

April 11, 2013

## Community invited to meet superintendent finalist

Next week, District patrons, parents, students and employees will have opportunities to get to know the lone finalist for SAISD superintendent.

In a unanimous vote, Trustees selected Dr. Manuel L. Isquierdo at the April 8 School Board meeting. The public gatherings will take place during the 21-day waiting period after the naming of a lone finalist that is required by state law.

Following Monday night's vote to name Isquierdo finalist, School Board President Ed Garza stated: "Now we begin a public process for the community to be involved and provide input on this important decision."

The 62-year-old Isquierdo currently is superintendent of Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson, Ariz., a position he has held since July 2007.

If hired, Isquierdo would be charged with assisting Trustees in their commitment to transform SAISD into a National Model Urban School District.

As an urban school administrator, Isquierdo is experienced in implementing and managing change and creating and designing successful comprehensive school reform initiatives that

### Meet Isquierdo community forums

April 18 (Thurs) 6 to 8 p.m. at Jefferson HS

April 19 (Fri) 6 to 8 p.m. at Lanier HS

April 20 (Sat) - 10 a.m. to noon at Sam Houston HS

are being used as models at the state and national levels.

His credentials also include a reputation as a visionary, with a record of consistent achievement in the field of school improvement that emphasizes improving test scores, decreasing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates.

He was one of three candidates Trustees interviewed last month and the only brought back for a second interview on March 29.

Dr. Sylvester Perez was appointed interim superintendent in March 2012, a month after the resignation of Dr. Robert J. Durón.

#### More about Isquierdo

While new to San Antonio, Isquierdo is no stranger to the Lone Star State. From 2003 to '05 he was an area superintendent for the

Dallas ISD where he oversaw two high schools, four middle schools and 22 elementaries, comprising 25,000 students.

Prior to Tucson, Isquierdo was deputy superintendent for the Stockton (California) Unified School District between 2005-07.

Career highlights include being named: one of three 2011 Tech & Learning's Learning Leaders of the Year who exemplify extraordinary vision; Converge magazine's 2011 Education Innovators; and one of the nation's 10 Tech-Savvy Superintendents of the Year by eSchool News for 2010.

Isquierdo received his doctorate of education in administration from National Louis University in Chicago, a master's in educational administration from Michigan State University and a bachelor of arts in history and English from Saginaw (Michigan) Valley State College.



Dr. Manuel L. Isquierdo, superintendent finalist

## Book bonanzas celebrate SAISD's spotlight on literacy

From their role as contributing authors to being beneficiaries of giveaways - including the latest one designed to provide ALL District students with brand new books of their very own - it's been a bountiful spring for SAISD's lovers of literature.

Following are the most recent examples of the Districtwide goal for 2012-13 to increase rigor in reading and writing.

#### Books Build Character

This exciting new initiative kicked off with special events at schools where 2nd- and 7th-graders comprised more than 8,000 to receive books for keeps.

The younger students took home "Freckle Juice" by Judy Blume, while the older ones got "Wonder" by R.J. Palacio.

The giveaways were courtesy of a new joint initiative of SAISD and the San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel.

Helping to make this goal affordable is First Book, an international non-profit organization

that partners with top publishers to offer deeply discounted prices so that children in need have access to a supply of high-quality books.

For the Books Build Character kick off, the Alliance raised \$28,000, of which \$25,000 came from the National Teachers Associates.

In addition to the book distribution, all SAISD staff members are encouraged to register with First Book for free at: [www.firstbook.org/AFT](http://www.firstbook.org/AFT).

Select "American Federation of Teachers" under "Affiliated Organizations."

Community support also is welcome. For more information, call Shelley Potter, Alliance president, at 225-7174.

#### Our Story, in Our Words

Making its debut during a ceremony at Lanier HS was this student-written, student-illustrated compilation.

As part of the District's goal to increase rigor in reading and writing, students from each

campus were charged with researching and writing about their school's namesake.

The idea to tie this task to SAISD's goal came about when Interim Superintendent Dr. Sylvester Perez first began visiting schools and discovered that few students and staff knew how or why the names were chosen.

"Our Story, in Our Words" contains the winning essays and illustrations from each school. Beyond creating a valuable keepsake, the exercise provided participants with a greater appreciation for their school, regardless of whether it was named for important persons or its neighborhood, said Dr. Peggy Stark-Wilson, the District's interim deputy superintendent of teaching and learning.

"I believe it gives them a sense of ownership about the school and the importance of why they are there," she said.

The authors, illustrators and their schools each received first editions and provided Trustees autographed copies at an April 10 book signing.



1. In honor of their book selection, Herff ES 2nd-graders belly up for their school's version of "Freckle Juice," served by assistant librarian Martha Lara. 2. At Longfellow MS, English teacher Lori Latiolais hands out copies of "Wonder" by R.J. Palacio. 3. Accepting a copy of "Our Story, in Our Words" is District 3 Trustee Debra Guerrero.

# UTHSC program to provide teens a jump start on careers

Ten SAISD freshmen are among 20 citywide named 2013 Voelcker Scholars.

Through this intensive three-year summer program at the University of Texas Health Science Center's Voelcker Biomedical Research Academy, they will gain valuable learning experiences as well as financial awards ranging by year from \$500 to \$1,000.

They and their schools are: Christopher

Corona, Burbank; Clover Moten, Joaquin Ramirez and Isabella Torres, Edison; Liliana Capistran and Iman Wallace, Fox Tech; Devyn Williamson, Highlands; Darley Guzman, Sam Houston; and Adriana Avendano and Meg Garcia, Young Women's Leadership Academy.

The students were selected after a rigorous application process that began last fall and will work with research faculty at UTHSC for

the next three summers using state-of-the-art technology and experimental design while learning about professional health careers in science and medicine.

The program will run weekdays from June 13 to July 27.



## Batter up for the 'First Annual Pitch for the Cure'

The life of the late Edison HS Lady Golden Bears softball coach, Mary Ann Villarreal, will be honored at a competition designed to bring awareness and funding to fight breast cancer.

Preceding the event will be a surprise first pitcher, a survivor's recognition ceremony and a moment of silence for Villarreal and others who have lost their battle against breast cancer.

The First Annual Pitch for the Cure and featured matches will be:

April 16 (Tues) - starting at 6:15 p.m.

Mary Ann Villarreal Softball Complex - Edison HS, 701 Santa Monica Drive  
Brackenridge vs. Lanier • Burbank vs. Jefferson  
Edison vs. Brennan • Sam Houston vs. LaVernia



Proceeds from commemorative T-shirts will benefit WINGS, a non-profit organization that provides breast cancer treatment to uninsured South and Central Texas women.

For more information email Aimee Silva, Edison HS head softball coach, [asilva4@saisd.net](mailto:asilva4@saisd.net).

## Higher ed options for employees

Staff members interested in furthering their educations may explore the possibilities at the:

Career Pathways & Advanced Degrees Information Fair

April 24 (Wed) - 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Brackenridge HS, 400 Eagleland Drive

Representatives from colleges and universities will be available to provide information on degree programs and class scheduling such as online, weekend, evening and traditional. For details call 554-8520 or 554-8400.

## Passionate about living a life of public service

Cuisine isn't Mario Mandujano's only passion. When not at work preparing and serving nourishing meals at SAISD's Central Office cafeteria, the administrative dining room manager directs a Good Friday tradition designed to nourish the soul: San Fernando Cathedral's annual presentation of "The Passion Play."

He first joined the cast 27 years ago as a recent arrival to San Antonio. Although he had no training as an actor, Mandujano had grown up seeing the public re-enactment of Jesus Christ's suffering and crucifixion in his hometown of Guanajuato, Mexico.

His part was that of Joseph Caiaphas, the Jerusalem high priest who sent Jesus to Roman governor Pontius Pilate for execution.

"As soon as I put on that costume I was transformed," Mandujano said. "Doing the play changed my life."

That wasn't the only change in store.

At that time, Mandujano intended to be here for only six months and had become active in the church, including joining the choir, to help him feel connected to his roots. But his plans of returning home to work with his father at an energy plant ended when he and fellow choir member Lupita Alvarado fell in love and married.

After eight years as part of the cast, then-San Fernando rector the Rev. David Garcia asked Mandujano if he would be interested in directing. Since he had no experience as a director, Mandujano initially declined.

"But Father David offered to help me, so I prayed about it and started doing research and came up with ideas I wanted to try," he said.

Those ideas included making the re-enactment more realistic and extending the play beyond the crucifixion scene, which expanded the time from one to two hours.

Once the decision was made, Mandujano fully embraced his new role. This included a holistic approach that begins at least two months prior to the production to



In addition to directing "The Passion Play," Mario Mandujano plays the part of a Roman soldier placing a crown of thorns on the head of Jesus. Son Mario Mandujano Jr. portrayed Christ in this 2012 production.

provide cast members a time for prayer and contemplation in order to immerse themselves spiritually.

Roles are cast only after prayer and careful consideration, he said. And obviously, Jesus is the most sought-after character.

Last year, Mandujano was faced with the difficult task of auditioning his son, Mario Jr., who was one of three finalists.

Ultimately, there was no doubt who was the right choice.

"My son thoroughly knew the part. He was raised watching it," Mandujano said.

Other factors added to the personal poignancy of Mario Jr.'s selection: he was about to join the Marine Corps; his own mother portrayed Mary; in addition to directing, dad played the part of a soldier placing the crown of thorns on Jesus' head; and brother Andres and sister Aimee had supporting roles.

"It was such an emotional time," Mandujano said. So emotional that Mario Jr. was the first Jesus ever to cry during the production, his father said.

The 17-year-old who first donned the costume of Caiaphas in 1984 could hardly have imagined that the play would become a

Mandujano family affair, or the other myriad changes surrounding it and him personally.

Since those early years of his participation, the number of spectators coming downtown to view the pageantry that starts at Milam Park with a procession to the cathedral has grown from 50 to 100 persons to more than 20,000.

It now includes an international audience as well, thanks to CatholicTV, broadcast locally by Catholic Television of San Antonio.

His San Fernando connections also led him to SAISD. He was a restaurant cook when parishioners and retired District administrators Joe Nick Garza and Frank Medina suggested he apply at SAISD.

Mandujano began as a cook at Rogers ES in 1994. After undergoing a manager internship, he became the Central Office dining room manager four years ago.

Like the play, his association with the District is a family affair. His wife is a Fox Tech HS alum, while both sons are graduates of Jefferson HS, where his daughter is a senior.

Whether his hat is that of a chef, Roman soldier or director, Mandujano sees these as all the same role: service.

"God has given me everything and this is something I can give. I like to serve!"

Father, son and mother are represented in this scene depicting an anguished Mary (played by Lupita Mandujano) seeing her child on the cross. Adding to the personal emotions all three felt was knowing that Mario Jr. was soon to begin military service.



Courtesy photos



## Financially savvy students

Brackenridge HS students proudly display certificates earned for the Capital One Financial Scholars Program. They were among more than 400 teens at their school honored for successful completion of this online interactive program that teaches students about personal finances. Adding their congratulations are principal Moises Ortiz (left), Interim Superintendent Dr. Sylvester Perez (back row, fourth from left) and (front row, fourth from left) Mayor Julián Castro



Courtesy photo

## Contributors to the 'Cure'

SAISD Passion for the Cure team captain and Fox Tech HS secretary Carmen Ng (center) takes a breather in front of the Alamo with best friends Sandy McCauley (left) and Sharon Portillo following completion of the 16th-annual Komen Race for the Cure. With more than 100 members strong, for the third consecutive year team Passion for the Cure won the Largest School Team category. They were part of an estimated 25,000 walkers and runners contributing to the cause for breast cancer research.

## Award-winning skills

Talented teens from two SAISD high schools took top honors at the recent SkillsUSA state competition in Corpus Christi. Lanier's Justin Mercado (right) heads to the national contest to be held this summer in Kansas City, Mo., following his first-place finish in the employment application process category. His teacher is Juan M. Morales Sr.

Shown below are Burbank automotive students who placed first in the total vehicle restoration category. The state contest is SkillsUSA's highest level of competition for this category. Their teacher (not shown) is Jose Cano.



Courtesy photos



## In a class by themselves

Members of the Brackenridge HS indoor drumline celebrate their state championship and gold medals earned at the Texas Educational Colorguard Association. This is SAISD's first state championship in this category. Their director (left) is Alfonso Alvarado.



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## East Side's VIP visitors

SAISD's East Side schools were destination sites for national visitors at recent events, including the following. **1.** An East Side Promise Neighborhood luncheon was the first of two festivities that Sam Houston HS hosted this week. Approximately 500 attendees including representatives from the District's six participating campuses gathered to learn the latest on the federally funded collaborative

effort to ensure that all children have access to effective schools and strong support systems. Shown presenting is Tony Leverett, EPN project director. **2.** Later in the week, Sam Houston was the site of the Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service. Mayor Julián Castro (left, with proclamation) used the occasion to publicly thank AmeriCorps for the work they do on behalf of students. Joining him center stage are AmeriCorps members Steve Acton (left) and (also holding the proclamation) James

Jackson. **3.** While in town for the Council for Exceptional Children's annual conference, U.S. Department of Education representatives Larry Wexler (left) and Michael Yudin visit Davis MS, where students show them how much they are enjoying their school's new SmartLab Learning Environment. Davis was the first District middle school to receive these career exploration labs through SAISD Bond 2010. The DOE representatives also visited Sam Houston.



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