

April 24, 2014

Wilson ES and Silver & Black Give Back 'Team Up' for service



For the fourth consecutive year, an SAISD school has netted a top prize for efforts to help improve their communities.

The Wilson ES Gardening Club is one of five San Antonio-area student groups to receive \$20,000 from Silver & Black Give Back to fund service-learning projects.

The money from the winning proposal, submitted by Wilson ES music teacher Rachel Woodward, will finance expanding the school's ongoing efforts promoting public health and wellness far beyond its current community garden focal point.

This includes adding a greenhouse, starting a

fish farm/hydroponic growing pond, installing an outdoor classroom and putting in fruit trees, with sufficient funds to benefit the Gardening Club for years to come.

"In our world, it is so important to know where your food comes from," Woodward said.

"So much of what our kids put into their bodies has been mechanically or chemically altered in a way that makes it questionable as a valid food source.

"By learning to grow their own food, our kids are taking charge of their bodies and their health in a way that is both environmentally and economically responsible, but also just plain better for them."

The knowledge and skills students are

learning through the Gardening Club have inspired many to start their own home gardens, she said.

Gardening Club also provides students an opportunity to see their music teacher, who also sponsors the school's Opera Club, in a different setting and to know that people can have a multitude of passions.

Woodward's own passion for gardening was cultivated through her grandparents, from whom she learned the joy of growing and eating the raw vegetable she picked from their garden.

The Wilson Gardening Club comprises 24 4th- and 5th-graders who work in groups of 12 each.



The Spurs Coyote and Rampage mascot T-Bone (photo left) are among those celebrating the Wilson ES Gardening Club's victory during the announcement ceremony. At the school's garden (adjacent photo) teacher Rachel Woodward points out the difference between grass and green onion blades.

YWLA to benefit from Science Educations Award grant

An on-campus greenhouse soon will provide students at San Antonio's only all-girls public school with even more innovative real-world learning opportunities.

The greenhouse and its upkeep will be funded through a \$1,500 Science Education Awards grant from Texas Biomedical Forum and the V.H. McNutt Memorial Foundation.

The applicant, Young Women's Leadership Academy teacher Nina Slote, was among a half-dozen area public and private high school teachers receiving a share of the total \$20,000 amount annually given to support innovative science projects.

"The greenhouse is intended to support

projects and instruction for all life-science courses, as well as science fair projects," said Slote, who teaches biology, chemistry and Advanced Placement environmental science.

Recipients are chosen by a panel of judges and the awards are given to "the top six teachers whose proposals demonstrate the strongest commitment to the scientific process and the further development of progressive science education programs," the Texas Biomedical Forum's website states, adding:

"The competition was incredibly intense this year as the number and caliber of applications increased dramatically."



Sharing in the happy news that YWLA teacher Nina Slote (shown with her plaque) has secured a Science Education Awards grant for her school are freshmen (l to r) Angelica Flores, Lorena Leza and Carmen Zayasbazan and principal Delia McLerran.

Trustees approve pay raises for 2014-15 school year

Good news for SAISD employees.

Trustees at the April 14 School Board meeting approved pay raises, as well as a \$500 longevity stipend for qualified employees who were not eligible for the one given earlier this year.

Raises approved by the School Board are:

- An increase of \$47,900 to \$49,000 in the starting salary for new teachers and registered nurses.
- An increase of 2.5 to 2.6 percent for

other (not first-year) teachers, librarians and registered nurses.

- An on-average 1.5 percent increase (based on pay-grade midpoint) for classified employees, paraprofessionals and professional employees.

The \$500 longevity stipend will be paid this January to returning SAISD employees who meet criteria of completing 15 years of District service in the 2013-14 school year.

Employees who received the Trustee-

approved one-time \$500 longevity stipend in 2014 are not eligible to receive an additional stipend in 2015.

The raises will be reflected in employee paychecks at the start of their work-year calendar for the 2014-15 school year.

The District Compensation Plan will continue to be reviewed to determine if other adjustments or analysis are in need of further consideration.

Arias added to three R's for SAISD Opera Club members

A whole new generation of high-culture music aficionados is being cultivated at about a half dozen elementary schools Districtwide.

And not just theoretically. Thanks to opera clubs being piloted this year, the genre has come alive for the select 4th- and 5th-graders who have the thrill of experiencing world-class productions throughout the school year performed by New York's Metropolitan Opera.

The performances, shown locally at the Huebner Oaks Theater, are in conjunction with the company's HD Live in Schools program.

Showtime is preceded by a thorough study of the featured production. Instructional materials include curriculum afforded through HD Live in Schools.

After first offering the program at middle and high schools, it was brought to the elementary-level in 2013-14 by SAISD Fine Arts Department Coordinator Isabel Romero, who cited proven advantages including opera being an excellent vehicle for teaching language.

"Young children use their whole being when they express themselves musically. They love to sing, dance, use different voice inflections, be another character and enjoy pretend play," Romero said.

"These things are all a part of language learning and also a natural part of opera. My

goal is to introduce our youngest community members to a life-long engagement with and delight in opera and the arts."

Among those delighting in their new-found love for opera are students at Fenwick ES.

"As we know, children are sponges and need to be introduced to as much as possible while they are very young," said that school's club sponsor, Cassandra Grim.

"At this age, they can discover how beautiful opera is and feel the music touching their hearts."

This discovery includes even her appreciative kindergartners, whose music instruction includes opera.

"Most of my students might not ever have attended an opera and could have grown into adults knowing nothing about this genre.

"It's up to us as music teachers to give them this introduction and let them decide for themselves," Grim said.

Besides Fenwick, other participating elementaries have included Arnold, Briscoe, Riverside Park, Rogers and Wilson.

Operas seen this year were Dvorak's "Rusalka," Puccini's "La Bohem" and Verdi's "Falstaff." The club's opera season concludes with Rossini's "La Cenerentola" on May 2.

Because ticket availability is limited to nine

per school, not all club members are fortunate enough to be able to see the productions they have been learning.

But based upon the clubs' popularity, Romero hopes the program can be expanded next year.

She currently is seeking partners to help provide funding for the clubs and for four elementary-level teachers to attend the Metropolitan Opera's Opera Conference in New York, tentatively set for Oct. 14-17.

Those interested may email: iromero@saisd.net or call 554-2565.



Fenwick ES music teacher Cassandra Grim uses "The Barefoot Book of Stories from the Opera," retold by Shahrukh Husain and Illustrated by James Mayhew, to lead 4th-graders in comparing the fairy tale version of "Cinderella" to that of Rossini's "La Cenerentola."

Team efforts contribute to grants for District schools

Through the support of their staff, students, alumni and community, two SAISD campuses have an extra \$1,000.

The checks to Collins Garden ES and Hawthorne Academy are courtesy of the

highest number of participants on the schools' behalf at the annual Run 4 Education.

Collins Garden represented the highest overall level of support, while this is the second consecutive year that Hawthorne has

qualified to receive this amount.

In all, \$6,250 in grants were awarded for participation to 15 schools in amounts ranging from \$250 to the top \$1,000 prizes.



Celebrants at the Collins Garden ES presentation (l to r) include check holders Cheryl Thienpont, PE teacher; Roger Rodriguez, SAISD senior coordinator for health and PE; Judy Geelhoed, SAISD Foundation executive director; Cynthia De La Garza, principal; Roxanne Sarabia, PE teacher; and Virginia Peche, music teacher.



Celebrants at the Hawthorne Academy presentation include check holders Jesse Hernandez, SAISD Foundation board of directors member, and Valerie Cavazos, a Hawthorne parent.

For Your Benefit

Seven helpful and easy tips on reducing stress at work

- 1. Get away from it all.** Take a walk around the block. Stop thinking about whatever is bothering you for a little while. Sometimes, when you give a problem some distance, it seems smaller. If not:
- 2. Confront the problem.** The longer you avoid dealing with something stressful, the more you worry and the worse things could get. So don't put off handling a difficult task or job. If you need to, talk with a co-worker or your boss to get help.
- 3. Leave work at work.** If you can, try to stop thinking about work when you go home. Save your nights for fun, rest and relaxation. Thinking about work all of the time does not allow your mind to rest.
- 4. Don't skip lunch.** This not only can be unhealthy, it also can reduce your ability to do your best work, which can lead to additional stress and worry. If you can, don't eat at your desk or station. Eat out sometimes. Other times, bring your lunch. But try eating it in the park or at least in a break room or conference room.
- 5. Say "no" at least sometimes.** Saying no also can keep you from getting overwhelmed and frustrated.
- 6. Exercise and stretch.** Forbes.com recommends standing in a doorway and holding your right arm straight out in front of you, against the frame. Take a step and turn your body to the left. This reduces muscle
- tension in your upper back, allowing you to better hold yourself upright. You also can take a moment to sit up straight and do simple stretches right in your chair. This can make your body feel better, relieve tension and let you move on with less stress.
- 7. Have fun.** Work can be very serious. It seems like there are always problems to be handled. But that does not mean that you can't try to have a good time at work and let off some steam. Look for the humor in everyday situations. Smile as much as you can. Having fun at work does not mean that you're not doing a good job. It simply allows you to do your work with less stress.





in the Spotlight



Top tier-teacher

Accepting a congratulatory gift as one of 20 area distinguished educator finalists for the Trinity (University) Prize for Excellence in Teaching is Barbara Nine. She and the others were honored at a recent awards banquet at which the recipients were announced. In addition to being SAISD's Trinity Prize nominee, Nine is one of three inaugural 2014 SAISD Distinguished Teachers of the Year and is the Ball ES Teacher of the Year. Joining the music instructor for the photo are (l to r) Emilio Castro, SAISD deputy superintendent learning and teaching; Dr. Michael Fischer, Trinity vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty; Shari Albright, a Trinity alum; and Ball ES principal Rachel Gonzales.



'Skill'ful Voks

In the limelight for Lone Star State recognition are Lanier HS criminal justice teacher Tamara Ford (right) and her student Wendy Guzman. Ford was named District 11 (comprising 13 school districts) SkillsUSA Advisor of the Year and placed second for this title at the state level. Honorees are selected for their success in providing career opportunities for students. Among those shown who wrote letters of recommendation on her behalf were Ford's principal, Dr. Edward Garcia, and District 5 Trustee Patti Radle. Headed to the national SkillsUSA competition this summer based upon her performance at the state level is Wendy, who also serves as SkillsUSA District 11 president. This is the second straight year that a Lanier criminal justice student has had the honor of being on the State Delegation Team.



College advocate colleagues

Maverick ES principal Linda Nance accepts a plaque as a valued partner in education from Vernell Walker (left), San Antonio College dean of professional and technical education, and Helen Torres, SAC's director of partnerships and extended services. They were at Maverick to donate more than 400 books. While there, Torres and Walker also read to kindergartners and 1st-graders and promoted college by providing information about their school.

Coming to theaters near you!

Be sure to catch our new District video capturing the essence of SAISD. See it on the big screen starting tomorrow, while other upcoming showings will be coming soon.

- City Base Cinema - April 25 thru June 5
- Alamo Quarry 16, May 2-29
- AMC Rivercenter 9, May 2-29
- Cinemark McCreless Market, May 2-29

Additional showings will run in select theaters this summer. See the video's extended version at:

www.saisd.net.



All SAISD schools and most offices will be closed Friday, April 25, in celebration of the **Battle of Flowers Parade**.
Have a safe and happy holiday!



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