

The School Zone

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The newsletter of the North Forest Independent School District

February 2010

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Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson reads a book titled "100 Days of School" to students during a recent Read with the Supe visit.

100 Days of School

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NFISD Black History program set for Feb. 25

North Forest ISD will hold its district-wide Black History Program at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 25 at the Forest Brook Middle School Auditorium. The theme of the program is "Coming to America."

The event will feature performances by North Forest ISD students and is being organized by the NFISD Fine Arts Department.

"Our students are practicing hard and are really

excited to share their talents and what they are learning about the contributions of African-Americans to our great nation," says Fine Arts Program Coordinator Toni Dunn.

Tickets are \$3 and will only be sold at the door. The entire North Forest community is encouraged to come out and support our students.

NFISD hosts Key Communicators Conference

North Forest ISD will hold its annual Key Communicators Conference at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 4, at Thurgood Marshall Early Childhood Center.

There will be presentations from every NFISD division, covering all aspects of the district's operations. Student performances will be featured, and light refreshments will be served.

The entire North Forest community is invited to come out and learn more about the district as well as what it means to be a NFISD key communicator.

Anyone can be a key communicator, from the local pastor, neighborhood leader or the local barber. Key communicators are a network of people who are well-connected to both the schools and the community. These individuals help to promote a continuing two-way exchange between the community and the schools.

Key Communicators will help people learn more about the school district and give school district officials a deeper understanding of what community members think, feel, and know.

Each key communicator will routinely be kept informed of school issues, and through the normal course of the day they are asked to share the information and make the district aware of questions or concerns by sending an email to keycommunicator@nfisd.org.

You can also register for the conference online and enter for a chance to win a \$100 Fiesta Supermarket gift card.

A Message from Dr. Adrain Johnson



Dear NFISD Community:

I take seriously the work that lies before us. We must educate our students while reshaping the community so that it can thrive. Success is our only option; but in order to be successful, we must actively build relationships with organizations and individuals that understand and appreciate the tasks before us.

On Tuesday, Feb. 2, North Forest ISD had the pleasure of hosting the monthly executive board meeting of the Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators, and I was honored to be the special guest speaker for this event. Of course, I shared with them many of the great things that have taken place and continue to happen in North Forest ISD; however, I also took advantage of this opportunity to bring new life to the partnership between the district and HAABSE, which has its roots

right here in North Forest ISD.

Then on Thursday, Feb. 4, NFISD took part in a meeting of local faith-based leaders. Other guests included Houston Community College's northeast campus and the Minority Male Initiatives program. There, we discussed the work that lies before our community and others like it.

We shared some of the plans, programs and initiatives that are underway to address the critical issues we face. More importantly, we asked each other for support and promised to work together. We recognized that there is much work to do and that we cannot do it alone.

As we continue on this important journey, I want to encourage everyone to reach out and join forces. Together we can achieve our goals.

North Forest School Zone is produced by the Education Foundation, Communications and Community Relations Department

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Tax collection up in NFISD

As North Forest ISD continues to strengthen its financial management systems, it has some good news to report. The district has improved its tax collection rate, based on a report from Chief Financial Officer Ron Wilson.

The administration had expressed some past concerns over a relatively low tax collection rate and has been aggressively focusing on raising the rate of collection as well as collecting delinquent taxes as well. North Forest ISD has contracted with a local law firm to handle some of the more difficult delinquent tax cases.

According to the report, which was presented to the NFISD Board of Managers at its January meeting, more than 96 percent of the estimated revenue from 2008-2009 local taxes has been collected.

Meanwhile, the district has also col-

lected about 10.3 percent of the 2009-2010 local tax revenue for the current levy year as of December 2009. So far, that pace is nearly 10 times better than the previous year. Only a little more than 1.5 percent of the 2008-2009 local tax revenue had been collected by the end of December 2008.

"These numbers are certainly promising, and we appear on point to outpace the district's past tax collection rates," Mr. Wilson says.

Roughly 32 percent of the district general fund budget comes from local taxes. It's money NFISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson says is required to ensure North Forest ISD can meet the needs of its students.

"I want to thank North Forest property owners for answering the call; and I urge everyone to pay their property tax bills in a timely fashion," he says. "Our district and our students depend on them doing that."

Campus Teachers of the Year to be honored

North Forest ISD will host its annual Celebration of Excellence Gala Friday, May 28, at the Double Tree Hotel, 15747 JFK Boulevard. The event is held to honor campus teachers of the year, service pin recipients and retirees.

The 2010-2011 NFISD Teacher of the Year will also be named. The theme for the 2010 gala is "Mardi Gras."

Individual tickets to the Celebration of Excellence are \$40 each. Event sponsorships at the Friends of NFISD (\$500), Bronze (\$1,000), Silver (\$2,500), Gold (\$4,000), Platinum (\$5,000) and Star (\$7,000) levels are available now through April 1. Sponsorship of this event helps raise money for the North Forest ISD Scholarship program, which has awarded more than \$27,000 in scholarships to deserving North Forest ISD graduates since 2007.

"The annual Celebration of Excellence Gala is really our premier event," says NFISD Education Foundation Communications and Community Relations Director Nakisha Myles. "Not only do we have the privilege of honoring top teachers and those individuals who have given years of service to the district, but we raise money to help send students to college. It doesn't get any better."

Each NFISD campus must nominate a Teacher of the Year. Nomination forms and application packets are due to Education Foundation, Communications and Community Relations by Feb. 17.

For more information, to become a sponsor or purchase tickets, call 713-491-1035 or go to www.nfisd.org. Information can be found by clicking "News" link on the district's website.

North Forest ISD resumes Parent and Employee of the Month programs with January nominees



NFISD honored Parents and Employees of the Month for January at the NFISD Board of Managers Jan. 19 meeting. Each month, the district will recognize individuals nominated by various departments and campuses.

From the nominees, one employee and one parent volunteer will be named the district-wide Employee of the Month and Parent of the Month, and each will receive a \$100 gift card provided Fiesta Supermarket, an avid sponsor of district programs and events.

January Employee of the Month nominees were: Betty Rasmus (Forest Brook), Angela Howard (B. C. Elmore); Nathaniel Scott (A. G. Hilliard), Cynthia Denton (Fonwood), Maninder Sharma (W. E. Rogers), Alejandra Alvarado (Lakewood), Ashtan Johnson (Thurgood Marshall) and Mamta Verma (Academic Support & Innovation).

The district wide Employee of the Month was Ms. Betty Rasmus. Nominated by Forest Brook Middle School's principal Mrs. Ruby Gilbert, Ms. Rasmus is the chair of the English Language Arts Department and a veteran teacher with more than 30 years experience.



January Parent of the Month nominees were: Maceo Dillard (Forest Brook), Ernestine Jones (A. G. Hilliard), Adrienne Duke (Fonwood), Iesha Hardy (W.E. Rogers), Cynthia Bankston (Lakewood), Blanca Hernandez (Thurgood Marshall).

The district-wide Parent of the Month was Ms. Cynthia Bankston, president of the Lakewood PTA. Nominated by Lakewood Principal Mr. Jerrell Purvis, Ms. Bankston has been a galvanizing force on the Lakewood campus assisting teachers and students and inspiring other parents.

Applications are available for NFISD Scholarship

Application deadline is April 1

North Forest ISD is taking applications for its scholarship program. The application is available online at www.nfisd.org. It can be found in the Parent/Students section by clicking on the "Scholarship Opportunities" link.

The deadline for the NFISD Scholarship application is April 1. All North Forest High School seniors who will attend an accredited college, university or technical school in the Fall of 2010 are encouraged to apply.

Since 2007, NFISD has awarded more than \$27,000 in scholarships to deserving North Forest High School

graduates.

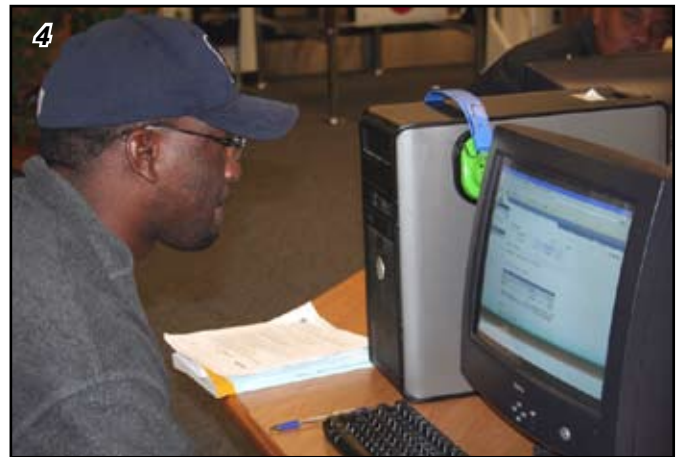
North Forest ISD's Scholarship Opportunities webpage also features other local, state and national scholarships. NFISD parents and students are encouraged to visit this site.

Money for the NFISD scholarship fund is raised by sponsorships of the annual Celebration of Excellence Gala, which will be held on Friday, May 28, at the Doubletree Hotel.

Photo Gallery

A Celebration of Higher Education in North Forest ISD

1: Forest Brook Middle School dancers help celebrate Houston Community College's new presence in North Forest at the Celebration of Higher Education on Jan. 16. 2: NFISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson makes remarks at the celebration. 3: HCC Northeast President Dr. Margaret Ford Fisher delivers a special address to those in attendance. 4: Registration for classes at HCC in North Forest continued after the celebration, with several people going online in the Forest Brook Media Center to secure classes. 5: Shadydale Elementary School's award-winning drum corps caps off the celebration with a rousing performance.



National CSTEM competition gears up

North Forest students set to take part in national competition that integrates communication, science, engineering and math

CSTEM formally announced the kick-off of its annual National CSTEM Challenge on Jan. 23 at Texas Southern University. The National CSTEM Challenge is designed to engage K-12 students through a project that allows them to work collaboratively on problem solving.

The CSTEM Challenge integrates communication, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (CSTEM), with the disciplines of social studies and art surrounding the central theme: Everyone is an Artist and an Engineer.

This event officially kicked off the 2010 National CSTEM Challenge, preparing stu-

dents for the upcoming competition which will take place on Saturday, May 8, at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Over 1,000 students nationally will participate in the opening ceremonies, expert panel, CSTEM kit distribution, and feeder pattern team planning.

Students from North Forest ISD will join others from the Houston area and throughout Harris County, representing the 70 schools competing in the national competition.

The CSTEM feeder pattern model assists schools in developing a pipeline of highly motivated students, prepared for higher

level learning, in related areas by building capacity and sustaining hands-on project-based learning.

The national competition is supported by Shell Oil Company and Schlumberger in addition to State Farm and the Wells Fargo/Wachovia Foundation among others, to provide CSTEM materials and supplies to participating schools. Students set off to solve real world problems in areas of robotics, engineering, and ecology through a project that fuses scientific innovation with environmental stewardship.

CALENDAR

Feb. 20	North Forest High School Science TAKS Camp
Feb. 17	District-wide Spelling Bee @ A.G. Hilliard Elementary School
Feb. 25	District-wide Black History Program @ 6 p.m. @ FBMS
Feb. 27	North Forest High School ELA TAKS Camp
	Saturday Classes @ Forest Brook Middle School
Mar. 1	TAKS Testing
Mar. 2	Key Communicator Conference
Mar. 3-5	TAKS Testing
March 15-19	Spring Break All NFISD offices and campuses closed

Textbook adoption process underway

The NFISD textbook adoption fair, held at all NFISD campuses in January, attracted more than 150 attendees; and teachers will be reviewing and rating books through Feb. 26.

Teachers are using detailed standards to rate the books, and the ratings will be tabulated March 1. The textbook adoption committee will make its recommendations to the NFISD Board of Trustees at the board's March meeting.

The textbook adoption process is extremely vital because the role of instructional materials in classroom learning is significant and has been shown to be an essential tool for teachers in today's classrooms.

Research supports the educational importance of textbooks and instructional materials, not only as the primary access to the knowledge and skills students must master, but also as an indispensable platform for fostering teacher learning and a key component of ongoing professional development.

At NFISD, parents and students were encouraged to take part in the process by attending the textbook adoption fair hosted at each campus.

A. G. Hilliard Elementary will host district-wide spelling bee

NFISD campuses are gearing up for the district-wide spelling bee, which will be held on Feb. 17 at A. G. Hilliard Elementary School.

The winner of the NFISD spelling bee will represent the district in the HoustonPBS Spelling Bee on March 27. Last year Shadydale Elementary School's Imani Tatmun represented NFISD in the HoustonPBS Spelling Bee. Top local winners will go on to the nationally-televised Scripps National Spelling Bee in May in Washington, D.C.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program and is designed to help students improve their spelling, increase vocabulary, learn concepts and develop correct English use that will help them throughout their lives.

100 Days of Learning



Above: Students show off their 100 Days craft projects. Below: Students at Hilliard take part in a contest to determine who could come the closest to blowing 100 bubbles.

North Forest ISD celebrates the first 100 days of school

Across the district, students in NFISD marked the first 100 days of school with an array of fun-filled activities that celebrated learning.

From arts and crafts to reading, writing and math, our students found the best ways to recognize the first 100 days of the school year.

The 100th day of learning in North Forest ISD was Feb. 4. However, celebrations were held throughout the week and culminated in "Read with the Supe" visits on Feb. 5, at Thurgood Marshall Early Childhood Center, A.G. Hilliard Elementary School and Shadydale Elementary School. NFISD Superintendent Dr. Adrain Johnson visited the campuses, taking time to read to students there.



Save the Date
NFISD Employee Appreciation
April 30, 2010

To learn more about how your organization can support this event, call 713-491-1047.

Supplemental Educational Services

**Find out more about free SES
tutoring available to your student
by going to www.nfisd.org
& clicking on the federal
programs link.**

NFISD campuses rally to help Haiti

In the wake of the devastating earthquake in Haiti on Jan. 12, several schools in North Forest ISD stepped up to the plate organizing donation drives and encouraging staff and students alike to give what they could spare.

At Lakewood Elementary, teacher Mr. Michael Lo is coordinating the ongoing effort to raise funds that will be donated to the American Red Cross

At A.G. Hilliard Elementary, the "From Hilliard2Haiti Campaign" set a \$1,000 goal in its effort to raise money for Haiti. Hilliard will also donate the money collected there to the Red Cross.

NFISD's youngest students have joined the campaign as well. Incorporating the 100 Days of School celebration into fundraising efforts,

Thurgood Marshall Early Childhood Center asked students, staff and parents to bring 100 pennies.

Similar efforts are underway throughout NFISD.

North Forest ISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson is proud of all of the coordinated efforts in North Forest ISD to assist earthquake victims.

"By both setting an example and encouraging our students to help others in need, we have a practical opportunity to truly help our young people develop into responsible and caring citizens of the world," Dr. Johnson says.



Junior Reporters

Elmore students make the grade in giving

By Javier Garcia
Eighth Grade
B. C. Elmore Middle School

I am Javier Garcia, the student council second vice-president at B. C. Elmore Middle School. At B. C. Elmore Middle School, community service is as important as academic excellence. All students are encouraged to give back to the community. Community service is what some people call “doing good deeds.” Good deeds are services you do for the community and don’t ask anything in return. Although you serve without pay, you can list your service on your resume when you apply for college.

Community service can include cleaning a park or neighborhood, collecting toys, clothes, shoes, or money for children who really need them. It can also mean helping

a family who needs a house repaired. Community service can also be done at school. It can include cleaning the classes, halls, and helping with programs, food and toy drives.

In December 2009, the B. C. Elmore Student Council organized a Santa Bash/Toy Drive for Christmas. Students paid \$5 to get in but if they brought a toy or gift card, they received a dollar off the original price. We collected almost 300 toys and \$200 dollars in gift cards.

We bagged the toys and gift cards, and delivered them to Ben Taub Hospital to the children who were unable to be with their families on Christmas day.

I learned that giving back to the community is a great way to help. It also made me a better person. I challenge all NFISD students to get outside and help a neighbor in need every chance you can. It will help to build a better community and a better you!

The School Zone’s Junior Reporters program has returned.

Junior Reporters is a special showcase that features stories written by NFISD students about the people, places and things on their campuses, providing a venue for student writing.

NFISD student submission’s will be published in each issue of *The School Zone*.

Lakewood Lions are leading the way

By Tatyana Toliver
Fifth Grade
Lakewood Elementary School

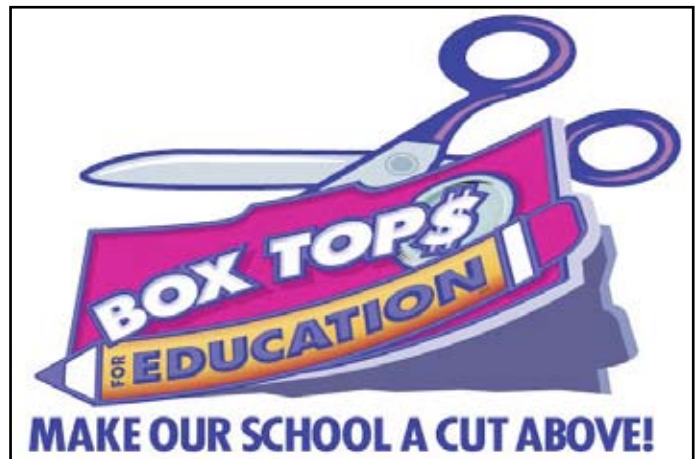
Several items were on our campus agenda for the school year. Thanks to our PTA, we started with a bang. My peers and I thought it was a breeze collecting the box-tops for our school once we found out the purpose for collecting them. It was to buy an electronic marquee for our campus. The competition between classes was fierce. The top class collected almost 300 box-tops. This is one of many projects to make things better here at Lakewood Elementary.

Recycling is another positive thing we do here at Lakewood. Every classroom has a recycling box to use. Instead of throwing away our used paper, we just throw it in the recycling box. Every Wednesday two of our fellow classmates pick up the boxes and put them in the recy-

cling bin.

At Lakewood, we are excited about our new hallway patrol. Two students were selected from each grade level to participate. Each student was provided with an orange cap, vest, and black strap.

Other students are aware that the patrol unit enforces the following rules such as no running or talking and staying on the line while walking to and from their destinations. Of course the patrol students must have good character traits in order to effectively monitor the students as well as themselves.



ALUMNI FOCUS: FOREST BROOK GRAD STRIVES TO ACHIEVE ANOTHER FIRST



Tamika Demming is a proud product of North Forest ISD. She attended Fonwood Elementary and Oak Village Middle School. After graduating from Forest Brook High School with high honors, she attended Texas A&M University and South Texas College of Law. She holds a B.S. in criminal justice and a law degree.

While in law school at South Texas College of Law, she was the first African-American female to become assistant editor-in-chief of the South Texas Legal Journal's Law Review.

She credits her teachers in North Forest ISD with providing her the academic foundation that sustained her through college and law school.

"The preparation I received in North Forest enabled me to make it," she says.

Mrs. Demming's passion for law began when she was 12 years old. It was spurred by tragedy when three of her family members were murdered as a result of domestic violence. Although she was young when the event occurred, she followed the case closely. Today, her work as an attorney predominantly focuses on civil, criminal and family law issues because of that experience, she says.

Mrs. Demming lives with her husband of 12 years, Marcus, and their 13-year-old twins in Harris County. In addition to parenting and juggling her career, she is also very active in the community.

She has even taken part in career day events in North Forest ISD, reaching out to students who now walk the same school hallways she once walked. Demming says she tells today's students to be focused. Her work in law and special interest in family law has given her insight into just how easily youth can lose sight of their goals.

"I tell them to stay focused," she says. "There's a lot out there that can distract them, but I tell them to keep their eyes set on their dreams. I encourage them to find mentors. If they don't have one in their homes, find one at school or church."

She soon hopes to fulfill her aspiration to become the first African-American female elected to family court Harris County in the

March 2 general election.

ALUMNI FOCUS

If you are or know of a North Forest ISD alumnus who deserves to be featured in Alumni Focus, please send an e-mail to anitra.brown@nfsid.org or go to www.nfsid.org to download and complete an alumni focus nomination form.

Special program established for local senior citizens

North Forest ISD Senior **GOLD** Card

This card entitles the holder to:

Special offers and discounts from North Forest ISD

Please present this card at select events in order to receive your offer or discount. All card holders will be notified in advance when this card is valid for use at an event or for a special offer.

The Division of Education Foundation, Communications & Community Relations has implemented a new program for senior citizens in the North Forest Community.

Called the Senior Gold Card program, it is designed to provide mem-

bers of our community ages 55 and older with special offers and discounts from North Forest ISD.

The Senior Gold Card Program will provide you with non-transferable discounts to district events such as fine arts performances or athletic competitions.

Many local seniors will soon begin receiving their cards in the mail, and the first opportunity to use it will be Thursday, Feb. 25, for the NFISD Black History Program, which will take place at 6 p.m. at Forest Brook Middle School.

Tickets to this event are \$3; however, Senior Gold Card holders can purchase their tickets at the door for only \$1.