

# YOUR SCHOOLS

Volume V, No. 2

Inside the Galena Park Independent School District

Fall 2002

## Hispanic leaders encourage teens to stay in school

Luis Hernandez, a sophomore at North Shore High School, is planning to be an architect, but he knows that dream will not come true without a good education.

"These days Hispanic teenagers face so many challenges so it is good to hear from our Hispanic leaders about the importance of staying in school," Hernandez said.

Hernandez and nearly 100 of his classmates participated in a career day sponsored by the North Shore High School LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) Youth Organization. Four Hispanic leaders, including Jo Ann Delgado, Harris County justice of the peace; Marcello Marini, director of programming and community service, KTMD-TV; Elena Cantu, Rancho del Viejo, owner; and Maricela Serna, Galena Park Multi-Services, talked to students about the importance of graduating from high school, pursuing a college education and serving the community.

"Learning is a life long process," Delgado told the students. "Being a strong leader, being fluent in Spanish and English, making school a priority, getting a high school diploma and pursuing higher education will give you more opportunities in the future."

"Education must come first for these kids," Marini said. "It will help them cope with the challenges they will face later in life."

Sophomore Aidee Garza agreed and said she is pleased to see Hispanic leaders inspiring young people. "Sometimes a student just needs a little push or encouraging word to feel they can achieve their goals. Without inspiration a teenager might not realize their potential."

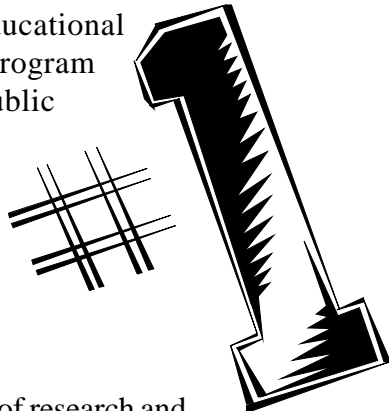
After the career day discussions, Garza, Hernandez and the other LULAC Youth Organization members took away an important message that will help them achieve their goals – a successful future requires a good education.



**HISPANIC LEADERS STRESS EDUCATION.** During a career day program, Hispanic leaders talked to students at North Shore High School about the importance of graduating from high school, pursuing a college education and volunteering in the community. From left, Marcello Marini, director of programming and community service, KTMD-TV; Aideo Garza, sophomore; Luis Hernandez, sophomore; Jo Ann Delgado, Harris County justice of the peace; Maricela Serna, Galena Park Multi-Services; and Elena Cantu, Rancho del Viejo Mexican Restaurant, owner.

## GPISD ranks at top in educating minorities

According to a study by Texas Educational Excellence Project (TEEP) - a joint program among the George Bush School of Public Service and the Department of Political Science at Texas A&M University, Pan American University and Oakland University, Galena Park ISD ranked number one in educating African American students among large districts of 15,000 students or more.



Dr. Dee Mattox-Hall, GPISD director of research and evaluation, said this data is an extension of the district's exemplary status. "The research puts us ahead of every other district in the state when it comes to educating African American students," Mattox-Hall said. "Everyone in this community should be proud of that accomplishment."

A second study by TEEP also indicated that Galena Park ISD ranked number three when it comes to educating Latino students in large districts.

Galena Park ISD educates nearly 20,000 students. Approximately 60 percent are Hispanic, 21 percent are African American, 13 percent are Anglo and roughly 1.5 percent are Asian and Native American.

"This data is a strong indication that Galena Park ISD is in the business of educating all kids," Mattox-Hall said. "We will continue to serve our students by providing a quality education for all of those in our classrooms."

## GPISD breaks ground on new school



Situated on a 29-acre site, a new 110,000 square foot elementary school is being constructed on Normandy Crossing just west of the GPISD transportation center. The new campus will relieve overcrowding at Cloverleaf, Cimarron, Green Valley and North Shore Elementary Schools. This \$13 million, two-story design features classroom wings that connect to a centrally located library and media center. This school will serve 850 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The design also includes a multipurpose area, stage, cafeteria and food service area, computer and science labs, storage and meeting rooms. The new school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2003. The photo is a proposed elevation for the school.

*On behalf of the GPISD Education Foundation,  
thank for your continued support.*



**FOUNDATION DONATION DRIVE UNDER WAY.** The Galena Park ISD Education Foundation recently held a luncheon to kick-off their annual donation drive. The drive will continue through January 15, 2003. Already, the Foundation has received lead gifts of over \$54,000. Pictured Dr. Gerald Cobb, Foundation past-president; Adrian Sloan, Foundation board member; and Dr. Shirley Neeley, Foundation board secretary, accept a lead gift of \$8,000 from ExxonMobil Chemical Company representatives Twila Argent, Rachel Muniz and Barbara Sidney-Brown. The Foundation has set a goal of \$100,000 to be raised during the drive. The GPISD Education Foundation has awarded grants and scholarships totaling over \$221,300 since 1998. For more information about donating, please call Lois Killough, director, at 832-386-1279.

**We want to hear from you!**

Let's us know what you think of this publication and others by contacting us any of the following ways:

**E-mail:**

cethridge@galenaparkisd.com

**Phone:**

832-386-1224

**Write:**

Galena Park ISD Department of School/Community Relations  
Attn: Publication Feedback  
14705 Woodforest Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77015

We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions.

### A Message from the Superintendent

By now you have probably heard the good news and seen a few of our banners celebrating a great accomplishment for our school district and community: ***GPISD is the largest EXEMPLARY School District in Texas!*** This is remarkable when you consider that Texas has 1,040 school districts. In simple terms, the Exemplary District rating for GPISD means that 90% of ALL our students passed all sections of the TAAS test last year. Our ultimate goal is for 100% of all students to pass the new TAKS test that will be administered for the first time this year.

Many school districts from around the state are calling us and asking this question: "What is your secret to such high student achievement?" My first answer is a rather simple answer, but it is the truth. There are no secrets; our scores are the results of teamwork, **HARD WORK**, setting high expectations, developing a comprehensive plan of action and doing whatever it takes for all children to be successful. The teachers, principals and students in GPISD deserve the real kudos! They have always believed that our children could do it, and they did!

Despite the successes we see everyday in GPISD, the debate continues across the state and country about how to improve public school systems. We see statistics and rankings that suggest children in the United States of America are "behind" compared to their counterparts in other countries. While this debate is raging, there are 2,500 dedicated employees in GPISD going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure safety and a quality education for the 20,000 children we serve. They are dedicated to making every child in GPISD feel special, valued and successful. We want our children to believe in themselves and know that regardless of how the critics rate student achievement in the United States, our children are special and they have something unique and productive to offer to our world.

The book *You Are Special*, by Max Lucado, illustrates this point so well. Every day the small wooden people called Wemmicks do the same thing: stick either gold stars or gray dots on one another. The pretty ones – those with smooth wood and fine paint – always get stars. The talented ones do, too. Others, though, who are thought to do little or who have chipped paint, get ugly gray dots – those like Punchinello. Eli, the wood-carver, teaches Punchinello that only he can decide what "sticks" to him – that he IS special. The world may be full of Wemmicks, giving the accolades and advantages to the pretty and talented ones; labeling our children and setting limitations. GPISD employees are like Eli the wood-carver, helping ALL our children understand how special they are no matter what the world may think.

Thank you for supporting GPISD! I invite you to share in our celebration of receiving the Texas Education Agency's highest academic rating: Exemplary. I hope you take pride in living in GPISD and being a partner in our success. Best wishes to you and your families for a Blessed Holiday Season!

*Shirley J. Neeley*

### Be a Special Santa

The spirit of the season can often be lost among holiday parties, gift buying and hurried travel. If you desire to renew the Christmas spirit within yourself or to teach your children about charitable giving, there are many families with children attending GPISD schools who are in need of assistance this holiday season. If you would like to provide gifts, food or money to help make Christmas brighter for any of these families, please contact the Department of Health Services and Intervention at any of the following numbers: 832-386-1070; 832-386-1076; or 713-455-4911





# NEWSSTAND



## NSSH receives national recognition for advanced placement program

North Shore Senior High School has been honored with the 2002 Siemens Awards for Advanced Placement in recognition of exemplary performance in advancing Advanced Placement Programs (AP) in math and science in the Southwest region.

“It is a privilege to receive this honor,” expressed Ken Wallace, principal, NSSH. “Everyone, including our students and teachers, has worked hard to enrich our AP programs.”

NSSH is one of 12 high schools nationwide that received a \$1,000 award and plaque. The school was also honored at a dinner ceremony in Georgia.

“Our AP courses are challenging,” Wallace said. “This recognition is an indication that our students are competitive with other students across the country.”

The Siemens Foundation is a New Jersey-based non-profit corporation that sponsored this award. Every year, 12 high schools are honored nationwide. Schools are selected in recognition for their commitment to students and the AP Program in biology, calculus, chemistry, computer science, environmental science, physics and statistics.

## GPISD touts National Merit semifinalist

Alisha Jiwani, senior, North Shore Senior High, is a semifinalist in the 48<sup>th</sup> National Merit Scholarship Program. As a semifinalist, Jiwani has an opportunity to continue in a competition for \$8,000 in Merit Scholarship awards. Jiwani holds several regional and national titles and is involved in the Math and Science Club and Model United Nations. She is also the editor of her high school newspaper. Jiwani plans to attend a four-year university and study the physical sciences.



**CULINARY COOKING AT THE HYATT.** Twenty-three students at Galena Park and North Shore Senior High Schools received a hands-on culinary arts experience at the Hyatt Regency. This two-year program offers a unique opportunity for juniors and seniors to develop an understanding of the hospitality industry and to develop a broad set of skills that will make them quality employees. The students spend nine weeks working with a variety of foods including pastries, salads, vegetables, fruits, and banquet meals. Myrna Martinez, senior, and Regina Ruiz, Hyatt pastry chef, prepared cookies for a recent luncheon.

## New and improved [www.galenaparkisd.com](http://www.galenaparkisd.com)

The information highway runs right through GPISD now that the district’s webpage has a new look and is more user-friendly. On the webpage you’ll find press release archives, electronic newsletters, links to each campus, athletic information, HRS job postings and online applications, administration contact information, bond information, Board Updates and much more. Send any suggestions for ways to improve the site to [webmaster@galenaparkisd.com](mailto:webmaster@galenaparkisd.com).



## GPISD student advisory board meets administrators

Eighteen students from three high schools make up the Galena Park ISD student advisory board. Chaired by Dr. Shirley Neeley, superintendent of schools, the advisory board was established seven years ago to allow students an opportunity to voice concerns about issues taking place on campus.

“I’m here to listen to our high school students,” Neeley said. “They need to know they have a say in their education.”

Each student is selected by their principal and is considered to be a leader among their peers. A variety of topics are open for discussion including dress code, security and scheduling.

Alisha Jiwani, senior, North Shore Senior High School, is serving a second term and says this is an opportunity to make suggestions. “This

is an excellent chance to talk about concerns that students talk about at school. It’s good to know our administrators are willing to listen to us.”

Robert Flores, sophomore, North Shore High, takes his commitment seriously. “I’m representing our entire student body. That means every student at my school has a voice.”

The student advisory board will meet with Neeley on four occasions through out the school year. Until their next meeting, these students will be taking notes and listening to their classmates for ideas and suggestions that could improve their schools.

“It feels good to know that we are being heard,” Albert Seydler, sophomore, Galena Park High, said. “As students, our opinions really do count.”



**GPMS DECORATES FOR RED RIBBON WEEK.** Eighth grader Michelle Pena finished details on a Red Ribbon Week poster display at Galena Park Middle School. Designed as a nationwide campaign, Red Ribbon Week encourages a healthy, drug-free and violence-free lifestyle among youth. Between October 23-28 banners, posters, essays and poems with anti-drug messages lined the halls at GPMS and various schools in GPISD.



**GPISD STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD.** First row from left, Cynthia Jones, senior, GPHS; Deanna Buck, junior, GPHS; Amicha Williams, freshman, NSHS; Jessica Limon, freshman, GPHS; Catherine Hernandez, sophomore, GPHS; and Corinna Tristan, senior, GPHS. Second row, Alisha Jiwani, senior, NSSH; Trey Roark, freshman, NSHS; Walter Sosa, junior, GPHS; Kayleigh Eaves, junior, NSSH; Amanda Bice, senior, NSSH; Elizabeth Harris, junior, NSSH; Paul Foster, senior, NSSH; and Dr. Shirley Neeley. Third row, Jessica Guzman, sophomore, NSHS; Robert Flores, sophomore, NSHS; Coleman Philley, senior, GPHS; and Albert Seydler, sophomore, GPHS. not pictured: Lattifia Randle, freshman, GPHS



**AWESOME ATHLETIC COMPLEX DEDICATION.** From left, David Aymond, head football coach, North Shore Senior High; Mandy Malone, head swim coach, North Shore Senior High; Ed Warken, athletic director; and Mike Coker, head football coach, Galena Park High, took part in a dedication ceremony at the Galena Park ISD District Athletic Complex. Nearly 200 people attended and took a tour of the new stadium and natatorium. The \$21 million district athletic complex was funded under the 1999 bond program and will be used by GPISD students as well as regional, district and state competitions for a variety of teams and organizations.



**FUTURE FARMERS DEDICATE NEW AG FACILITY.** John Cooper, city administrator, City of Galena Park, opened the arena gate for a parade of animals at the GPISD Agriculture Science Facility dedication. This new \$3.5 million agriculture facility is located on Holland Avenue in Galena Park. The design features a 10,000 square foot arena, an exhibit hall, an exercise pen, 70 stalls, an animal grooming area, welding shop, two classrooms, two office areas, storage space and a concessions area. A pasture, chicken coop and green house are also located on the property.

**STANDING TALL.** During the GPISD Veteran's Day ceremony, senior Brian Ellis, JROTC, NSSH, proudly carried a flag honoring all prisoners of war and those who were missing in action. The ceremony featured a parade of national flags, patriotic readings, special recognition of attending veterans, a special flag presentation and a 21-gun salute.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO GPHS BAND AND COLOR GUARD.** From left, senior Monica Cantu, band president; junior Antonio Flores, junior drum major; and junior Jeanette Guadron, junior drum major, celebrated a first division rating at a UIL region 19 marching band competition. The band performed to music from the opera *Carmen*. The performance was a contemporary drill with more emphasis on the drums and bugles. This is the first time since the late 1980s that the band received a first division rating from all three judges.

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*Your Schools* is published periodically by the Galena Park Independent School District under the direction of the superintendent for the purpose of informing the citizens about district events, programs and accomplishments.

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