

Jack Kent Cooke Reunion

July, 2023

N
NORTHEAST TEXAS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Volume: 16
Issue: 1

ALACRITY



Former winners of the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship from NTCC: Daniel Landaverde, Aaliyah Avellaneda, Clara Ramirez, and Brenda Godoy, 16 June 2023.

Unique among small colleges, NTCC can claim eleven Jack Kent Cooke scholars, all elected since 2010. The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation has conferred through the years, the most lucrative transfer scholarship in the United States with only forty-to-sixty awards each year. Today JKC scholarships are worth \$165,000 for up to three years of study. They also come with the opportunity to win second substantial JKC scholarships when entering graduate school. To date, at least four NTCC scholars, Stephani Calderon, Brenda Godoy, Clara Ramirez, and Jessica Velazquez have each won two JKC scholarships.

On a June Friday in Mount Pleasant, for the first time, thanks to the donors of Honors Northeast, four former NTCC JKC winners came together. All four live in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. They shared experiences with each other, and also told their stories to four current NTCC students whose current profiles resemble the trajectory set by our JKC pioneers.

NTCC's JKC alumni included, Daniel Landaverde who now works as an associate for the world-leading brokerage firm of Marsh; Aaliyah Avellaneda, who is contemplating law school as a student at Southern Methodist University; Clara Ramirez, who just earned an MBA and accepted a residency at Duke University, and Brenda Godoy who has just finished her first year of med school at the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Worth.

The four had much in common in addition to a willingness to be in Mount Pleasant during a Father's Day weekend. Each while at NTCC presented a scholarly work at the National Collegiate Honors Council. Each published an essay they had completed in Texas history at NTCC. Each were active in campus life at NTCC. Brenda Godoy, and Daniel Landaverde took leading roles in Honors Northeast film productions. Clara Ramirez was the winner of NTCC's 2nd McGraw Hill Poster contest back in 2009. Avellaneda conducted perhaps the finest student interview in college history after president Clinton arranged for her to meet former Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff in the Biggers Room of NTCC during the COVID fall of 2020. All four participated in the donor-funded day-trips of Honors Northeast. All have already helped NTCC students with the JKC process.



Hitting the Top of the Charts: Jordan Chapin and Skylar Fondren

In 22 American states, it was not a good year for community college students seeking the nation's highest honors for merit-only awards. Students from Utah, Georgia, Massachusetts, and other states failed to gain a foothold in 2023 in the Hites, All-USA, Guistwhite, and Coca-Cola Gold lists of Phi Theta Kappa. But a smaller, semi-rural college in Texas this year had two students on these lists. We are referring to NTCC, to Jordan Chapin (left, above) and Skylar Fondren (right). The two placed on the All-USA and Coca-Cola Gold lists respectively, gaining alluring cachets as national leaders, and also winning \$5,000, and \$1,500.

All-USA judges, in a contest sponsored by the educational company, Centage, culled 20 from a group of 2,400 top nominees. Jordan Chapin symbolized the way in which NTCC's Phi Theta Kappa association, Alpha Mu Chi, and *Honors Northeast* have worked together to produce top candidates. Chapin was not only president of the Texas Regional Organization of Phi Theta



ta Kappa but the College's Russell-Mowery Scholar who presented at the National Collegiate Honors Association, and helped win the college's premiere Portia Gordon Awards with her essay on legendary housewives. The Coca-Cola Gold winner, our Texas Heritage National Bank Scholar, Skylar Fondren, also brought major honors to the contest. She was the student leader of the Great Plains Honors Council, an association of both university and college students, and a winner of Britt, Gordon, and McGraw Hill Awards for her essay on news deserts.

Both were devoted advocates of NTCC. Fondren was an avid reader and writer, the partisan of the *Eagle* newspaper, and the ebullient contributor to NTCC's two-year skein of Caldwell Chapter Project Awards in film. Chapin was more scientific, and sensitive, more of a rising star than a flamboyant intellect. She won a Chitsey Award for exceeding expectations, and then an REU in research last summer.

First Major Alumni Gift: Emmalea Cunningham



"East Texas Giving Day" made for a niche outreach this last May. Since 2009, the alumni of *Honors Northeast* have scattered. Stability and wage-rates have accrued. Though it was not the 1st alumni donation, Emmalea Cunningham's gift this last May, especially when doubled by the NTCC Foundation, represents the 1st substantial gift from this source. Cunningham gained her Doctorate in Physical Therapy and works with her husband in Georgetown. Two-time JKC winner, Jessica Velasquez also provided a gracious gift. We remain beholden mostly still to our established donors like Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery, below. But these gifts open new vistas of possibility!



Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

College Leaders

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

Honors Committee: Skylar Fondren, Dr. Drew Murphy, Heidi Wooten, and Dr. Andrew Yox.

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

Honors Coordinator: Melody Mott
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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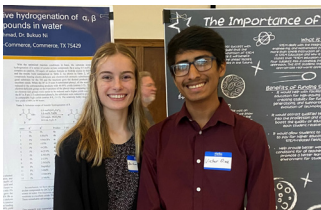
Alacritous
Alumni

Our Beneficent Benefactors



2023-2024 promises to be as good a year as any thanks to the solid support of donors who have supported our enterprises since our first 3 years of operation! We are awed again by gifts from John and Jan Bryan, Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, Karen Harmon and Dr. Charles Florio.

A Tribute to our Sophomores



Our 2023 graduating class, on paper, one of our weaker cohorts in terms of high school rankings, set amazing new precedents. They were the first group to give us the panel that earned Portia Gordon Awards. At the East Texas Historical Association in 2022, Jordan Chapin, Skylar Fondren, and Evan Sears won this same award that undergraduate scholars from Texas A&M at College Station had won in 2019. They were also the second cohort in our history to earn back-to-back State of Texas Caldwell Project Awards. Twice, our 2023 cohort could say that they were instrumental in compiling the best project in Texas history, of any university or college group in the state. This was our first cohort to have at one time the student leaders of both Phi Theta Kappa in Texas, and the Great Plains Honors Council. In the latter case, Skylar Fondren defeated a university student for the position. Intervarsity success marked their tenure.

Regional Vanguard



(Far Left) Film group on radio with Collins Knighton. Our filmwork led to our 5th \$600 Caldwell Project Award, received in El Paso. Neida Perez will represent NTCC at TAFE in Orlando this summer. (Lower Left) Neida Perez placed second in the state for an upper-division \$300 Caldwell for her article on Texas vs. Microbes. Aubrey Watson placed 4th in the lower division for her essay on the Cowboy Church. NTCC honors students dominated the first Red River Symposium in Texarkana. (Right) Scholars who presented in El Paso at the Webb Meeting, and at Wichita Falls at the GPHC.



An anonymous donor has funded 24 \$100 Eckman Awards for students who have the highest academic scores in honors seminars. This past spring, Victor Diaz won the 2nd-year award for best overall Seminar performance, and Neida Perez won her second Eckman for excellence in the Stat-Psych Seminar.



Anonymous donors also re-enabled our Thank-You Dinner, after a 3-year hiatus. It was a fun time at JoJack's in MP, with the spirit of a reunion. S. Fondren and S. Pollen presented our film project on the Texas Suffragettes. We thank Ann Goodson for the Suffragette quilt given to our preeminent film donors, the Mowerys.



Though this group had the two national winners on the cover of this issue, two other scholars won Eckman awards amidst the competitive free-for-all of this cohort, Victor Diaz, and Hope Kelly.

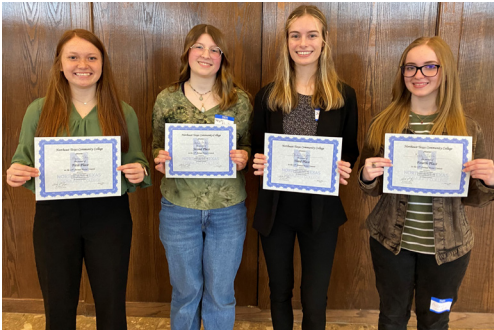


Spring Happenings



We thank Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, and others for our 31th day trip, an exquisite journey last January to Dallas. We took in Starbucks, explored Klyde Warren Park (above), the Dallas Museum of Art, North Park Center, Oak Point Park, the Galleria for ice-skating, and the Garland Theatre for “A Few Good Men.” To the right we see the winners of our annual McGraw Hill Poster Contest. Left to Right: In first, Alyssa Ochoa (\$400) 2nd: Skylar Fondren (\$300), Jordan Chapin

Winners of the 15th-Annual McGraw-Hill Poster Contest



3rd: \$200 and Maddy Smith, 4th: \$100. For these awards, we so thank Beverley Kelley of Mount Vernon. She is our most generous unseen donor ever. McGraw Hill contributed. We thank Casy Slaght, and Bill Welsh of Dubuque, Iowa. The poster contest also subsists due to generous local judges. This year we single-out Andrea Reyes and Rev. Dr. Wayne Renning. Each has judged the contest over 10 times. Below, we thank the Chitsey/Hearron families for our 11th Chitsey Award for the Honors student who most exceeded expectations. Our winner: Maddy Smith of Winnsboro. She is shown with honors professors, Dr. Karyn Skaar and Dr. Paula Wilhite.



Deo Gratias! “Culture and Community” By Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director

Since 2007, the mission of *Honors Northeast* has involved the exciting objective to “enhance the cultural vitality of the college and its community.” This has since become a staple of our “Mozart Hypothesis,” that with proper backing, college scholars can contribute directly to culture. At times, this seems like just another grandiose velleity, with honors students and director failing to win or impress an audience. But in an elemental sense, is not the paramount objective of *Honors Northeast*, to “develop original ideas and successful projects,” also tied to this overriding possibility? We want to instill in our students not just public service initiatives in the form of charitable donations, but to fuse the sense of public service with their career goals. Education from this vantage point, must put our students in the batter’s box rather than on the sidelines. Their essays, poems, films, vodcasts, posters, and presentations are supposed to matter.

More and more, we find that the effort to influence culture requires the resources of the whole community. Our students need poetry to make their ideas attractive, and therefore they need to hear master poets like Dan Boyd of Wood County during our poetry readings. Without our local judges, our poster contest would devolve into a bureaucratic formality. Our presenters learn by teaching as they experience local audiences at the Mount Pleasant Library, and during our late-October luncheon for donors. Finally, we can help

students take the leap into public-mindedness as our donors provide special social amenities which reflect the community’s interest in them.

This summer I am so pleased that the level of community support for our film agenda has exceeded all previous standards. This could become a problem. But we are thankful for the possibility to experiment. Aspiring regional filmmaker, Allen Herald, and his associate, Hannah Goldblum, below right, have agreed to work with our student leaders (left). Our script on the traveling preachers of early Texas received a very significant input from the research of Reverend Dan Hoke of Franklin County (below in tie). Ann and Kenny Goodson of Hughes Springs, who have helped us with so much of the visual and musical backdrop of our previous films, have already contributed significantly to this effort.

