

ALACRITY

Donors Make for a Wonderful Spring



We were so thankful and surprised this spring to receive another special contribution from Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery. Their Russell-Mowery Perpetual Honors Scholarship will again remind us that the films, and contests, and special striving have special support. We so appreciate those from our community who say, in effect--be singular, "shoot for the stars!" We obtained that same message from East Texas Giving Day, which doubled already generous contributions, again from the Mowerys but also from our longest-term donors, Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, as well as an anonymous benefactor. Our donors have given us unheralded potential energy.



CARLOS MENDEZ DIDN'T CHOOSE to come here illegally. "The thought never crossed my mind," he says. He was only nine years old when his mother got on an inner tube, put Carlos on top of her, and floated across the Rio Grande. He is one of more than eight hundred thousand people known as "Dreamers," who crossed the border as minors and grew up in the United States. Their legal status here, along with their identity, their dignity, and their future, is in limbo until Congress acts. I wanted to share Carlos's story to illustrate the contributions Dreamers can make to the only country they know as home.

In the town of La Tinaja, Mexico, Carlos grew up the very definition of *dreamer*. There were no paved roads, and his toys consisted of old cans and marbles. "I remember my mother would build a small bonfire to keep me warm when I showered," he says. "Although we always had a meal to eat, it typically consisted of beans, eggs, and soup. We would have meat once a week if we were lucky. My parents tried to have their own business several times, but things never seemed to work out."

In 2000, Carlos's dad decided he had to do better for his family. He went to Dallas and worked multiple jobs in restaurants, saving every penny he could. After about a year, he sent word for Carlos and his mom to head north.

"I remember traveling to the border, and I could see in my mother's face how worried she was," Carlos says. "She knew the danger we were facing." After they crossed the river, smugglers had them quickly change into dry clothes and start walking. "We continued on our journey—I can't remember how much we walked, but we did it. I remember the night at some-



Former President George W. Bush Recognizes NTCC Honors Alumnus

The "charm of fame is so great" noted Blaise Pascal, "that we like every article to which it is attached." Former President George W. Bush recently published an artistic and biographical compendium that the friends of Carlos Mendez will no doubt "like." The 43rd President painted portraits of 43 living immigrant contributors to American life. The group includes Henry Kissinger, Dirk Nowitzki, and the former NTCC honors alumnus, Carlos Mendez.

Mendez is currently a process engineer for Visionworks, a giant retail optical chain.

Bush's portrait evokes the warmth and canny intelligence of Mendez. The attendant biography leaves little doubt that Mendez reached the apex of his hopes, after a daunting climb. Living along a dirt road in La Tinaja, Mexico, the family made it to Dallas only to experience a traumatic car accident. Carlos' mother was killed, and his father, disabled. They moved to Mount Pleasant and lived in an aluminum garage with a concrete floor.

Alacritous Alumni

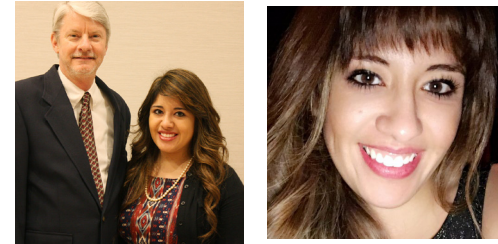
award, and placed in the poetry contest. Melody Mott pioneered the study of Texas-Japanese relations. For that she was our only student ever to receive two cash prizes at a single meeting of the Texas State Webb Society, dedicated to Texas history. She is also aiming to obtain a Ph.D. in history. She graduated from Sam Houston State, and for the time being works for a



giant pet medication company, Zoetis. *Alacrity* had good reasons to call Brenda Godoy in 2018 the most decorated college student in the nation. She won the Jack Kent Cooke, New Century, the Hites, & the All-USA Team. After graduating from Texas A&M and taking 2 medical trips to Guatemala and Thailand, Godoy now works with the UNT Health Science Center and Titus Regional Medical Center surveying our region's health scene.



Stephani Calderon, our Jack Kent Cooke winner in 2013, was featured recently in the *East Texas Journal*. After five years at Accenture, a *Fortune* Global 500 company, she was promoted recently to Analytics Manager. Connecting with clients and team members online, she was



able to work in Mount Pleasant for a time. She plans to obtain an MBA at the University of Virginia.

Few will forget the special spirit and engaging personality of Chesney Davis. In 2018, Davis and Godoy (above) won two of the ten Hites Awards of the nation. Davis also was a winner of poetry and poster



awards here. Davis looks forward to finishing up his stint in Mechanical engineering at A&M. He just ordered his Aggie ring.



A speaker at our 2014 Thank You dinner predicted that Noah Griffin would one day become a Texas Governor. He was one of only two from NTCC (the other being Brenda Godoy below) to ever make PTK's All USA Academic Team (a top 20 group). Today Griffin works at Brookwood in Georgetown, a vocational non-profit for adults for special needs. He graduated from Dallas Baptist University in 2017.



In her capacity as Student Representative of the Great Plains Honors Council in 2019, Hannah Dickson sat next to Dr. Guy Litton, the Dean of Honors at Texas Woman's University. Last May she graduated from TWU with a B.A. in psychology. She also married Elijah Rogers (above), and the two plan to serve full-time as missionaries to Vienna. With us, Hannah won a Boe Award, a Caldwell Award, a McGraw Hill Poster

Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

College Leaders

President: Dr. Ron Clinton
VP Instruction: Dr. Kevin Rose
Associate VP: Anna Ingram

Honors Committee: Jalyn English, Erika Garza, Dr. Drew Murphy, Heidi Wooten, & Dr. Andrew Yox.

Honors Professors: Dr. Andrew Daniel, Dr. Melissa Fulgham, Dr. Mary Hearron, Dr. Karyn Skaar, Jim Ward, Dr. Paula Wilhite, Dr. A. Yox.

Honors Coordinator: Andrea Reyes
Honors Secretary: Delbra Anthony

Like to Help?

View our Honors Northeast website, and you may find the largest collection of prize-winning essays, films and poems about a single region--in this case, Northeast Texas--in the world. Our benefactors have enabled this "above-and-beyond" culture of scholarship. If you would like to contribute, contact VP Dr. Jonathan McCullough, 903-434-8229, Nita May, 434-8113, nmay@ntcc.edu, or Dr. Yox at ayox@ntcc.edu.



Want more information?

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www.ntcc.edu/honors

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Our Beneficent Benefactors



Karen Harmon with Carlos Mendez (p. 1). We thank Dr. Mary Hearron for first introducing Karen and her now late husband Jim to us back in 2009. Karen has been through a lot since then, and has moved several times. But she entertained us in Fort Worth in 2016, and supports us still.



Not even COVID put an end to special trips and social events that has marked these honors here since 2008. For that matter, neither have numerous hospitalizations. We are both amazed by, and beholden to Drs. Jim and Paula Archer for their steady support for the social facet of our program, setting us up for success for the year ahead, once again. Beverly Kelley from Mount Vernon has enabled another facet, the 14th annual NE Texas poetry contest this fall. We thank her!

Some of our most unique donors have been “Santa’s Sweeties” from the First Methodist Church in Mount Vernon, whose crafting and sale of high-end Santa Clauses helped enable our last poster contest. We also thank Casey Slaght of McGraw Hill for his generous work. For 13 years this preeminent education corporation has backed our endeavor. Slaght is the 5th representative of McGraw Hill to facilitate this tradition, and he has enabled this gift since 2017.

Star Sophomores



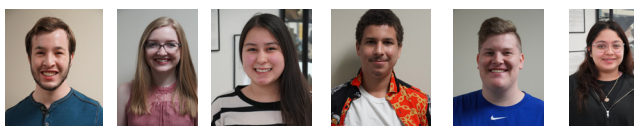
Though our 2020 honors cohort was COVID-affected, the 2019 group really bore the brunt of the disease’s dislocation. Six qualified for the meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council which turned from an exciting congress, to a googling bout to turn in the right kind of video file. The 2019 group never experienced an actual meeting of the Great Plains Honors Council or what we have come to call our “Thank You Dinner” in the Spring. Their 2000 spring poster contest went virtual, and the one last spring occurred with masks. Our sophomore seminar this past year registered some of the effects, whittling down to our smallest group yet.

The 2019 cohort, however, never flagged when it came to the higher-order challenges. Their 2019 film, starring Maritza Quinones as Adina de Zavala, and produced by Jalyn English won a \$600 Caldwell Award for the best project in history produced by any university or college group. Two won Caldwell essay awards--Cox, and Quinones. English has published an essay, in a regional journal, and Cox and Elmore are on the docket to publish two more. Quinones was elected to the top student spot of the GPHC. We fortunately have an aid to memory--the honors website--which now features Jaidyn Thompson’s vodcast on lawyer Harold Nix, Katelyn Cox’s magical first-place Texas poem, and English’s excellent Zavala film trailer.

Regional Vanguard



NTCC won 3 of the 4 cash Caldwell Awards at the virtual meeting of the State Webb Society for the best essays in Texas history. Aaliyah Avellaneda, Maxime Risner, and Dorali Hernandez placed 1st, 3rd, and 4th. In the poster contest of the Great Plains Honors Council, NTCC won 2 of the 8 cash awards. Avellaneda, and our GPHC Student Rep, Maritza Quinones both won Britt Awards! The GPHC has 80 university and college honors programs, and NTCC not only excelled in posters, but had our largest contingent of students qualify--14. Everyone shown here presented a panel or poster.



Spring Happenings



We thank Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, Ned and Margaret Muse for our spring trip to the Big D. Read like a book above we see J. English, I. Perez, Brian Ramirez, J. Laney, C. Bennett, H. Barnes, J. Thompson, C. Alcocer-Salas, and J. Rodriguez. We took in Starbucks, the Heard Wildlife preserve in McKinney, the North Park Centre, and the Andretti Experience in Frisco. Our 2021 McGraw Hill poster contest took place with masks, but still drew 14 community judges.

Winners of the 13th Annual McGraw-Hill Poster Contest



Thanks to VP Kevin Rose it was the 1st time all posters were professionally printed. The winners (below left) were: Brian Ramirez, 1st, Maxime Risner, 2nd, Cade Bennett, 3rd, and John Rodriguez, 4th. We are so thankful again this spring to our anonymous donor who now has funded 18 \$100 Eckman Awards for those who perform best in our honors seminars. Aaliyah Avellaneda was our Stat-Psych Seminar winner. Katelyn Cox was our sophomore winner. The 2021 \$200 Chitsey Award for the honors student who most out-performed expectations went to Hilda Rodriguez. Finally, Jalyn English won a Coca Cola Gold Award nationally.



Deo Gratias! “Culture of Student Success” By Dr. A. Yox, Honors Director

The NTCC catalog of 2019-20 was the first to announce that the paramount goal of the college was “student success.” “Student success” has a close association to the needs of our region, the recent history of our college, and to our remarkable national ethos--the American Dream. First, our region of Northeast Texas with all its wonderful lakes, loblolly pines, and wildflower extravaganzas, lags considerably in income, health, and education compared to urban centers. Our students need a special boost. Second, with all of our limitations, NTCC has become a powerhouse of measured student success on the national level. After a decade of ten Jack Kent Cookes and a yearly average of over five national awards, NTCC has a natural propensity to wave the flag of what it represents.

The NTCC culture of student success is unique in the way it is monetized, intervarsity and contextualized. Earning and learning coincide—through special awards, donated scholarships, the honors-pays first system launched by our NTCC administrators, and negligible costs. As universities are our key competitors, our success is appropriately intervarsity. Our student election wins in the GPHC, our Cawdells, Britts, student publications on the state level, and entries to the NCHC all come at the expense of university competi-

tors. Finally, we tell stories about our success. In 2021, we are averaging one press release pertaining to student success, or student opportunities, per week.

All this is worth it! Our regional students deserve to have greater influence in the national culture. As the children of the upper 9.9 percent of wage earners continue to monopolize the best universities, our students can certainly benefit from an innovative culture of student success. Let others name names, our students will cite accolades. We need leaders who can appreciate the work of communal action. In short, the American Dream, and our regional ethos both are in need of encouragement and development. We are thankful for the way our honors team of administrators, donors, educators (including our NCHC-PTK double-prize-winning Coordinator, Andrea Reyes, below!), students, and parents have performed this very task.

