



**NORTH
FOREST ISD**

SCHOOL ZONE

NFHS goes GREEN

**BP AMERICA
donates
\$1 million**

**Tax collection
rises in NFISD**

**NFISD wins eight
awards at state
conference**

NFHS goes GREEN

The "Up and Atom 4-H Club" and the Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension 4-H program pledged their heads, hearts, hands and health to making a difference at North Forest High School.

The "Up and Atom" garden, planted on the W.G. Smiley Career and Technology campus, is a product of the Health Science Technology program and the Urban Gardening Project managed by Dr. Emily Bartley, 4-H advisor. It is the first vegetable garden planted in the district.

The 4-H club's president JaMarcus Payton and vice-president Esmeralda Garcia lead the ribbon cutting ceremony which was filled with special guests, including Superintendent Dr. Adrain Johnson, a spokesman for Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, representatives from Prairie View A&M Department of Agriculture, and a representative of Texas Southern University.

State Rep. Senfronia Thompson said when she saw the garden she wanted to start picking immediately.

"One of the things we have to do is eat. Nutrition is a part of our diet, health, intellect, and well-being," Rep. Thompson said. "This is not only the beginning of a new lifestyle, but knowledge to educate others. Math and science can be learned inside and outside of the classroom."

In her efforts to educate students on



the importance of nutrition, community improvement, and leadership, Dr. Bartley formed partnerships with the Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program and Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension program. In these programs, students learn how to combat childhood obesity, increase their iron levels, and prevent diabetes. The students are also challenged with real life scenarios that cover major science objectives included on the Science TAKS exam.

"I know it was not easy," Dr. Bartley said to the students, "to go out and dig in the dirt but there are good things that can come from this earth and this Forest. We love the life you bring."

First Lady Michelle Obama is urging schools and communities around the country to start their own vegetable gardens as a part of her "Let's Move" Campaign and North Forest High School has moved.

Mrs. Obama told the New York Times "my hope is that through children, they will begin to educate their families and

that will, in turn, begin to educate our communities."

Dr. Warren Anderson, interim principal of the high school, said he believes the garden symbolizes the idea of supporting students in the community and in school.

"You can't just plant a seed and expect it to grow overnight. We have to nurture it, love it, and watch it grow," he said. "I thank Prairie View A&M and Dr. Bartley, and the students for their hard work."



Dr. Bartley (center) and her students standing in the "Up & Atom" garden with Prairie View A&M staff.

HCM fingerprinting complete; upcoming job fair

North Forest ISD has ended its fingerprinting blitz, which began in January. More than 500 certified employees were fingerprinted in this process, said Executive Director of Human Capital Management (HCM) Glenda Gims.

Any North Forest ISD employee required to complete the fingerprinting process to comply with the Senate Bill 9 (SB 9) has until March 26, 2010, to do so. If a certified teacher, instructional aide or any employee who holds a certificate does not complete this process, their certificates will be marked "inactive" and they will no longer be allowed to work in the capacity requiring certification.

In the meantime, North Forest ISD administrators will review the results of the fingerprinting as they are available. The district is prepared to follow the appropriate actions as stipulated by state law.

If the results of the fingerprint processing reflect any criminal records, those employees' records will be reviewed and the appropriate determination will be made with regard to their ability to retain their certification and/or employment with NFISD.

"SB 9 was passed by the state legislature to ensure that our schools and school districts are safe environments to learn and work," Ms. Gims says. "We will follow the measures prescribed by the state to ensure that our schools and facilities are safe."

As the Division of Human Capital Management wraps up the mandated fingerprinting process, it is also preparing for its annual job fair, which will be

held from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, April 24 in the boardroom of the central administration building.

"We're hoping that we can get our staffing completed early for the 2010-2011 school year," Ms. Gims said, adding that math and science teachers are critical areas in which the district hopes to make new hires. Members of HCM Division also traveled to Monterrey Mexico in early March to recruit bilingual teachers.

In addition to the professional positions, North Forest ISD also has several open support staff jobs, including bus aides, bus drivers, mechanics and foremen. There are also openings in district-wide and campus-level administration. Ms. Gims said the Human Capital Management Division is dedicated to building and maintaining a quality workforce for North Forest ISD.

Tax collection continues to rise in North Forest ISD

North Forest ISD continues to experience an upswing in its property tax collection rate. As of January 2010, more than 50 percent of the tax money the district expects to receive for the 2009 tax year has already been collected.

In recent years, the district has had issues with a relatively low and slow-paced tax collection rate. For the same period exactly one year ago, only 30.4 percent of the estimated taxes had been collected.

Timely payment of property taxes assists North Forest ISD in meeting its operating costs in an efficient manner.

"We just want to thank the residents within North Forest ISD for paying their taxes in a timely manner," says Chief Financial Officer Ronald Wilson.

In North Forest ISD, property taxes account for about one-third of the more than \$51.2 million general fund budget.

Congresswoman Lee presents \$1 million to NFISD from BP North America



Left to right: President of the Board of Managers George McShan, Dr. Johnson, Congresswoman Lee.

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee announced on Monday, Feb. 15, that BP North America, one of the world's largest energy companies, has donated \$1 million to North Forest ISD.

"We're here today for a number of reasons, most important of which are our children," she said. "This is what it's all about."

NFISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson highlighted the district's plans for the donation, which include enhanced instruction in math, science and career & technology education through professional development opportunities, field trips, virtual learning, computer-based training, internships, special lectures and visits by energy industry professionals and much more.

NFISD wins eight awards at state conference

Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA) presented the Department of Communications and Community Relations with eight awards for the districts' publications at the 2010 TSPRA Conference in late February.

The publications that won gold awards are two brochures "Its Where You Want To Be!" and "Tax Referendum", the "2008-2009 North Forest ISD Guide & Back-to-School Handbook", the "Key Communicator" letter and the website "www.nfisid.org." North Forest ISD also took home three silver awards for the newsletter "School Zone", and two posters "Job Fair Human Resources" and "UTTP".

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Adrain Johnson alongside Nakisha Myles, Anitra Brown, and Danielle Saizan also presented "Communicating Triumph in Tough Times" a professional development seminar, on the first day at the conference.

The department received great feedback on the experiences of North Forest ISD and the overall presentation.

Jennifer Bailey from Leander ISD attended the seminar and wrote an email saying:

"I thoroughly enjoyed North Forest ISD's session at TSPRA.

I found it to be innovative and inspirational. Too often we only hear the bad news, but the story of your school district was very uplifting; a great example of ideas that are really working. I found it particularly interesting to hear how your district reaches out to the senior citizens and ministers and how you have something to offer both of those groups -- turkeys or grant application information. What an innovative way to get those groups behind your schools. I will be interested to hear how North Forest progresses over the next few years. I'm glad ya'll are a part of TSPRA. I hope you will have more good news to share next year."

The presentation included an outline of the crisis and instability the district has had in the past, and steps the communications department took to help restore the districts credibility and prestige including developing a strategic plan. The presentation also included other discussion topics such as building a support base and using technology effectively.

TSPRA is a nonprofit professional organization designed to help communications professionals network and share public information, with other districts throughout the state of Texas. This year's TSPRA conference, which has been held for over 45 years, also included over 40 different skill sessions, several roundtable discussions, field trips, and an awards ceremony that culminated the event.

Roofing work to begin at North Forest High School, facilities being assessed district-wide

At its February meeting the North Forest ISD Board of Managers approved a measure allowing the district to execute a contract to begin roof replacement at North Forest High School, including the main facility at 10725 Mesa and the career & technology campus at 10726 Mesa.

The estimated cost of the project is about \$1.49 million. The project is part of the district's ongoing efforts to assess and ultimately renovate district campuses and facilities, Maintenance Director Roy Byerly said.

A 1974 graduate of Lamar University, Mr. Roy Byerly joined NFISD as maintenance director in February. A mechanical engineer, he brings with him 35 years of experience in engineering and project management.

Other facility and maintenance projects underway include fire audibility tests to ensure bell warning and fire safety systems at all schools are working properly. Additional improvements have been made to district sports facilities, in-

cluding the resurfacing of the tennis courts at North Forest High School. New screens and nets will also be added.

During Spring Break, all floors at NFISD schools will be stripped and waxed and reviews and assessments of the HVAC systems at all campuses are ongoing, according to Deputy Superintendent of Educational Operations Travis Weatherspoon, adding that the district's contract with RDI to assess and repair HVAC systems is running smoothly.

Meanwhile, two fire incidents at the high school are still under investigation, Mr. Weatherspoon said.

In one incident, the film room at the high school caught fire. Another incident involved smoke filling a room after a microwave oven overheated. There were no injuries in either case, and damages are estimated to be approximately \$5000 to \$8000, he said.

Alumni Focus



“It’s never too late to start!”

As the Public Relations Director for Houston Community College’s northeast campus, Sheron Bruno spends plenty of time in the North Forest community. It’s a community she knows well. Mrs. Bruno is a 1985 alumna of M.B. Smiley High School. Before graduation, she attended Keahey Intermediate School and Oak Village Middle School.

Bruno believes the skills she acquired at M.B. Smiley truly helped to give her a jump start in life.

“The teachers really cared about the students, and they really pushed us academically,” she said, adding the preparation she received at Smiley was so great that she still tested at a college-ready level 10 years after graduating high school. She credits teachers like Ms. Barbara Perkins, who is now a school improvement facilitator in NFISD, for laying her academic foundation.

Bruno also took part in the district’s Career Technology Education cosmetology program and graduated from high school with her diploma and a cosmetology license, allowing her to transition into a career.

“I was self-employed,” she says. “I graduated from high school and went straight to work.” She spent about 11 years as a successful cosmetologist, she said, adding her license not only gave her the means to earn a living but to eventually further her education.

“My parents couldn’t afford to send me to college, but my cosmetology license gave me the ability to make money to send myself to college.” In 1995, she enrolled in Houston Community College, where she earned an associate’s degree in business and marketing.

After an internship at Fox 26, Bruno was offered a full-time job at the media outlet. She later worked in marketing and community outreach at North Harris College (now Lone Star College-North Harris). In the meantime, she earned a bachelor’s degree in business management from the University of Phoenix.

In 2006, Mrs. Bruno returned to Houston Community College’s northeast campus, not as a student, but as the campus’ community outreach coordinator. Two years later she was promoted to public relations director.

Her advice to young people and mature adults is the same. After taking the non-traditional route to continuing her own education and making a career change, she reminds them that “it’s never too late to start.”

“If you find yourself not knowing where to go, it’s never too late, and the community college can get you there.”

Send your NFISD alumnus nomination to anitra.brown@nfisd.org.



Jose Cruz

Jaiden Beal

Javier Garcia

Tatyanna Toliver

Junior Reporters

New Things at Marshall

By Jaiden Beal

Kindergarten

Thurgood Marshall Early Childhood Center

We sure do like the front of our building. It has all sorts of birds, pictures, sandboxes and a playground with a picnic bench and children playing around the tree. We have flowers and butterflies on the wall. We even have a big sun and children are swinging and jumping. I don’t think that’s all we are going to get. Our assistant principal Mrs. Berry says there will be some more things coming to make our school

look pretty. I really do like my school!

For Black History we placed our writing on display. My teacher called it a stick-to-it writing. Mrs. Brooks told us about how ordinary people helped to shape the world. All of the students in the 500 Pod, that’s my Pod, had to write about what we would buy if we had a \$100 bill. My friends in Pod 600 wrote a “I Have a Dream” pledge. They pledged to work harder at finding peaceful solutions. We even looked at the Ruby Bridges movie!

We’ve been getting ready for the Black History Program at our school and at Forest Brook Middle School. We’re going to be the best ones on program. There are nine bells and violinists; of course I play them both.

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is for..

Auto body, auctions, and agriculture.

At the W.G. Smiley Career and Technology school's auto body shop students like Javier Gonzalez and George Sinesterra, are able to learn skills that can lead to a successful career following graduation. Javier Gonzalez, a 2009 graduate of North Forest High, who is now majoring in Auto Collision, will earn an associates degree in July from the Universal Technical Institute (UTI).

"Being here made me want to do this for a living and I really like it. I felt like after graduating from high school I had a career. Now I want to help others learn."

Gonzalez, who took Auto Body for two years during his matriculation at North Forest, said that after he graduates from UTI he wants to go on to a four-year university so he can teach Auto Body to his own students.

"It was fun for me," he said, "because I was able to work on my parents' car and then I painted my own truck one summer."

He visits the campus when he has questions for his former teacher, Mr. Lastrap, or whenever he wants to help other students.

Mr. Lastrap has been teaching at the high school for 21 years. He said it's rewarding to hear of his students



going on to work in the industry with some starting their own businesses.

George Sinesterra, a senior at North Forest High said, even though he does not want to be a mechanic, he has learned other skills in class.

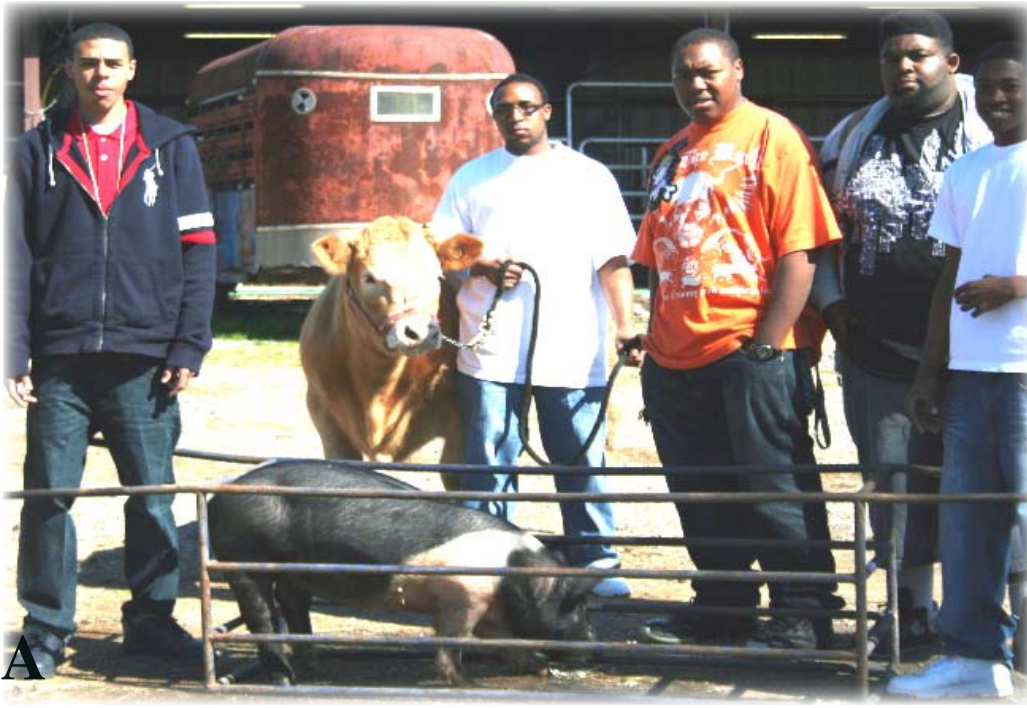
"Mr. Lastrap teaches me valuable lessons like how to take my time, how not be lazy, and always be responsible."

Mr. Lastrap has the students working on several projects such as painting the district's golf carts, repairing a horse trailer, rebuilding an old Plymouth, and working on cars for residents within North Foest ISD.

"We accept cars from the students, people in district and in the community. We charge but its really cheap. The money goes to our department. I allow the kids to work on it and I step in whenever they do not know something. It takes a little longer but they always do a good job," Lastrap said.

If you are a member of the community, North Forest ISD employee, parent, or student interested in minor car repairs, visit the Auto Body shop at 10726 Mesa Drive or call 713.636.4305.





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Ag. Dept to hold Livestock Show & Sale

Bill Dodd, who has been the advisor of the Agricultural Science Department for 38 years, is helping the North Forest FFA students prepare to sell their animals and plants for the **North Forest ISD Livestock Show & Sale which will be held on April 14.**

Last year's auction raised over \$30,000 for the department. Jahmar Sampson sold his 1316 pound steer last year for \$5,025 to the Northside Group. If buyers purchase the FFA students' livestock but choose not to take it home alive, they can donate the animal back to the FFA, the student, or to a charitable organization. Another buyer's option would be to have it processed at the Career and Technology Meats Lab. Student butchers can make cuts including steaks, roast, cutlets, stew meat, chili meat, ground beef and more at the buyer's specifications.

Senior Reginald Mathis, has been taking the Agriculture class all four

years at North Forest High. He said he really likes the class and he hopes to become a certified butcher. Mathis, who named his steer 'Sunny' after his grandfather, bought a cow for \$1500 and plans to sell it at the Livestock Show.

FFA students, Edmond Petties and Josue Jacome participated in the calf scramble at the Houston Livestock and Rodeo show. At the scramble, 28 students throughout the Houston area chased 14 calves around the Reliant Arena, for a chance to win \$1500 to buy a registered heifer. Petties was one of the winners.

For eligibility in the Houston Livestock and Rodeo show, the students must buy an animal and care for it for 10 months before entering into the contest, where the top three will get to make the sale.

Mr. Dodd said he is excited for the students who participated in the Houston Livestock and Rodeo competition but the NFISD Livestock Show and Sale is where the students are really going to benefit.

The North Forest ISD 48th Annual FFA Livestock Show & Sale will take place on April 14-15, 2010.

For more information on the show or how you can donate to the North Forest ISD FFA call 713-636.4369 or email bill.dodd@nfisd.org.



A: FFA students are preparing their animals for the show and sale in April. **B:** Jahmar Sampson, last year's Grand Champion, seen trimming his steer
C: Reginald Mathis and "Sunny"



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North Forest ISD
Office of Communications & Community Relations
6010 Little York
Houston, Texas 77016

***Non-discrimination Statement:** North Forest Independent School District does not discriminate against persons because of race, creed, national origin, age, sex, disabilities, economic status or language disability in employment, promotion or educational programming.*

Superintendent's Message

As superintendent of North Forest ISD, open dialogue with community residents is important to me and critical to ensuring that the district continues to move in a positive direction. The district needs your support to be successful. As such, I want to keep you abreast of what district administrators, faculty and staff are doing to ensure North Forest ISD moves forward.



Many of you may soon notice significant work at our high school campus. The North Forest ISD Board of Managers has approved a measure allowing the district to enter into a contract to completely replace the roof of the high school and career technology center. This is an important project that will improve the aesthetics, safety and durability of the facility.

With the assistance of staff at various levels, the district is also working arduously to improve and accurately report the high school completion rate. As you may know, this rate is an important part of determining the district's state accountability status. Details of some of these and other district activities are provided in this issue of the School Zone, in other district publications and are shared through a variety of avenues so that you will be aware of what's taking place in North Forest ISD.

I urge North Forest community members to share news about our district, speak positively and honestly about the great things taking place in NFISD and the hard work that goes into improving the district at all levels.

Talk with your friends, neighbors and family members. Others will be buoyed by your pride in the district and encouraged by its progress.

For more updates from Dr. Johnson, visit www.nfisd.org, click on About NFISD, Superintendent, and Johnson's Journal.