementing many community action projects

over the years and has inspired many students to become leaders in the community," Ruvalcaba said. "Longfellow has also developed partnerships with local universities and the media to provide exceptional learning experiences for our students."

The video also will be shown at the 2013 and 2014 national AVID conferences.

Ruvalcaba and the other Longfellow AVID teachers were selected to attend the 2012 session in honor of their school being selected a national demonstration site for the program earlier this year.

Jefferson HS also is a national AVID model.

Since earning this designation, both have hosted opportunities for other educators to learn why these two programs are so successful.



Courtesy photo

Texas AVID State Director Patrick Briggs (center) commends the Longfellow MS team on their school's success. They are (l to r) Jeanette Rodriguez, Cyndi Rodriguez, Rolando Ruvalcaba, Liz Noriega, Eliza Vela and Adrian Reyna.

'Masters' of education

Once again, the Texas A&M Kingsville campus has presented five District educators with \$5,000 to pursue a master's degree in educational administration or principal certification through the School Leadership Grant Program. Recipients are selected for qualities including innovation, their ability to exert positive influence and good communication and interpersonal skills. Shown seated, they are (l to r): math teacher Jennifer Soto, Whittier MS; 7th-grade bilingual teacher Yvette Lopez, Bonham Academy; special education teacher Monica Mendez and 1st-grade teacher Angel Curry, Austin Academy;



and 6th-grade teacher Cheryl Toscano, Hawthorne Academy. Shown standing are H.R. Director of Recruitment and Hiring Gabe Muñoz (left) and university representative Dr. Don Jones.

Meet me in the board room

Learning about the nation's central bank from the unique vantage point of the board room are these newly-appointed members of the Student Board of Directors.



Courtesy photo

Teens from eight District high schools are participating in this six-month program at the San Antonio branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas where they gain an insider's view of the economy, banking and business. SAISD was selected to pilot this program in 2008. This year's board members are welcomed by Blake Hastings, vice president in charge Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, San Antonio branch. They and their high schools are: (top row, l to r) Aaron Vega, Highlands; Justin Manjarrez, Fox Tech; Rodolfo Navarrete, Edison; Ashley De La Garza, Jefferson; and Jaclyn Munoz, Fox Tech. Seated (l to r) are: Marquize Menchaca and Michael Ytuarte, Brackenridge; James Garza and Louisa Rodriguez, Burbank; Jennifer Mendez, Edison; Antoni Perez, Jefferson; Mia Muniz and Selena Rivera, Lanier. Not pictured are Tanya Sanchez, Highlands; and Isaac Thornton and Dominique Washington, Sam Houston.

Rocket-fueled science lesson



Don't let the red construction paper and colorful markers fool you into thinking this is a holiday art class project. To the contrary, these are Sam Houston HS concepts of engineering students, overseen by teacher Alan Chubb as they provide a holiday touch to one-half

to two-liter water bottle rockets prior to their Dec. 14 launch near the school's football field. The rockets are designed to shoot 40 feet skyward for two to five seconds, with the amount of water per bottle and the 30-40 psi air pressure from an air pump, determining the height reached. Afterward, the aspiring aeronautical engineers will discuss their observations and take measurements. Their work will continue in the classroom where students will use the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet application to analyze the results in order to fine tune plans for their next rocket launch.

SAISD's newest novelist

District Bilingual/ESL Compliance Facilitator Beatriz Canales-Ramirez (center) accepts congratulations from (l to r) department clerk Pat Chavez and Luz Garcia-Martin, senior coordinator for bilingual/lotte/ESL, at the signing of her children's book "Cocoa's Mission." The story - designed to ignite a child's interest in science and math through reading about Cocoa's adventures - was inspired by her own AKC-registered chocolate Labrador retriever. Co-author is Canales-Ramirez's husband David Jerome Ramirez.



Courtesy photo

Safety First

Precaution and prevention are keys to fire safety

Preventing causes and knowing what to do in the event of a fire is imperative, particularly for those who are entrusted with the care of children, such as school district employees.

Because increasing awareness reduces the number of potential fires, this edition of Safety First provides prevention and precaution tips to help keep everyone safe.

Major causes, particularly at schools

- Flammable liquids.
- Overloaded electrical outlets.
- Electrical shortage.

Heed fire drills

- Fire drills should be held regularly and always taken seriously, so evacuate immediately when alarm sounds.
- Ensure that employees know how to evacuate their work areas and perform their fire drill duties in an emergency.

What to do in case of fire

- Know location of alarm and sound at the first sign of smoke or fire.
- Call SAISD Police Department, 271-3124.
- Be familiar with location of the extinguisher and how to use it.

- Evacuate those in immediate danger first.
- Perform any fire drill duties assigned.
- Do not panic.

How to properly prepare

The SAISD Police Department provides evacuation/lockdown training annually to all schools and offices.

For more information call Sgt. Alex Almendarez, 299-1331 ext. 141.



Spreading Holiday Cheer

Helping to make the season merry and bright for the SAISD community are the District's generous staff, students and partners. Here are just some examples.

District offices and schools will be closed Dec. 24- Jan. 4, and re-open Monday, Jan. 7.



This tasty, Taj Mahal-inspired structure earned Jefferson HS architecture students honorable mention at the annual Gingerbread Design contest, sponsored by the San Antonio Architectural Foundation. Shown with them (right) is David Garcia, Magnet program coordinator.



Courtesy photo

Senior Betty Clay again has earned Highlands HS top place in SAISD's fourth-annual holiday card contest. As grand prize winner, she received \$150 and was recognized at the November school board meeting. Shown with Betty is her teacher Annette Hoffman.



Miller ES PALS students exemplify their club's name by creating cheer for military service members and veterans through participating in the Holiday Mail for Heroes program.

If Knox ECEC students, their parents and staff had their way, there would be a world where no one ever need go hungry. Contributing to the San Antonio Food Bank's "Imagine There's no Hunger" campaign is an annual event at their school, where they were treated to a pep rally rewarding their contributions. Leading the cheers were members of the San Antonio Talons arena football team and their mascot.



Courtesy photo

SAISD teens including these Sam Houston HS JROTC corps members taking a break with Santa (adjacent photo) and Phoenix Middle College seniors (shown far right) volunteer their gift-wrapping skills for the Elf Louise Christmas Project.



Courtesy photos

Help the homeless

New and gently-used clothing is being collected for homeless shelter families. Contributions can be left in the donation box in the Central Office Accounting Department, which also is the drop-off site for those participating in the Giving Tree project. Donation deadline for both is Thursday, Dec. 20.



Holiday card deadline extended



There's still time to purchase one-of-a-kind holiday cards showcasing SAISD talented student artists that your friends and family will cherish for years to come. The deadline to order these future collector's items has been extended to Tuesday, Dec. 18. But don't wait 'til then. Get your holiday cards now while supplies still last! For details visit www.saisd.net or call Printing Services, 554-8350.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2013

Mark your calendars for the:
SAISD Council of PTAs Founder's Day dinner
Feb. 15 (Fri) - 6 p.m.
Brackenridge HS, 400 Eagleland Drive



Courtesy photos

In partnership with Communities in Schools, students from Tafolla MS raised more than \$300 for the Make-A-Wish-Foundation, which grants wishes to children whose medical conditions are life threatening. Shown in top photo are students of teacher Irene Cruz. Students in bottom photo are in Ruth Hartman's class. Tafolla's partnership was coordinated by CIS site coordinator Jeannette Hutson.



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