



Spotlight on our STARS

STARS—Seniors who Take A Role—volunteers make a world of difference in the lives of SBISD children.

Delivering books

Since 1998, a dedicated group of retired Spring Branch teachers has quietly raised thousands of dollars and distributed about 1,000 books a year to SBISD students for personal reading and pleasure.

Northwest Harris County Retired Teacher Association members gave away free children's books recently at Edgewood Elementary School, one of three campuses chosen for the distribution program this year.

"We want all children to love to read, and we know that this is the only way that some children in Spring Branch will get a new book to take home," says Bernice Autrey, second vice president of the retired teacher association. She taught for 41 years, including 35 years in SBISD.

During Edgewood Elementary's book distribution, third-graders chose their own Scholastic books to call their own. Selections ranged from historical fiction to timeless chapter books, from "Harriet Tubman" to "Hank the Cow Dog."

Joan Hudson, who tutors weekly with a committed group of retirees at Edgewood Elementary, says that free books such as these really do mean a lot to these students.

"The children never forget. They ask all of us when we come back each week, 'Do you have more books today?'" Joan says. "We do this to promote reading, so that all our children are good English readers."

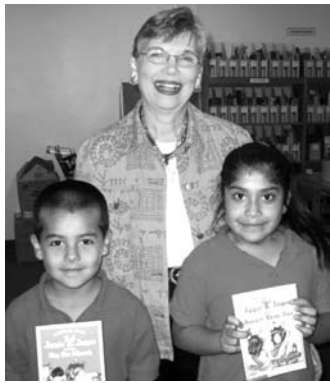
The retired teacher association donated more than 1,000 Scholastic books to students at Edgewood, Terrace and Pine Shadows elementaries this year. The paperbacks cost the group about \$1 each.

"We worry about students who don't have their own books," says Sharon Koehn, a former eighth-grade science teacher, who volunteered for the Edgewood Elementary book distribution. "If children can't read, they won't be successful in school or life."

"And if a child is not reading on grade level, you can't teach them technical subjects like science," she says.

To help put more personal books in the hands of Spring Branch students, please call Northwest Harris County Retired Teacher Association second vice president Kathy Hopson at 281-550-7805 or email her at dkhopson@sbcglobal.net.

Senior volunteers are also needed for tutoring or other campus assignments in SBISD. For details, please contact SBISD's Partnerships and Volunteer Programs at 713-464-1511, ext. 2286.



Volunteer Bernice Autrey and students Jonathan Nava and Catalina Moreno.

Bus Stop: 50 years in driver's seat

Fifty years ago, William "Alex" Alexander walked into a Spring Branch school office and asked about driving a bus.

He picked up a set of keys, took a bus out for a trial spin, then drove his first Hunters Creek Elementary School route later the same day.

In May, some five decades later, Alex will drive his last afternoon route on Bus No. 1 with Pine Shadows Elementary students. At 79, this dedicated, dependable man will step down at last from the bus driver's seat.

In addition to his weekday afternoon routes, Alex delivered the U.S. mail for 25 years, and raised three children with his wife, Dorsey Mae. She also drove a school bus and worked in SBISD for 30 years before retiring. Alex even operated a Conoco service station on Long Point years ago where he – of course – also serviced and washed school buses.

Alex and Dorsey Mae, in fact, were named SBISD's first-ever Employees of the Month; Alex received the district honor again earlier this year. Hundreds of guests attended a surprise retirement party for him in March.

"I've enjoyed all my years as an employee of Spring Branch. I'd like to thank everybody. We're like family, and I know that I'll miss my children," Alex says.

As a child, he attended a one-room schoolhouse in Foster, near Rosenberg, and sometimes rode a horse to class. He served in the Navy during World War II.

Married in 1952, Alex and Dorsey Mae moved to Spring Branch four years later after Alex was laid off by the Southern Pacific Railroad. His bus driving began as the young couple began to prepare for the birth of a third child.

Back then, Interstate 10 was a four-lane highway with a grassy median. Road construction and congestion are the greatest changes he's seen. "We



Spring Branch ISD bus driver William "Alex" Alexander will retire in May after 50 years of service. The 79-year-old's first route was Hunters Creek Elementary.

had maybe a quarter of the traffic that we have today," he estimates. Bus rules have changed, too: Years ago, he carried more than 100 students on some routes.

"He's been an ideal school bus driver and a role model for others," SBISD Director of Transportation

Henry Behne says. His driving skills will keep him busy, even in retirement. At Holy Cross Lutheran Church, he drives members who are shut-ins to weekly services.

He drove children with disabilities to a Texas Lions summer camp in Kerrville for many years. He picks up supplies for diabetic children from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He also helps send many of these children to summer camp.

"I have a full life," Alex says. "I've liked everything that I've done. I've

never viewed it as good days or bad days." "I've never known him to wake up in the morning not happy," says his spouse of 54 years, Dorsey Mae.

His Pine Shadows Elementary students will miss him. "Mr. Alexander makes sure that students do not do things that are dangerous like standing up on the bus. He really cares about safety," says fifth-grader Guillermo Campos.



Alex and Dorsey Mae Alexander

SBISD student crowned Spelling Bee champ

A Spring Branch Middle School eighth-grade student was named one of 54 district and county area winners during the Houston Chronicle Spelling Bee, held earlier this spring at the downtown Chase Center Auditorium.

Hyun Woo "Samuel" Lee, who moved to Spring Branch from Seoul, South Korea in the fifth grade and learned to speak English and spell the language only three years ago, was named the school district's



Hyun Woo "Samuel" Lee

best speller.

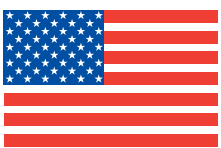
During the first two rounds of the Spelling Bee, held March 22, Samuel was able to spell *prerequisite* and *agonal* correctly, but then was eliminated in the third round over the word *obsequy*, which means a funeral or burial rite. *Agonal* is related to agony.

Samuel attended Hunters Creek Elementary in the fifth grade, the same year that he learned to speak and spell fluently in English.

"I don't know exactly where I acquired the ability to spell. In Korea, I barely spoke English and only knew the ABC's, basically," the smart student says.

To prepare for the Spelling Bee, Samuel studied the contest booklet and worked with a spelling coach. He will attend either Memorial or Stratford high schools. A younger sister, Jenny, attends Wilchester Elementary. His parents are Dr. and Mrs. Jongin Lee.

STARNews is produced by the Communications Department of Spring Branch ISD. Its purpose is to keep retired residents informed about the school district they helped build.



COMING ATTRACTIONS

April

20-22	As Bees in Honey Drown	Stratford HS Playhouse	7:30 pm
27	Comedy Sportz Match	Spring Woods HS	7 pm
28-29	Into the Woods	Westchester Academy	7 pm
29	Run for the Arts 5K Walk/Run	Memorial City Mall	8 am

May

4	Service Award Recognition	Northbrook HS	4:30 pm
4-6	As Bees in Honey Drown	Stratford HS Playhouse	7:30 pm
5-6	Into the Woods	Westchester Academy	7 pm
6	Into the Woods	Westchester Academy	1:30 pm
6	As Bees in Honey Drown	Stratford HS Playhouse	2:30 pm
9	Spring Orchestra Concert	Spring Woods HS	7 pm
9	Spring Band Concert	Northbrook HS	7 pm
11	Early Childhood Parent Event	Wilchester Elementary	5:30 pm
15	Orchestra Concert/Banquet	Memorial HS	7 pm
24	Graduation	Westchester Academy	7:30 pm
25	Graduation	School of Choice	10:15 am
27	Graduation	Stratford HS	10 am
27	Graduation	Northbrook HS	1 pm
27	Graduation	Memorial HS	4 pm
27	Graduation	Spring Woods HS	7 pm

August

16	First Day of Classes	All campuses	All Day
17	Summer Graduation	Northbrook HS	TBA

Note: Special reservation and pricing policies may apply for some events or those with special options. Check ahead to obtain STARCard discounts for events listed above.

Volunteer Update



Ormonde Smith

Dictionary Project volunteer Ormonde Smith, whose work has been featured in several issues of the STARNews newsletter, will be recognized May 9 during the Mayor's Volunteer Houston Awards program for his efforts to buy a personal dictionary for every SBISD third-grader.

Ormonde, who is now 91 years old, volunteered for many years with his wife, Margaret, in the H.U.G. tutoring program at Housman Elementary School. The couple then began raising donations to hand out personal dictionaries through the national Dictionary Project program.

Last year, Ormonde earned a private grant and enough contributions to purchase a personal dictionary for every third-grade student in the district.

Out of more than 100 nominations, Ormonde joins only 13 people chosen to receive a Mayor's Volunteer Houston Award.

Be A STAR

Spring Branch ISD seeks volunteers for assignments ranging from one-on-one tutoring to office support. Mature volunteers are eligible to attend free beginner personal computer classes with instruction in basic Internet, e-mail and word processing. To volunteer, please contact 713-464-1511, ext. 2286.

SBISD reading scores exceed Texas average

Spring Branch students testing in English and Spanish at the third- and fifth-grade level performed better than the state level, according to results from the first administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading tests at both grade levels.

In grade three, 90 percent of students testing in English met standards compared with 89 percent statewide. For those testing in Spanish at grade three, 80 percent met standards compared to 76 percent in the state.

In addition, 51 percent of Spring Branch students reached the much higher level of student achievement known as Commended, versus 43 percent at the state level. SBISD third-grade students testing in Spanish mirrored the state's Commended level of 16 percent.

In fifth grade, the passing rate for SBISD students testing in English was 86 percent compared with 80 percent at the state level.

In fifth-grade Spanish testing, 77 percent of Spring Branch students met standards compared with just 65 percent at the state level.

SBISD's fifth-grade Commended level of higher achievement in English was 30 percent compared to 22 percent statewide; the Commended level for Spring Branch students testing in Spanish was 21 percent

2006 TAKS Reading Results		
Grade/Language	SBISD	State
3rd English	90	89
3rd Spanish	80	76
3rd Grade Total	87	NA
5th English	86	80
5th Spanish	77	65
5th Grade Total	84	NA

NA - Not reported by state

versus 19 percent across the state. When compared to 2005 SBISD results:

- Passing rates of students testing in English were the same or higher
- Passing rates of students testing in Spanish improved in both grades
- Commended rates of students testing in English were the same or higher
- Commended rates of fifth-grade students testing in Spanish more than doubled

More TAKS results in other subjects and grades will be released by the Texas Education Agency in May.

Spring Branch ISD
STARCard
 SENIORS TAKE A ROLE

Blue Willow Books

STARCards are distributed free of charge to citizens, 65 or older, who reside in SBISD. It's our way of saying thanks for all you've done, and continue to do, to support our district. Benefits include:

- ★ 20% discounts on SBISD continuing education classes
- ★ Free admission to SBISD regular season "home game" athletic events (playoffs not included)
- ★ Free admission to student performances (some seats are limited and advance ticket pick-up may be required)

★ 10% off on Wednesdays (14532 Memorial Dr.)

To receive your free STARCard and earn these discounts, please contact the Communications Department at 713-464-1511, ext. 2272.