

SPRING 2010

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE!

Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Greg Smith shares good news about Clear Creek ISD and what's on the horizon for the highest performing large school district in Texas.

Senior-To-Senior Prom

For all you do, this party's for you! Clear Creek ISD invites Gold Card members to a complimentary night of dinner, dancing and entertainment, 'chaperoned' by the graduating seniors of the class of 2010!

Gold Star for ???

Who earned the Gold Star for the Spring issue of the Communicator Gold edition?

Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?

You might be surprised to learn what Clear Creek ISD Board President, Stuart Stromeyer, has to say about public school funding.

21st Century Learning

Students of Clear Creek ISD show they have more than book smarts as they take on special causes much larger than themselves!

Community Connections

Find out about lifelong learning opportunities and support services near you!



CLEAR CREEK ISD

the
Communicator



Gold
EDITION

*a publication for and about the
mature citizens of Clear Creek ISD*

2009-2010

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Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends:

I hope this newsletter finds year 2010 off to a happy and healthy start for you and yours! For the Clear Creek Independent School District, this year is already well on its way to being one for the record books.

Clear Creek ISD is the highest performing large school district in the state of Texas and recently had 12 schools chosen as the top public schools in the State as is soon to be published in Texas Monthly.

Our students are learning and growing not just academically, but as quality human beings. As modeled by many of our fellow retired and senior citizens, our students are serving and giving back to their community. Students of all ages united for Haiti through several district-wide and campus fundraisers which raised thousands of dollars for inhabitants of the devastated region.

In other District news, CCISD's Board of Trustees has two seats up for election in May 2010. They are Position At-Large B, currently held by Ann Hammond and District 1, currently held by Bob Davee. Mr. Davee is running unopposed and candidates for the At-Large position are Ann Hammond, Star Lazarow, and Robert Schultz. We encourage you to become informed about these candidates and exercise your vote on May 8th at a precinct near you.

Inside this issue, you'll find your invitation to Clear Creek ISD's first annual Senior to Senior Prom. On May 20 at Clear Springs High School, graduating seniors will be serving our senior friends during an evening of food, music and entertainment. I hope to see you at this very special celebration.

See you around the District!



Greg Smith, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools, Clear Creek ISD



First Annual Senior to Senior Prom

Save the Date:
May 20, 2010

**Clear Creek ISD cordially
invites you to the 2010 Senior to Senior Prom
to be held on Thursday, May 20, 2010 from 5:30 p.m. –
7:30 p.m. at Clear Springs High School located at 501
Palomino Lane in League City.**

Your Gold Card Club membership is your ticket for entrance into the star studded evening. Guests will be treated to a complimentary dinner, dancing and entertainment provided by Clear Creek ISD graduating seniors of the class of 2010.

“We could think of no better way to say thank you to our retired and senior friends than to join with our high school seniors to tell you in person how much we appreciate the many ways you make our district a great place to live and learn,” Superintendent of Schools Dr. Greg Smith says. “We hope you’ll join us on May 20 for a great evening.”

Personal invitations will be mailed to Gold Card Club members (*available to all district residents 65 years of age or older*) in April. Gold Cards will also be issued at the door, however, reservations are required. Space is limited so RSVP by May 6.

To confirm your party reservations, call 281-294-0020.

Gold Star for Our Master Volunteers!



How does your garden grow? Like most, probably not very well, unless you happen to be a Texas Master Gardener or Master Naturalist.

Thankfully, Clear Creek ISD has a few such volunteers around to lend a green thumb to campus flower and butterfly gardens. These valued volunteers contribute their time and unique talents as either certified Texas Master Gardeners or Texas Master Naturalists**.

Sandra Mossman Elementary recently broke ground for what will be its Discovery Garden. With the help of Master Gardener and CCISD volunteer extraordinaire, Linda Garren McKillip, the Discovery Garden will spring to life during the next few months. The Master Gardener will also be growing the next generation of expert gardeners as she launches the Junior Master Gardener program, structured to enrich TAKS curriculum, on that campus.

The volunteer efforts of these Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists have become intertwined. A volunteer from the Center for Agriculture, Science, and Engineering (CASE) is starting seeds in the Center's new greenhouse that will eventually be moved to Mossman Elementary's garden and greenhouse. Master Naturalist Gib Larson and McKillip are collaborating to accelerate the plant life growth at the new Discovery Garden. "This is all very exciting for me," said Garren McKillip, "I love putting resources together. For instance, my Master Gardener organization has its training program in the summer especially to be available to teachers."

Located on a 60-acre tract of land located at the Johnson Space Center (JSC), CASE, or The Longhorn Project, began in 1996 as a joint educational effort between JSC and Clear Creek ISD. Today, there are eight longhorns, a learning facility for visiting 3rd grade and 7th grade level students, a garden area, and a new greenhouse where seeds are springing to life before they reach their final destination.



The Mossman Elementary Knights are ready to get their hands dirty in their new Discovery Garden.

Story continues on back cover...



School Funding 101

Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?

Clear Creek ISD, like the 1,037 school districts in Texas, is at a crossroad, while wanting to enhance education for its students it has to work with an inadequate public school funding system that is preventing the District from moving forward at the quantum pace that is so necessary for this generation.

In brief, the funding per student the District receives is based on what property values were in 2006. So even though property values continued to increase over the past 3 years, the additional tax money goes directly back to Austin. Many citizens find it very surprising to find out that even though their check to Clear Creek ISD increased every year, the students of their district did not benefit from the extra revenue.

The district continues to look inward on how to do its part to make up for the funding inadequacy by reduced operating costs. For the current school year, Clear Creek ISD** was able to balance a \$13 million projected deficit by reducing central administration budgets, moving high schools to a seven period day versus block scheduling and competitively sought vendor contracts to lower costs.

Looking at a projected \$10 million deficit for the coming 2010/11 school year, CCISD is committed to balancing the budget by continuing to evaluate programs and make difficult decisions without impacting its mission. Clear Creek ISD is even embarking on school bus advertising, which is expected to bring in an additional \$200,000 revenue stream. Additionally, the district is considering a change in policy which will allow employees, who live outside the district, to bring their children in to CCISD for education. It is anticipated 100 district employees' children will join CCISD next year, generating revenue of \$630,000 since the state provides about \$6,300 per student. ♦

*** Clear Creek ISD's fiscal practices have earned the District state, national, and international awards for meeting the highest standards of school budgeting.*



**Stuart Stromeyer,
CCISD Board President**

SHOWING SELF DIRECTION

Community Service

Cassidy Hurwitz was the mastermind behind a one mile walk to raise money for the people of Haiti. The Clear Lake High School junior explained, “I wanted to do something to help. I thought this walk would give all CCISD students the chance to make a



Cassidy speaking to media about the Haiti Walk.

difference. Students across the Clear Creek Independent School District (CCISD) raised thousands of dollars for the Haiti earthquake relief efforts in a variety of ways ranging from a one mile walk at Veterans Memorial Stadium to a shoe drive at an elementary campus.

“CCISD is committed to growing a generation of students who believe in community service,” explained Superintendent Greg Smith, “We want them to understand the importance of giving back.” This valuable lesson is demonstrated every day by students enrolled in the certified nurse’s assistant program housed at Clear View Education Center. “There are some patients, as soon as you meet them, they make my day,” explained Clear Creek High School senior Jalina Schexnayder, “They tell us, ‘Thank you so much,’ ‘They are very grateful.’” The students do clinical work at The Regency Village, learning how to assist residents at the skilled nursing and rehabilitation center in Webster. “I think it’s educating the younger generation on what it is like to be a senior citizen,” said CNA instructor Wanda Herfarth, “I want them to respect seniors. They’ve had a lot of living.”

Regency Director Ramona Williams believes the educational process is a two-way street. “The residents feel a part of the community and the students are learning how to interact with a generation many of them are not exposed to very often.” Brittany Berry, a Clear brook junior describes it this way. “It is a wonderful experience.” Most of the time they are happy to see another friendly face.” Community members, students, and educators everywhere are discovering that service-learning offers everyone a chance to take part in the active education of youth while simultaneously addressing the concerns, needs, and hopes of their community. ♦

Community Connections

Clear Creek ISD is pleased to share the following Useful Community Resources for our Senior friends:

Clear Lake Association of Senior Programs (CLASP)

CLASP is a community outreach initiative of CCISD partner, the University of Houston-Clear Lake. CLASP provides lifelong learning opportunities through free programs open to the public. Call 281-283-2021 or contact clasp@uhcl.edu for the complete evening lecture series and daytime minicourses schedules.

AARP Tax-Aide

From February 1 through April 15th each year, the AARP Tax-Aide program offers free one-on-one counseling to help individuals prepare basic tax forms. Go to [ww.AARP.org](http://www.AARP.org), click on AARP Foundation, select AARP Tax-Aide Site Locator and enter your zip code to find a location near you.

Interfaith Caring Ministries Senior Outreach Program

ICM's Senior Outreach Program enables the elderly and disabled citizens over the age of 55 in service area (*CCISD residents who reside in both southern Harris County and northern Galveston County*) to maintain independent living by providing access to needed services from monthly delivery of groceries to rent and utility assistance. Contact Director of Client Services, Suzy Domingo at (281) 332-3881 ext. 229.

United Way of Greater Houston – Bay Area Service Center

Clear Creek ISD employees contribute thousands of dollars annually to the United Way of Greater Houston programs including:

- **Senior Center:** www.neighborhoodcenters.org
281-282-6073
1300-A Bay Area Blvd., Suite 109 | Houston, TX 77058
- **Sheltering Arms Senior Services:** *Services by Appointment*
www.shelteringarms.org | 713-685-6577
- **Just Dial 2-1-1**
Assistance for seniors is just a phone call away, thanks to the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE. Trained elder-care experts are good listeners who can find true answers to even the most complicated questions.





Clear Creek Independent School District
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“Gold Star” continued...

Master Naturalist Ollie Schwausch devotes countless volunteer hours working on CASE’s acreage in an effort to maintain the land and equipment. However, his true passion is the teaching time spent with student visitors to educate them about everything from invasive species control to longhorn adaptability and genetics. “For so many reasons this land affords us an excellent educational opportunity,” said Schwausch. “Students not only have a chance to view the longhorn, a Texas icon, but they hear firsthand about Texas’ ranching heritage – and all against the backdrop of technological marvel of JSC’s rocket park – a rich and fascinating contrast that is not lost on the students,” said Mr. Schwausch. Clear Creek ISD thanks all of our volunteer Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists who make such a beautiful difference! ♦

*** Master Gardeners apply their special expertise in horticulture to a variety of community projects, conducting workshops, establishing new civic garden projects, and working with the youth. Master Gardeners are representatives of Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System.*

Master Naturalists provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their community. Master Naturalist programs are coordinated by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Texas A&M system and Texas Parks and Wildlife.