



Spotlight on our STARS

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

A Touch of Hope

If it takes a village to raise a child, then the local elders at Thornwood Elementary are Charles “Bruce” Koons, his wife Margaret, and about 20 members of nearby Christ Memorial Lutheran Church.

The Lutheran churchgoers volunteer through a national mentoring program called Kids Hope USA, which matches one adult volunteer with one child for one hour every week.

Bruce Koons’ leadership as the church’s director of outreach helped earn him a Volunteer of the Month award several years ago. Faith-based programs like these match up perfectly with SBISD’s growing push into adult mentoring, now more than 500 volunteers strong.

“The children really enjoy it. Their faces light up when they see us,” Bruce says. “We are there to simply be a friend, to play games, to develop a relationship with a child in need. We have a lot of students in Spring Branch who are in need.”



Bruce and Margaret Koons mentor students Alexander Madrid and Corbin Ruiz.

The Koons are 42-year residents of Spring Branch. Bruce, an Oklahoma native who holds a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Minnesota, is a retired ExxonMobil research scientist. A Navy veteran, he served in the Korean War.

Among his 30-year career highlights, he studied the Exxon Valdez oil spill and its impact on Alaskan waters. He authored a National Academy of Science report on the topic.

The couple raised three boys who graduated from Westchester High School. Over the years, their sons have earned seven undergraduate and graduate degrees, and now work as a college professor, computer scientist and engineer.

At Thornwood Elementary, Bruce and Margaret mentor third-graders Alexander Madrid and Corbin Ruiz weekly.

“I’ve been with Alex two years. His writing has improved, and he’s fun to be with,” Margaret says. “We raised three boys. We hope that our friendships will encourage these boys to be all they can be.”

To learn much more about mentoring and volunteer programs in SBISD schools, please call Partnerships and Volunteers at 713-464-1511, ext. 2286.

More news about SBISD on back page



Stratford High School Choir members performed recently on the battleship U.S.S. Missouri in Hawaii's Pearl Harbor. Stratford High Choir Director Peter Steinmetz led 24 teenagers in March on the historic trip.

Singing a song for America

History lessons don't get much better than Pearl Harbor. This spring, 24 members of the Stratford High School Choir stood on the Surrender Deck aboard the World War II battleship U.S.S. Missouri. They presented a patriotic choral program there.

On the morning of Sept. 2, 1945, American and British sailors stood on this same spot and watched as Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allies, co-signed the final war-stopping documents.

The unconditional surrender by the Japanese on the U.S.S. Missouri ended the Second World War officially.

The choral program took on special meaning for many of the Spring Branch teenagers because it followed their visit to the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial.

The famous war-making moment when the Arizona was attacked on Dec. 7, 1941, became more than book facts when they stood at the site.

"It was truly moving for us, and the survivors that we met there made me especially proud to be an American," junior Ally Lundell, a Stratford High Choir member, said.

The Spring Branch singers were popular. At Pearl

Harbor, a group of veterans requested music and three performed "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," followed up by "The Star-Spangled Banner."

On the U.S.S. Missouri, the choral program included the Tahitian-influenced "Tiare," the U.S. national anthem, "I Sing a Song for America," a memorable "Flanders Fields," and the Latin choral work, "Non Nobis."

A Spring Break trip is taken each year, and is open to all 140 members of the combined boys and girls choirs. Choir Director Peter Steinmetz was personally touched by the trip: His father served at Pearl Harbor as a Marine after the famous attack.

"I was moved by the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, especially by seeing the oil coming up from the bottom. Pearl Harbor has not been all tinselled up. It is what it is - the remains of a sunken ship," he says.

He has directed the Stratford High Choir for 12 years.

The local students toured other Hawaiian sites and even performed impromptu on open-air street trolleys in Honolulu and Waikiki. The student choir won a Tommy Tune award recently for its musical work in high school theater.

Golden Apple winners SBISD names 2007 Teachers of the Year

A 30-year social studies teacher, who coordinates Northbrook High School's highly praised Childress Academy Foundation, and an art teacher at Hunters Creek Elementary with a global resume are the district's 2006-07 Teachers of the Year.

The Childress Academy is a campus-based program that combines student academics and community service.

Donald Miller of Northbrook High was named SBISD Secondary Teacher of the Year and Samantha Melvin of Hunters Creek Elementary earned SBISD Elementary Teacher of the Year honors May 2 during the district's annual Service Awards Reception at Northbrook High.

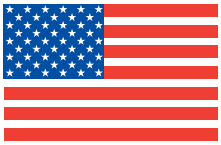
Superintendent of Schools Duncan Klussmann announced the winners from among six finalists. They will represent SBISD in regional competition. In all, 44 educators were nominated.



Secondary Teacher of the Year Donald Miller of Northbrook High School and Elementary Teacher of the Year Samantha Melvin of Hunters Creek Elementary School.

The annual fall STAR Senior Prom, an evening of fun, food and dancing, will be held in early November. Call the Communications Department at 713-464-1511, ext. 2272, for more details.

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.



Flight XXV: Your passport to college

Leadership Houston supports Landrum Middle School

Seventh-grader Ana Tavera and her mother, Maria, spent a recent sunny Saturday afternoon sitting on a gym bleacher at Landrum Middle School. Like springtime gardeners, they were planting seeds indoors for Ana's future.

Ana joined 28 other Landrum Middle students and their families April 28 to "graduate" from a novel college-readiness program sponsored by Leadership Houston, an independent nonprofit group.

Landrum Middle students who completed the three-session weekend program, "Flight XXV: Your Passport to College," became eligible to earn scholarships of \$700 or more from the group.

Leadership Houston's sessions helped the teenagers and their families learn how to plan and prepare for life after high school. Only three of the students had visited a college campus before they toured the University of Houston as part of the program earlier this year.

Like Ana, many Landrum Middle students will be the first in their families to attend college. Ana Tavera is eager to be one of Leadership Houston's success stories.

She has put down academic roots at Landrum Middle, which has earned a Recognized rating from the Texas Education Agency for two years now.

Her math teacher, Darby Hickman, has



Leadership Houston held a college-readiness program for Landrum Middle School students and "graduated" 29 students this spring. Pictured here from left, SBISD's Board of Trustees Member Mary Grace Landrum, Maria Tavera and her daughter Ana, and Sheryl Johnson-Todd. Sheryl attended Landrum Middle when it opened 50 years ago.

encouraged her, and her grades have improved. "This fall, I will be PreAP (Advanced Placement). Mr. Hickman says that I might really be a math teacher one day," the seventh-grader says. This is her dream and her mother's hope.

"I want her to do something with her life, not just grow up and work at McDonald's," says her mother, Maria, a quiet-spoken woman,

SBISD Board of Trustees Member

Mary Grace Landrum, active in Leadership Houston, helped organize this college-readiness program. "Flight XXV: Your Passport to College" takes its name from Leadership Houston's 25th anniversary and its effort to empower students to "soar" to new heights.

The need to increase the level of college attendance among Houston students, especially minority learners, is key to the city's ongoing growth and

development, demographers report.

In 2000, more than half of all adult Hispanics in Texas had less than a high school education. The jobs of the future, experts say, will require more education.

"Spring Branch ISD has a goal of being the premier college-focused district in Texas," Mary Grace Landrum says. "This program gave us an opportunity to create a model that we could take to other SBISD schools to help reach that goal."

"I was excited about the model because it addressed all the elements of success: helping students envision college success; encouraging support from the family; and providing financial assistance."

Leadership Houston members will mentor 24 students who have requested help during high school, she adds.

Memorial-area resident Sheryl Johnson-Todd, among the first seventh-graders to attend Landrum Middle five decades ago, calls the program insightful. "Leadership Houston chose this school because it really does reflect the demographics of Spring Branch and Houston," Sheryl says.

Leadership Houston President Elaine White says that families are included in activities for a reason. "We are all concerned with education and want to do what we can to help people who feel that they may not have an opportunity to get higher education," she says.

Golden Dome wins Red Apple



Northbrook Middle School Principal Laura Schuhmann, Spring Branch Education Association's Edie Clark and Notre Dame Alumni Club's Wynn Norris pose with the Red Apple award. Norris and members of the Golden Dome Club mentored about 30 Northbrook Middle students.

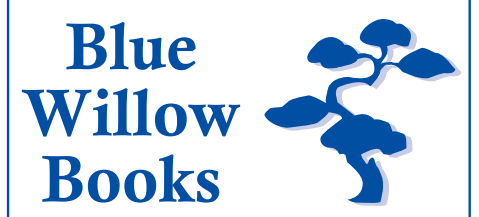
The Spring Branch Education Association awarded its Red Apple Award to the Golden Dome Mentors of the Notre Dame Alumni Club of Houston, a group of adults who mentor seventh- and eighth-graders at Northbrook Middle School. This annual award to a non-educator or group was announced during the district's Service Awards, held in May at Northbrook High School.

The Golden Dome Mentors work with about 30 Northbrook Middle students. To become a mentor, call Community Relations at 713-464-1511, ext. 2286.



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.