COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

# 2017 DEAN'S ROUNDTABLE HONORING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS



Friday, May 5, 2017 Thomas G. Hildebrand, DVM '56 Equine Complex 6:00 - 9:00 pm "Being able to attend Texas A&M University has been a dream of mine and I am proud to be graduating from this university. Receiving this scholarship has given me the confidence to accomplish my goal. I really appreciate your generous contribution towards my education and I will work hard to honor the scholarship." --2017 Dean's Roundtable Scholarship Recipient

#### FROM THE DEAN



Welcome to the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Dean's Roundtable hosted by the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Established by Dr. Jane Stallings in 1991, the Dean's Roundtable has recognized more than 550 individuals who have been role models, mentors, servant leaders, and who have inspired others to reach for the stars.

Sponsors of the Dean's Roundtable elevate the accomplishments and dedication of leaders and life changers who positively impact the lives of people throughout the great state of Texas. They

choose representatives who model the ideals we hope all Texas A&M graduates will emulate.

This year, benefactors have identified a remarkable group of 29 professionals who share our vision of transforming lives. The 2017 Dean's Roundtable honorees include superintendents, classroom teachers, professors, counselors, and those professionals who have devoted their careers to helping others.

Through their generous contributions to honor these champions of tomorrow, our benefactors have provided scholarships to future teachers, community health educators, researchers, and policy makers in education and human development. We are grateful to both our sponsors and honorees for positively impacting our communities and our world.

Joyce Alexander Dean and Professor

#### **ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

The College of Education and Human Development officially opened its doors under the direction of Dr. Frank W.R. Hubert in 1969. With 1,307 students, and faculty from across the nation, the college was soon heralded as a premier school for teacher preparation.

Our college is among the leading institutions in the state for producing the highest number of certified teachers in bilingual education, special education, and STEM-related fields. We have consistently been ranked among the top five educator producing programs in Texas. Aggie educators are working in 756 school districts in all 20 regions of the state in 211 counties. That's more than 10,000 former students working in the state of Texas.

As the fourth largest college at Texas A&M University with over 7,000 enrolled students, we are not just a school for teachers. We are a school for leaders.

We offer 19 undergraduate programs and seven minors across four academic departments: Educational Administration & Human Resource Development, Educational Psychology, Health & Kinesiology, and Teaching, Learning & Culture.

In education, sport, business, government, and health, we work to enhance equity in educational achievement and health outcomes. We seek to not only foster innovation and development, but also to influence policy and practice.

We are dedicated to transforming and enriching lives with integrity, passion, and hard work. We seek challenges and break boundaries because our children, our communities, and our future depend on us.



#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Welcome

#### Dean Joyce Alexander



Keynote Speaker

Dr. Jimmie Don Aycock '69

Recognition of Honorees

Dean Joyce Alexander Jody Ford Haley Jennings

Closing Remarks

Dean Joyce Alexander

#### **SPONSORS & HONOREES**

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Honorees Jimmie Don Aycock Cindy K. Boettcher, Ph.D. Norvella Carter, Ph.D. Gloria Cavazos Mary Ann Clark Carol Stuessy Dickson, Ph.D. Charles Burton French Deborah Gant Paul Garro Lauren Given Kristiana E. B. Hamilton John P. "Jack" Helfeldt, Ph.D. Lee Hood Karen Kaspar Patricia J. Larke, Ed.D. Jeff Mann Allen McCan leff McCanna Elizabeth Moreland-Mason Joyce Nelson Jeffrey Allen Pilchiek Nicole Ponzio Arian Rutkowski Dr. Greg Smith Sharon and James Tays Sandra E. Urton Rodney E. Watson, Ph.D. Kelly Bond-White Jeanette Kay Williams

#### **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



 Dr. Jimmie Don Aycock
Known as a champion of public education, Jimmie Don Aycock represented District 54 in the Texas House of Representatives from 2006 until his retirement at the end of the 2015 Legislative Session. He is best known for his work as Chair of the House Public Education Committee during the 2013 and 2015 sessions where he worked to enact policy for the more than five million Texas public school students. One of his most

notable accomplishments was the passage of House Bill 5 which significantly reduced the number of courses that Texas high school students must pass and created more paths to graduation for Texas students.

In addition to serving on the education committee, Dr. Aycock worked on the Defense and Veterans' Affairs Committee, the Higher Education Committee, Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee, Agriculture and Livestock Committee, and the Redistricting Committee.

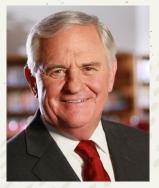
He chose not to seek re-election in 2015 and urged his colleagues in the House "to not think about the extremes on the right or on the left, but to think about good policy."

For all his efforts, the Texas School Public Relations Association named him as the recipient of the association's 2015 Key Communicator Award, the most prestigious honor bestowed by the organization.

In that same year, the Texas A&M University Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development and the Texas Association of School Administrators presented Dr. Aycock with the Golden Deeds for Education Award at the Annual Administrative Leadership Institute. This award is considered the most coveted award in the field of Texas education.

#### **JIMMIE DON AYCOCK**

# Sponsored By: Rick and Sue Rickman



Dr. Aycock earned his Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University in 1969 and his Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine in 1970. He served as a Captain in the United States Army from 1970-1972. He then focused his efforts on ranching and veterinary medicine owning and operating veterinary clinics in Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Harker Heights through 1998. Public service was another endeavor to which he devoted his time and energy.

His focus on education is reflected through his work on the Board of Trustees for Killeen ISD from 1985-1988. He was also a member of the Killeen Vocational Instruction Commission and was treasurer of the Central Texas College Board of Trustees from 1995-2005.

Among his many efforts to serve his community were his role as Chair of the Harker Heights Solid Waste Study Committee, member of the Killeen Quality of Life Study Committee, and President of the Bell County Water Control and Improvement, District 3. In addition, he was Chair of the Harker Heights Economic Development Corporation, President of the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce, and Director of the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce. He held membership in several professional organizations including both the Texas and American Veterinary Medical Associations and the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Associations.

In addition to receiving the 2015 Key Communicator Award and the Golden Deeds in Education Award, Dr. Aycock has also been recognized with the following: Legislative Honor Roll, Texas State PTA, 2011; Community College Champion, Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2011; Appreciation Award, Communities in Schools, 2011; Champion of Free Enterprise, Texas Association of Business, 2007, 2011; Friend of Education Award, Killeen Independent School District, 2010; Fiscal Responsibility Index of A+, Texans for Fiscal Responsibility, 2009; and the Roy J. Smith Award, Killeen Citizen of the Year, 2008.

#### CINDY K. BOETTCHER, PH.D.

## Sponsored By: Teaching, Learning & Culture



Dr. Cindy Boettcher recently retired after a 43year teaching career. With a master's degree in educational psychology and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Texas A&M University, she has worked in the academic advising office, been a clinical professor of reading education, and served as an associate department head for undergraduate students. Other professional experiences outside of the university include teaching in Brenham ISD and being the principal and founder of First

Baptist School in Brenham, Texas.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Dr. Boettcher was asked to lead the newly created Lohman Learning Community in 2002. The learning community is designed to be a place where first-generation students can connect and gain a sense of belonging while at Texas A&M. Dr. Boettcher is known for building relationships with her students and providing those in the learning community with all the resources they might need to be successful, whether that included helping them open a bank account or finding medical care.

Over the years, Dr. Boettcher received the Association of Former Students Distinguished Teaching Award, College Level 2005; Association of Former Students Distinguished Teaching Award, University Level 2009; George Bush International Teaching Award, 2013; Howdy Camp Namesake 1998; Fish Camp Namesake 2005; and T-Camp Namesake 2005.

"I really think getting to know and interact with students is what I'm most proud of. I have truly loved my students. I have changed the lives of some of my students – and this has been the best part of my career from preschool through college. I've won all kinds of awards but do they mean anything? No. It's the long-lasting relationships and seeing students go on to make something of themselves that makes me proud." ~Cindy Boettcher

#### NORVELLA CARTER, PH.D.

Sponsored By: Teaching, Learning & Culture



Norvella Carter, Ph.D. is Professor of Education and Endowed Chair in Urban Education in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture at Texas A&M. She has a Ph.D. from Loyola University Chicago and M.Ed. and B.S. degrees from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. She has been the director of the Center for Urban School Partnerships at Texas A&M for nine years. She has engaged in the preparation and development of educators for urban and

diverse environments at four other universities, Loyola University Chicago, Illinois State University, University of Georgia (Scholar in Residence), and Texas Southern University (Distinguished Professor). Formerly, she was a teacher in elementary, middle, and high school, and a principal in Detroit, Michigan.

Dr. Carter was awarded the Houston Endowment Chair in Urban Education in 2001 for her outstanding work in urban schools. Some other awards include The W.E.B. Dubois National Award for Teaching in Higher Education; The Slate Award for Outstanding Teaching, TAMU; The International Learning Program Award; Distinguished Professor Award (TSU); Service Awards from The American Educational Research Association and The Association of Teacher Educators; The Phenomenal Women Award, Jack and Jill of America; Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity Award and the Council for Exceptional Children Award.

One of the highlights of Dr. Carter's career was giving expert testimony at a Congressional Hearing in Washington, DC on "Closing the Achievement Gap for Children of Color," sponsored by the Children's Caucus and The Black Caucus in congress. Finally, Dr. Carter, scholar, author of numerous publications, and editor of a journal, taught and conducted presentations on her work nationally in many cities and internationally in 15 countries.

She has been married to William Carter for more than four decades and is mother to seven children and grandmother to 15 grandchildren.

#### **GLORIA CAVAZOS**

## Sponsored By: Beverly Irby and Rafael Lara-Alecio



Gloria Cavazos holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Texas A&M University and a master's in mid-management from Sam Houston State University. She chose education as a career because she believes education, specifically public education, is the most important factor to the success of our country's future. She believes teachers, both individually and collectively, can not only change lives, but can change the world.

Gloria gained classroom teaching experience in both McAllen and Aldine ISD. She served as an assistant principal and principal at several elementary schools in Aldine ISD prior to becoming an Area Superintendent working with the leadership of 16 schools. Her last position at Aldine was as Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. Today she is the Chief Human Resources Officer for Houston ISD. Her duties include working with district leaders to ensure that the district recruits, maintains, develops, recognizes, and rewards a high quality workforce of 29,000 employees.

She is a member of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA); Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA); Texas Association of Bilingual Educators (TABE); and the Council of Great City Schools.

"I believe the single most important factor affecting student learning is the effectiveness of his or her teacher. An effective teacher can make a full year's difference or more in the learning growth of a student, regardless of that child's socioeconomic status, race, or language they speak. Therefore, it is imperative that every classroom has an effective teacher and that every teacher is given the tools, training, and support they need to grow as an educator. It is also imperative that every school has an effective leader that is focused on growing, developing, and supporting teachers." ~Gloria Cavazos

#### **MARY ANN CLARK**

## Sponsored By: Joyce Juntune



Mary Ann Clark is a veteran educator with 39 years of experience who is currently serving as an instructional specialist for inclusive education for Gadsden ISD in New Mexico. Previous positions include: Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction, El Paso ISD (EPISD); Executive Director Core Content, EPISD; Director of Advanced Academics, EPISD; Middle School Teacher of Gifted, EPISD; Elementary ESL Teacher, Ysleta ISD; High school Geography & Health Teacher

& Elementary Self-Contained Teacher, Cumby ISD; and Elementary Self-Contained and Migrant Reading Teacher, EPISD, Lorenzo ISD.

Mary Ann graduated from Texas Tech University with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She has a Master of Arts in Educational Administration from New Mexico State University and also has a 30-Hour Gifted and Talented Certification.

For her work, she has received the 2007 TAGT (TX Association Gifted &Talented) Region 19 Advocate of the Year; 2005 National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) Outstanding Curriculum Award; 1997 Hornedo Middle School Teacher of the Year; 1997 EPISD District finalist for teacher of the Year; 994 TAGT Region 19 Teacher of the Year; 1994 Outstanding Teaching of the Humanities awarded by the Texas Council of the Humanities; and the 1990 Wiggs Middle School Teacher of the Year.

"The most meaningful work I continue to do is with Joyce Juntune and TAMU [Educational Psychology] in building academic success with students from poverty. It started with a search for why gifted students from our high poverty school were not being identified for gifted programs or were not successful in gifted programs. The effects have been far-reaching and have impacted learning disabled, ELL, and general education students." ~ Mary Ann Clark

#### CAROL STUESSY DICKSON, PH.D.

## Sponsored By: Teaching, Learning & Culture



Dr. Carol Stuessy Dickson, an Associate Professor in Science Education and Technology, retired in May 2016 after serving Texas A&M University for 27 years. Leadership roles at A&M included Director, Online Ed.D. Program in Curriculum and Instruction; Co-Director, Center for Mathematics and Science Education; University Liaison, Texas Statewide Science Initiative; Chair, University Academic Appeals Committee; Assistant Department Head; and Graduate Faculty. Her career

has also included assistant professorships at New Mexico State and the University of Oklahoma and secondary school science teaching positions in Ohio. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from the University of Texas in Austin and both a Bachelor of Science and Ph.D. in Science Education from the Ohio State University.

In 2016, she received the Award of Distinction from the Ohio State University, College of Education and Human Ecology. Among other awards, she has received the School Science and Mathematics Association's Outstanding Service Award (2011); and Outstanding Educator (2010) and Outstanding New Faculty Member (1992) in the College of Education and Human Development. She has been an editor and/or reviewer for many academic publications and the National Science Foundation and held leadership positions in many national, regional, and state organizations.

Her research interests have focused on advancing science education reform through innovation and integration, serving as principal and coprincipal investigator of external grants and contracts totaling over \$11 million. These efforts have emphasized reform in science education policy; innovative science teaching and learning models, environments and tools; and collaborative partnerships with scientists and engineers.

Dr. Stuessy continues to work with four doctoral students who are planning graduations in December 2017. Including these four students, she will have served as chair or co-chair for 40 doctoral students, many of whom serve in academic positions in the United States and abroad.

#### **CHARLES BURTON FRENCH**

Sponsored By: Patsy Kirksey



Charles Burton French has always felt called to teach and today is a university lecturer, a tutor, a trainer, and a playwright.

He received a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity University and a Master of Arts in Speech Communications from Texas A&M University. In his work as a lecturer at the University of Houston Downtown, he regularly uses technology in the classroom and looks for ways to meet the needs of today's students.

As a Master Trainer/Tutor with Princeton Review, he travels to schools across the greater Houston area and around Texas to train teachers on the new SAT. In addition, he meets one-on-one with students to teach SAT or ACT techniques.

He also served as an adjunct lecturer for the Cy-Fair campus of Lone Star College where he strove to find new ways to connect with younger as well as older students. In 2009, he was an Adjunct Excellence Award Nominee at Cy-Fair College.

After several years of work, his play "Hair Like the Sun" was performed in 2016 by the Texas Repertory Theater. His script about people of Japanese ancestry relocated to an internment camp in the 1940's was described as "simple and authentic" by Broadway World of Houston.

"I believe in the joy of knowledge. Effective teachers have passion for their subjects and a desire to see students learn. No matter how many times I've taught the same lesson I teach with energy and excitement, because it is the first time my students may have heard it. I also believe that teaching is more than just lecturing, it is inviting the students to participate and take ownership. The best thing I can do as a teacher is ask questions that provoke a student to think." ~ Charles Burton French

#### **DEBORAH GANT**

## Sponsored By: Urban Education Program



Deborah Gant was inspired to become an educator by her high school P.E. and cheerleader coach. She admired the way the coach pushed her students to be their best and made them feel special. As a teacher and counselor with 36 years of experience, her goal is to connect and build relationships with the students, families, and staff members that she serves.

Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Education from Central Michigan University and a Master of Education in Counseling and Guidance from Texas Southern University.

Deborah has taught social studies and has been an elementary counselor in Galena Park ISD and an elementary counselor in Spring Branch ISD. Today, she is a counselor at Holmsley Elementary in Cy-Fair ISD. She also serves as a Guidance Counselor Cluster Leader, working with seven other counselors to disseminate information and communicate the team's concerns to their coordinator. She is member of the Texas Counselors Association.

"I believe educators play a vital role in the success of students. It is important to believe that every child can be successful. As an educator it is my goal to connect with the students I serve and build a relationship with them, so that I can help them to move toward their success." ~Deborah Gant

Her service extends outside the professional area to First Metropolitan Church where she is a youth teacher of children ages 4-13 years. She is also a founder and facilitator of a girls mentoring program at First Metropolitan.

#### **PAUL GARRO**

Sponsored By: Gogi and John Dickson



Paul Garro originally planned to live life as a lawyer, fighting for justice similar to his role model Atticus Finch in "To Kill A Mockingbird". A service immersion trip to the mountains of Appalachia taught him that he could change the world through teaching.

With a bachelor's in political science and a master's degree in education, Paul Garro has spent 31 years seeking to transform barriers and empower people with the knowledge and

skills necessary to live a meaningful and creative life.

He has lived that philosophy in many ways including as a classroom English teacher, a high school principal, a professional development facilitator, and director of school improvement. His career has taken him from schools in East St. Louis, Illinois to both Northeast and Northside ISDs in San Antonio. He has created magnet schools and gone to Finland to help initiate a special education program. He is currently the president of Central Catholic High School, a college preparatory school for young men in San Antonio.

"Humans are inherently designed (part of our DNA) to learn and seek meaning individually and in community. My teaching philosophy is to create the optimal conditions by which to enhance, stretch, guide and accelerate the process of learning to improve our human condition." ~Paul Garro

He was named "Teacher of the Year" three times, including one as District Teacher of the Year for one of the largest school districts in Texas. Rotary International has honored him with the "Service Above Self" award. He has also been invited to participate in the National Conference of State legislatures and the Oxford Roundtable.

Other activities include: Rotary International, the SA Area Foundation Advisory Committee and Chamber of Commerce, Catholic Charities Advisory Board, and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition Lecture Series.

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#### LAUREN GIVEN

#### Sponsored By: Sue Ellen and Phil Miner



Lauren Given has always been drawn to working with children. As a senior in high school she volunteered in a full-inclusion kindergarten classroom that included children challenged with language barriers, health problems, and developmental disabilities. She watched in amazement as the teacher differentiated the lessons and minimized distractions for the students.

Moving on to Texas A&M University, Lauren

received a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies and, later, a master's in curriculum and instruction.

She began her career as a kindergarten teacher in Galveston ISD. Lauren returned to College Station in 2007 to teach at College Hills Elementary where she was named Teacher of the Year in both 2010 and 2016. She was also honored by the district as Elementary Teacher of the Year in 2016. Today, she is a second grade math, science, and social studies teacher at Forest Ridge Elementary in College Station.

"Today's classrooms are growing more diverse in cultures, languages, and social status. There is a desperate need and constant challenge for educators to adjust their teaching to best fit the needs of these diverse learners. I work hard to communicate high expectations for all students. I strive to align my teaching with the students' culture and language. I strive to create student advocates for their own learning and success! I myself continue to work towards being a life-long learner and knowing "best practices" in educating today's youth in this diverse world we live in." ~Lauren Given

Some of her leadership activities include: Leaders Inspire People (FLIP) Leadership Program, Forest Ridge Elementary, College Station ISD (2016-2017); "YOU MATTER" Presenter (2015-2017) at CSISD teacher in-service; "Paws to the Pavement" Family Fun Run Founder and Committee Chair (2012-2015); CSISD Leadership Cadre (2011-2013); and Kindergarten Team Leader (2008-2010, 2012-2016).

#### **KRISTIANA E. B. HAMILTON**

Sponsored By: Jody and Jennifer Ford



Kristiana Hamilton grew up surrounded by educators in her neighborhood, church, and community. She graduated from LaMarque High School and went off to college *"vowing to be anything but an educator"*. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Radio/TV Broadcasting/ Journalism from Prairie View A&M University in 1986. After working with clients at the Texas Employment Commission who struggled to complete the application, she decided to return to school so that she could

*"fix things"*. She went on to receive her certification and has never looked back, beginning her teaching career in Houston ISD.

Her next move was to Bryan ISD's Neal Elementary to teach third grade math. She has remained in the area ever since, teaching at College Station ISD's Oakwood Intermediate, earning a master's in educational administration from Texas A&M University, and serving as an assistant principal at Cypress Grove Intermediate. Today, she is the principal at Southwood Valley Elementary where she strives to provide a safe, family-oriented educational environment.

"Teaching provides an opportunity for students to learn and grow. As an educator, it's my job to cultivate and nurture that growth. I absolutely refuse to accept any excuses when it comes to learning." ~ Kristiana Hamilton

Kristiana is the immediate past president of the Aggie Educator Network. Other activities and affiliations include: Immediate Past President of Brazos Valley Area Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Advisor, Omicron Omega Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., TAMU; Membership Intake Trainer, DST Sorority, Inc., Southwest Region; Jr. Leadership Brazos, Co-Chairperson; and the National/Texas Alliance of Black School Educators.

She has been honored by the Brazos Valley African American Museum, the BV Prenatal Clinic, and as a STAR Educator in CSISD.

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#### JOHN P. "JACK" HELFELDT, PH.D.

## Sponsored By: Teaching, Learning & Culture



Dr. Helfeldt is a Professor of Education with 18 years of service at Texas A&M University. He earned a B.A. and M.Ed. from SUNY at Fredonia and a Ph.D. in Education from Syracuse University.

Before coming to Texas A&M, he was a Professor and Department Head at the University of Alabama and the University of Arkansas. At Texas A&M University, he served as Department Head of Teaching, Learning,

and Culture for four years. He has also served as the Director of the Teacher Internship and Induction Program and directed a TAMU – TAMIU Cooperative Ed.D. Program.

Currently, Dr. Helfeldt is serving as an Associate Department Head in Teaching, Learning, and Culture. While at Texas A&M University, he received a TAMU system SLATE (Student Led Award for Teaching).

His wife, Betty, is also a career professional educator who has taught at Texas A&M University as well as serving as an ESL teacher and a Reading Specialist in public schools.

"If you are planning for a year, sow rice; If you are planning for a decade, plant trees; If you are planning for a lifetime, educate people." ~ Chinese proverb

#### **LEE HOOD**

# Sponsored By: Carolyn Lohman



Lee Hood always knew what she wanted to do with her life. As a child she loved school and her teachers, especially the way they made learning fun. She felt a sense of purpose and accomplishment when the teachers let her help others in the class. From that point on, she knew that teaching made a difference in the lives of others.

She received a Bachelor of Science in Education from Angelo State University and

soon after began her 38-year career devoted to helping others. She has served as an elementary classroom teacher, a music teacher, a resource teacher, and a middle school language arts teacher.

Pebble Creek Elementary honored her efforts to make a difference by naming her their 2002 Teacher of the Year. The next year a student nominated her for Who's Who in America's Teachers.

In 2004, Lee became a learning specialist for Texas A&M athletics. She received the Athletics Academics Award of Excellence Support Recognition in 2009 and the Partners in Learning Award from the Department of Multicultural Services in 2012.

She is a member of the Texas College Reading and Learning Association, National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes, and National College Learning Center Association.

"They may forget what you said—but they will never forget how you made them feel.' This quote from Carl W. Buehner summarizes my philosophy for working with students. I believe as educators we are in the unique position to make a strong impact in a student's life, one they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. They might not remember all of the dates or numbers or strategies we had them learn but they will remember how we treated them as we helped them learn those skills. All of us want to be treated with respect and dignity. Students are no different." ~Lee Hood.

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#### **KAREN KASPAR**

## Sponsored By: Sonja and Neal Adams



As an elementary principal in Bryan ISD, Karen Kaspar has mentored innumerable methods students and clinical teachers studying at Texas A&M University. She meets with all the students placed on her campus to welcome them and share expectations. She often provides feedback to the students after classroom visits. In addition, she passionately shares her experiences hosting students with other administrators and speaks of the value they offer in the classroom.

She didn't start out to be a role model for teachers. She actually got her Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of North Texas and went into restaurant management. Wanting more out of life, she started substitute teaching and ultimately fell in love with the job that allowed her to work with students.

Karen then attended Sam Houston State University, where she received her teaching certification, as well as a master's and doctorate in educational leadership. She began her career teaching U.S. History at Huntsville High School, before moving on to Goodrich ISD as an assistant principal and principal. Her local stops have included leading Harvey Mitchell Elementary and her current position as principal at Mary Branch Elementary.

Always looking for opportunities to make a difference, she piloted and started the first READY program in the district for students on the Autism spectrum.

Karen believes in "doing whatever it takes for each child, each and every day, each and every minute. This means that if there is something that needs to be done to help with a teacher, a student, a family --- then it is my job to make sure that happens."

#### PATRICIA J. LARKE, ED.D.

Sponsored By: Teaching, Learning & Culture



Patricia J. Larke, Ed.D. is a professor in the department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. Her career has spanned 42 years -32 of those at Texas A&M – and 10 years as a public school teacher in South Carolina and Missouri. Larke explains that she actually had her first teaching assignment at age six when she was asked to teach five of her classmates to read. Her mother had taught her to read before she entered school and this first assignment nurtured her quest to

assist educators with culturally sensitive knowledge and skills. She continued to use those skills to develop and teach the first graduate and undergraduate multicultural education courses at TAMU.

With a bachelor's and master's in education from South Carolina State University and an Ed.D. degree in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri in Columbia, she began working at Texas A&M in 1984. Her research interests have included Multicultural Education, Educating Teachers for Diverse Classrooms, Educating African American Girls, Girls of Color in STEM, and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy. Highlights of awards she has received include: 2014-2016 TLAC, Teacher Education Fellow; 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award, TX Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education; 2012 Curriculum Activist Award, Research on Women in Education, SIG Group of AERA; 2005 Fulbright-Hayes Scholar to China; 2004, G. Pritchy Smith Multicultural Educator Award, National Association for Multicultural Education; and the 1997 Extraordinary Service Award, College of Education, TAMU.

"I believe that education is the best equalizer that we have, and that every child should have the right to equity in education as well as access to education. Coming from poverty and a family that values education and who had caring teachers, I know that I would not have been a professor at TAMU, if I did not have those who empowered me to use education as a means to achieve greatness. Teachers should never forget the power they have to influence the lives of students." ~Patricia J. Larke

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#### **JEFF MANN**

## Sponsored By: Melanie and Bill Toler



Jeff Mann became an educator to make a difference in the lives of students. As the principal at A&M Consolidated Middle School for the past two years, he not only helps the seventh and eighth graders under his care, but he also welcomes many of Texas A&M's special education pre-service students as methods students and clinical teachers. In addition to letting them work with his special and general education teachers, he guides them in ways to apply and interview for teaching jobs.

With a bachelor's and master's in kinesiology, Jeff began his career as an athletic trainer and teacher at A&M Consolidated High School. He went on to obtain a master's in educational leadership and is currently working on his doctorate.

His first administrative position was as an assistant principal at A&M Consolidated High School before becoming the principal at Oakwood Intermediate School, a fifth and sixth grade campus.

Jeff tells visitors to his campus website that educating students in the 21st Century not only involves the education that occurs inside the walls of the classroom but also through technology that reaches outside of the classroom.

"As an education administrator, I feel it is my responsibility to remove the barriers to education for all students; to motivate students to want to learn each day; to push all educators to create learning experiences that transform how students learn in schools." ~Jeff Mann

He has been a Leadership Course Designer 2016-2017 for My School Transformation Network and a Design Team Member 2015, 2016, 2017 for the Texas Principals' Vision Institute. He has presented at TCEA New Teacher Podcast 2017; TCEA Conference 2017; TASA Midwinter 2017; Summer Conferences for TESPA 2016 and Texas Principals' Vision Institute 2015; and CSISD You Matter Conference 2014, 2015, 2016.

#### **ALLEN MCCAN**

Sponsored By: Jim Drew



Allen McCan has been at Duchesne Academy in Houston for 30 years. The academy is a college prep school for girls age three through 12th grade. His duties include safety and security of the campus and everyone on the campus. Allen believes in being honest and caring. He lives the mission of the school through knowing each student's name and getting to know the students and the families within the Duchesne community. He not only gets to know the students and their

families, he also connects with faculty and staff on campus. His kind demeanor welcomes students, families, faculty, staff members, and guests to campus.

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees." -Amelia Earhart



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#### **JEFF McCANNA**

## Sponsored By: Claire and Bill Selman, DVM



Jeff McCanna is the Officer of Human Capital at Houston ISD where his responsibilities include faculty hiring, compensation, and employer relations. He has served in numerous roles over his 26 years in education including teacher, assistant principal, principal, and human resources director. Throughout his career, he has strived to shape young minds around his community by reflecting his own similar experiences.

Having grown up with limited resources, Jeff identifies with underserved students. He had a mentor who helped him toward the path of success and, as a teacher, he worked to build those same relationships with his students.

"I believe that as educators, we have the role of mom, dad, coach, counselor and cheerleader. For some kids, we may be all that they have so it is critical that we plan purposefully and work relentlessly to give them the opportunities that they deserve." ~Jeff McCanna

No longer in the classroom, he continues to focus on the students in his role in human resources by looking for people who can truly be change agents and difference makers and understand that the job is more than just delivering instruction.

In addition to his full-time duties at HISD, he is a candidate for an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at Texas A&M University. He joined the graduate program in 2014 and two years later received the Paul R. Hensarling Distinguished Graduate Student Award.

His efforts to make a difference have been recognized through the receipt of the 2003 Texas Association of School Librarians Administrator of the Year and the 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award from Mayville State University.

#### **ELIZABETH MORELAND-MASON**

Sponsored By: Jim and Eddie Mattei Nelson



Elizabeth Moreland-Mason is the Instructional Officer for Special Education Curriculum and Instruction, K-12 for Katy ISD. She supervises programs for students in LIFE Skills, Resource and In-Class-Support. The goal is to ensure that campuses and teachers have the support they need to implement high quality programming in their classrooms. She and her staff support students in many different settings, from special education classrooms to the general education classroom. During

her 33-year career, she has taught in LIFE Skills, resource, general education, special opportunity support, and autism programs, while serving in various leadership capacities along the way.

Teaching children with special needs has always been her life's passion. While in college, she worked in home based programs for several children with special needs and taught in a private preschool for children with disabilities. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Houston and Master of Education from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The author of two books, <u>Visual Support</u> and <u>Teaching with Visual</u> <u>Support</u>, Elizabeth has done private consultation with various districts in Texas. She has also conducted staff development and training related to goal writing, state assessment for students with intellectual disabilities and programming for students with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

"I believe that schools and families must work together so that each student can be as independent and self-reliant as possible, regardless of the challenges they may face. Helping campuses and teachers establish programs that encourage and support successful independence for students in both special and general education settings is one of my main goals. Supporting teachers in building relationships with families that sustain life long independence is critical to student success while in school and after graduation." ~Elizabeth Moreland-Mason

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#### **JOYCE NELSON**

## Sponsored By: Educational Administration &



Human Resource Development Joyce Nelson has been with the Department of Educational Administration & Human Resource Development advising office since 1989. Among her many duties, Joyce is the primary contact for all student-related issues, monitors all aspects of students' progress, and assists with submission of documents, and scheduling university required exams. Her performance in these tasks ensures that students in EAHR receive a smooth, successful, and enjoyable experience while gaining their degree at Texas

A&M. Due to her vast experience in her role as an academic advisor, Joyce became the Director of Academic Advising almost 10 years ago and, over these years, has trained and supervised both undergraduate and graduate academic advisors.

"As an academic advisor, I want to ensure that each student has the support and/or guidance so that he/she can succeed in their goal: to receive their degree. Failure to provide this support/guidance will result in the student not succeeding or having a poor experience during their graduate program. The success of a student is a reflection on how I, the department, the college and the university supported the student." ~ Joyce Nelson

Her dedication has been recognized over the years through receipt of various awards including: Student Affairs Administrator of the Year Award (2016); College of Education & Human Development Staff Relationships Award (2016); Dept. of Educational Administration & Human Resource Development Staff Achievement Award (2013); Texas A&M University President's Academic Advising Award (2005); Texas A&M University President's Meritorious Award (2001); and the Principals' Center Staff Recognition (1986; 1988).

Through her work, Joyce has served on several search committees, scholarship award committees, and professional service organizations. During her personal time, she has volunteered as a coach for the Challenger Little League team for five years and currently volunteers in a reading program at a local elementary school.

#### JEFFREY ALLEN PILCHIEK

Sponsored By: Sarah and Mike Mabry, DVM



Jeffery Pilchiek has worked in public education for 30 years. As a certified public school counselor, he has helped students navigate the college admission process for more than 20 years. He has visited an extensive number of college campuses across the country, gaining personal perspective. Colleges have invited him to serve on their Counselor Advisory Boards including the University of Chicago, Auburn University, and Texas Tech University. He is also a member of

the Rice University Nominators Circle.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University; a Master of Education from the University of North Texas; and Mid-Management Certification from the University of Texas at Arlington. Today, he is an independent educational consultant, retiring after working as a teacher, counselor, or guidance director at several school districts.

"I believe the teacher/counselor has an important role in the learning process. It is important that they empower the students to be the best. I do not believe a good teacher/counselor spends their entire day in their office. They need to be out in the school visiting classes, talking with students, staff and parents, and participating in the daily activities of the school. They need to be able to problem solve effectively and need to be able to look at the whole picture when faced with conflict. They need to be able to look at the problem from an outside point of view when possible in order to solve problems successfully. I believe a good teacher/ counselor demonstrates these qualities and creates a positive school climate that nurtures the students' educational process." ~Jeff Pilchiek

Jeff served as conference chair, membership chair, and president of the Texas Association for College Admission Counseling. He received the Association's Founder's Award in 2015, and was touted as a *"man* of great conviction, fortitude and someone who leads by example."

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#### **NICOLE PONZIO**

#### Sponsored By: Arno and Barbara Krebs



Nicole Ponzio was named Teacher of the Year at Kemp Elementary in 2004-2005 and at Johnson Elementary in 2010-2011 but she believes that her greatest achievements are seeing her students succeed. She strives to help both her elementary students as well as the countless student teachers from Texas A&M that she has mentored over the years.

Nicole is a physical education teacher at Johnson Elementary in Bryan ISD. She also

served in that same position at Kemp Elementary in Bryan. Over her 18 years in education, she has also taught kindergarten at Sul Ross Elementary in Bryan and pre-kindergarten at St. Joseph Catholic School.

She attended Sam Houston State University where she received a Bachelor of Science in Academic Studies with a specialization in Kinesiology and an endorsement in Early Childhood. She states, however, that she did not choose her profession, it chose her. Sitting still and focusing was not fun for her as a child and her favorite part of the day was P.E. She is passionate about learning through movement and credits her parents who are educators as her inspiration.

"My philosophy as a physical education teacher is to help children understand the importance and enjoyment of exercise and being healthy by teaching all students physical fitness games, activities, and tools they can use throughout their life." ~Nicole Ponzio

Her activities and affiliations include: serving on the School Health Advisory Committee for Bryan ISD; training to help facilitate, support and mentor Capturing Kids Hearts at Johnson; member of Texas Association of Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance; and numerous fundraisers for The American Heart Association. She also started a morning running club to stimulate the brain before school. She has danced to raise money for the local Health for All Clinic and taught religious education for St. Anthony Catholic Church in Bryan.

#### **ARIAN RUTKOWSKI**

# Sponsored By: H. Malcolm Stewart



Each year the department of Teaching, Learning and Culture recognizes outstanding clinical teachers that demonstrate exceptional work ethic and commitment to the teaching profession with an "Always Expect More of Aggie Teachers" award. Arian Rutkowski was a recipient of that award in the spring of 2012. She graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, having also been named to the Dean's List and Pi Lambda Theta Honor

Society during her time at Texas A&M. Four years later, she was named the Elementary Teacher of the Year for Bryan ISD.

The first grade dual language teacher at Henderson Elementary willingly shares that she was retained in the first grade as she struggled with reading and focusing. She praises incredible teachers and parents for not giving up and ultimately enabling her to graduate from Texas A&M University. This experience drives her to give her students the same chance.

She is not only passionate about teaching her students, but she mentors junior and senior methods students and clinical teachers from Texas A&M as well. She is also a leader of a K-Kids club that allows students and teachers to work in, and give back to, the community. Career Day organizer and technology representative for her campus are just a few of her other activities.

"Smart is not something you are, it is something you can become." Principal El said to a crowd of teachers in the beginning of the year. Some just nodded along and agreed because he is an incredible speaker and you could tell he was an even better educator. However, I felt that he was speaking directly to me, of course I was in awe and hanging on every word, but I was moved on a different level because I did become smart and it was one of the biggest challenges I ever overcame! I believe that all students deserve this same opportunity for a terrific education and incredible educators!" ~Arian Rutkowski

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#### **DR. GREG SMITH**

## Sponsored By: Linda and Robert Flesher



Dr. Greg Smith became the Clear Creek Independent School District superintendent of schools in January 2008. He was named the Superintendent of the Year by the Texas Association of School Boards in 2012, named the top administrator by the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, Superintendent of the Year for the Texas PTA, and named the Galveston County Daily News Community Champion in 2013.

Dr. Smith has led the Clear Creek Independent School District and its 5,000 employees on a journey to transform education in the 21st Century. Under his superintendence, student performance has increased in all state indicators as well on college entrance exams. Today, the Clear Creek Independent School District is considered one of the largest high performing school districts in Texas. Dr. Smith is Co-Chair of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium, State Board Member of Texas PTA, a member of the Space Center Rotary Club and the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP).

In 2014, Clear Creek ISD was a finalist for the HEB Excellence in Education Award and TASA Honor Board Award. In 2013, Clear Creek ISD voters overwhelmingly approved a \$367 million school construction bond that led to the 1:1 tablet initiative known as Latitude 2 Learn.

Dr. Smith earned his bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Oakland University, master's degree in Education Administration from University of Houston Clear Lake, and his doctorate in Education Administration from Texas A&M University.

Dr. Smith and his wife, Kathy, are the parents of two daughters and one granddaughter.

#### SHARON AND JAMES TAYS

Sponsored By: Jerry and Kay Cox



One of Katy ISD's newest facilities, James and Sharon Tays Junior High School, stands a permanent testament to the Tays' impact on the lives of students and the educational community where they spent the majority of their careers.

Graduating with a degree in Industrial Education from Texas A&M University in 1972, James began his career as a vocational teacher at Katy Junior High. While serving as

an assistant principal at West Memorial Junior High, he received his master's in educational administration with a principal certification from his alma mater. He assumed the role of principal at West Memorial in 1979 and remained in that leadership position until his retirement in 2002. He held a philosophy that *"students of varying abilities should be given the opportunity to learn. An educator's job is to provide those opportunities and do what is best for the child."* 

Sharon Tays holds a Bachelor of Science in Education with an English specialization from Southwest Texas State and an M.Ed. in Educational Psychology with kindergarten, early childhood handicapped and learning disabled certifications from Texas A&M University. She taught for one year in Hearne, Texas prior to teaching in both elementary and middle school classrooms in Katy ISD for another 29 years. She shared James' belief that every child should have the opportunity to learn and tried to include many activities to reach children with different learning styles and abilities.

In February of 2016, the Katy ISD Board of Trustees approved the naming of a new junior high after these retired educators.

"As mentors, the Tays were encouraging and supportive to both teachers and students. As individuals and as a couple, they significantly and positively impacted the lives of thousands of Katy ISD students and colleagues. With nearly 60 years of combined service, the Tays represent a lifelong commitment to the education of Katy ISD students." ~ katyisd.org

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#### **SANDRA E. URTON**

#### Sponsored By: Rick and Sue Rickman



Sandra Urton took a circuitous route to becoming an educator. She started out with a law degree and worked in the legal field for 11 years. During that time, she realized the importance of having a good education. She opened a free assistance legal clinic to help low income people. She met young people facing legal consequences and wanted to help them understand that the solution was education. She began teaching at the Technological University of Cancun, Mexico.

Upon hearing of Dallas ISD's need for bilingual teachers, she headed for Texas.

She earned her certification in Generalist ED-4 and Bilingual Supplement EC-4. She has also taken graduate classes at Texas Woman's University and Southern Methodist University. For the past eight years, she has served as a kindergarten, first, second, and third grade bilingual teacher for Dallas ISD.

Today, Sandra is a kindergarten teacher at SOLAR Preparatory School for Girls at James B. Bonham and was recently named a Dallas ISD Teacher of the Year.

"I believe that every student is unique. I believe in providing a caring, secure and respectful atmosphere where students can grow emotionally, academically, socially and physically. Curiosity, asking questions to activate critical thinking and problem solving need to be promoted. I believe in motivating students to help them have the passion to be lifelong learners." ~Sandra Urton

In addition to her work in the classroom, she has sponsored an after school French club to help students learn a second or third language. She promotes language acquisition through songs, poems, and hands-on activities. She also mentors a group of bilingual teachers in Quintana Roo, Mexico and writes educational articles for "Libertas".

#### **RODNEY E. WATSON, PH.D.**

Sponsored By: Urban Education Program



Dr. Rodney E. Watson became the Superintendent of Spring Independent School District in July 2014. Spring ISD serves nearly 37,000 prekindergarten through twelfth-grade students in a diverse district located 20 miles north of downtown Houston in an urban area of Harris County.

During the first year of his leadership, the district launched a five-year strategic plan - Every Child 2020 – designed to increase academic achievement and prepare every

student to be college and career ready. With this plan as a foundation, Dr. Watson has led the work to improve practices at district schools while strengthening Spring ISD's ties to the community and the region. He has also helped forge initiatives such as the Urban Student Teacher Advanced Residency (U-STAR) program, a forward-looking partnership with Texas A&M University to bring future teachers into district classrooms for a yearlong, hands-on clinical teaching experience. In November 2016, local voters, emboldened and encouraged by these and other positive developments, approved a \$330 million bond referendum to address long-awaited facility, technology, safety and security needs throughout the district.

Dr. Watson received his bachelor's degree in psychology and music education, his master's degree in counseling psychology, and his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri–Kansas City in Urban Leadership and Policy Analysis and Curriculum and Instruction. His professional affiliations include work with The Education Trust, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Association of Black School Administrators, and the American Counseling Association. He recently was among more than 20 superintendents from across the country to complete the National Superintendent Certification Program offered by AASA.

Prior to accepting the leadership role at Spring ISD, Dr. Watson served as the Chief Human Resources Officer at the Houston Independent School District, the largest district in Texas.

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#### **KELLY BOND-WHITE**

## Sponsored By: Rod and Ellen Thornton



Kelly Bond-White just completed her 14th season (2016-17) with the Texas A&M women's basketball team, and has served as Associate Head Coach since the 2007-08 season.

During her tenure at A&M, the Aggies won the 2011 NCAA National Championship, made three Elite Eight appearances, won four conference championships and have appeared in the NCAA Tournament each of the last 12 seasons. She has played a part in 331 wins

in 14 seasons in Aggieland—an average of 24 wins a year, and has helped the Aggies reach the Sweet 16 five times since 2008.

All told, Kelly has been a part of 403 career victories and has coached 31 first or second team all-conference players. Her players have received Associated Press All-American honors 14 times in her career.

A former student-athlete, she played point guard for the University of Illinois and helped the Illini achieve several milestones during her four-year career including back-to-back NCAA Sweet 16 appearances. Bond-White also led the squad to the 1997 Big Ten Championship. During her junior and senior seasons, the Illini reached the 1997 and 1998 NCAA Tournaments and posted 20-win seasons.

A 1998 graduate of Illinois with a bachelor's degree in sociology, Kelly played high school basketball for the late legendary Chicagoland coach Arthur Penny at Whitney Young High School in her hometown of Chicago, Ill. She and her husband, Christopher, are the proud parents of Lauryn Christina, born June 25, 2012. They currently reside in College Station and have two Yorkies, MJ and Pip.

#### JEANETTE KAY WILLIAMS

Sponsored By: Ann and Jerry Gundy



Jeanette Williams grew up knowing that she wanted to teach young children to read, learn, and grow. She received an Associate of Arts degree from Blinn College in 1986 and a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Texas A&M University in 1989. She has taught kindergarten and pre-kindergarten in McDade ISD ever since.

"Education is not meant to be cookie-cutter with all children expected to learn in the same

manner and at the same rate. Instead, education should build upon the strengths of the individual and build support in areas of weakness. Education should instill a joy and love of learning." ~Jeanette Williams

In addition to instilling a joy and love of learning in her classes, she has given of her time and talent in numerous ways to the students and community of McDade ISD. She has been a member of the parent/teacher group for 28 years including stints as board member, vice president, and secretary. The Association of Texas Professional Educators have benefitted from her service as local unit president, membership chair, and district representative. Committee service within the district includes: grant writing for playground, technology (TIF), and local festival grants; Language Arts Committee; Spirit Committee; Safety Patrol - Sponsor 2015 to present; LPAC/TELPAS; and Holiday Helpers.

The real story of her impact on McDade ISD, however, comes from the endearing testaments given by supervisors, colleagues, former students, and parents, describing her as an integral part of the campus; a kind, caring, and considerate teacher; an expert at individualizing instruction; a mentor, friend, and role model.

"Ms. Williams has 'raised' many, many children in McDade and still continues today. She is an example of love, kindness and caring in a world that does not teach this much anymore. She is a shining star and blessed teacher to the many students she has taught over the years." ~a co-worker

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