

Alacritous Alumni



Miguel and Maritza (Quinones) Paco. He was our Cypress Bank Scholar, and she, a Britt-award winner. He produced our Caldwell-winning 2018 film, she starred in our 2019 film on Adina de Zavala. In 2 separate honors cohorts, they met again, and are now married in Tyler. She plans to graduate this December with a Master's degree in occupational therapy.

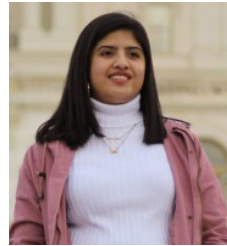


Israel Perez is now engaged, and living in Austin. He was our only student to have ever published an article in the *Texas Handbook*, and he did this on Bo Pilgrim. He graduated from UT Austin with a degree in advertising. In our Shelby film, he was Lee Iacocca. Now, he has served as project manager and strategist for the Ford luxury car, the Lincoln Navigator. He has patented several of his ideas. One involves a solution for docking large boats. For this invention, he collaborated with the engineering department of UT Austin.

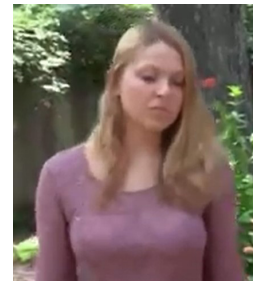
Miranda Mendoza, oldest sister of our current award-winning scholar, Emma, presented at the 2014 Denver NCHC, served as our film scholar for our production on Harriet Potter Ames, and placed 2nd in our poetry contest. She graduated from East Texas A&M at Commerce, and in 2023, accepted a position as the General Manager of the Festive Kitchen, a high-end specialty food shop in the Dallas area. She enjoys traveling and has made three forays into Brazil.



Leivy Zuniga appeared in our film on Sam Houston and the Cherokee, and developed a project on Texas' gun-toting Governors who also appeared as cowboys and supported the death penalty. She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in engineering, and now is celebrating her one-year anniversary as a civil design engineer with Lackland of Fort Worth.



Maxime Risner covered every base of excellence, winning a Caldwell, placing in the McGraw Hill and poetry contests, presenting at the NCHC in Orlando, and publishing her article



in *Touchstone* on rural veterinarians. She helped "save" our film in the COVID summer of 2020 by playing the role of Patty Pilgrim. She is set to graduate this April with a Master's in Veterinary Forensic Science at the University of Florida. She is also engaged to be married.

Victor Diaz was the associate producer of our Caldwell-Prize winning film on Carroll Shelby which he presented at several venues before making it to the NCHC in Dallas. He was also an Eckman Award winner, and a McGraw Hill poster winner.



Diaz graduated from UT Tyler in December of 2025. He is currently working at Tyler Legacy High School as a colorguard technician, and working on his teacher certification.

ALACRITY



18th Time at the NCHC: An NTCC Team of Scholars

The continual admittance of our honors students into the oldest and most exclusive inter-iversity honors conference in the United States is a function of a unique synergy. What other community college has something like a "Dr. and Mrs. Bradley Witt Scholarship" to cover the attendance of a student to the meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) every year? What state hands out more student awards for scholarship in the spring than Texas? This allows us to propose proven regional winners. With our donor-funded films in the summer, and donor-funded contests, NTCC's honors students maintain a year-round tradition of scholarship. The team that went to San Diego last November had thus already won two State Caldwell Awards, two McGraw Hill Poster Awards, two Red River Symposium awards, and four Portia Gordon Awards of the East Texas Historical Association. The films that we discussed won a Group Caldwell Research Award, and a Walter Webb Chapter Award.

The 5 honors students who made the cut above were Emma Mendoza, Stephanie Hernandez, Yahir Garcia, Estefani Garcia, and Andrew Higgins. Combined they have maintained a GPA of 3.8, and have been an integral part of the excitement that has attended our recent accolades in biology, Phi Theta Kappa, film projects and history. In San Diego all received some outstanding feedback. Groups of one-to-six, many of them professionals, formed continually before our four poster presenters, engaging in an often vigorous Q and A. Dr. Melissa Etzler, a vivacious director of Honors at Butler University, who attended the group's film panel, found the group's work remarkable and inspiring. Professorial leaders of the Great Plains Honors Council, the regional offshoot of the NCHC, again applauded the success of another GPHC student leader from NTCC, in this case, our Stephanie Hernandez. One month before the NCHC, Hernandez set a new NTCC record, winning her 6th cash award for scholarship.

Regional Banks Make a Difference



The 2025 book, the *Banker Who Made America*, shows that from the beginning of our history, bankers have served as key enablers and energizers of the community. Though this became more arduous in Texas after the oil slump of 1985, and the over-regulation that attended local banks after 2008, our regional bankers have played a pivotal role in our honors program since the beginning. Above, Hernan L. Mata, Vice President of Cypress Bank, transfers a new laptop to Jasmine Landaverde. This is the 18th time Cypress has so enabled one of our scholars! Below, Ian Mares became a pioneer Sid Greer Scholar, thanks to the generosity of Texas Heritage National Bank



Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

College Leaders

President: Dr. Kevin Rose
Exec. VP Advancement: Dr. Jon McCullough
VP Instruction: Dr. Anna Ingram

Honors Committee: Araceli Landaverde, Emma Mendoza, **Professors:** Dr. Andrew Daniel, Dr. Melissa Fulgham, Dr. Chris McAllister, Dr. Drew Murphy, Dr. Karyn Skaar, Heidi Wooten, and Dr. Andrew Yox..

Secretary: Elizabeth Simas

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?

903-434-8229 • ayox@ntcc.edu
www.ntcc.edu/honors

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In this
Edition:

Regional
Vanguard

Caring
Donors

Alacritous
Alumni



John Bryan (1942-2025). Reticent and unassuming, John Bryan was a vital reason we have had honors at NTCC, as well as the skin of high-level student successes since 2010. A graduate of SMU, Bryan served on the Board of Trustees of NTCC for 20 years, starting in 1996. His enthusiasm for an honors program matched President Charles B. Florio’s, and in 2007, before any of the current honors professors or the director was an advocate of such a program, Bryan and Florio had the plan for honors in motion. After the launch of the program, Bryan was a warm supporter, and friend of honors as he was of other NTCC ventures. As a trustee of Texas Heritage National Bank, he supported the THNB Scholarship in 2016 which was the most prestigious Presidential Scholarship for a decade, and he helped implement the Sid Greer Scholarship in 2025. He also gave many other financial gifts to the program. Days before his death, he texted Dr. Yox apologizing that he had fallen behind in his “charity.”

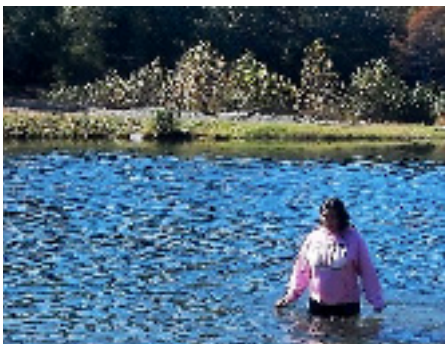


Awards: We thank our anonymous donor for the 31st, and 32nd \$100 Eckman Awards for star performances in honors seminars. To the left, Ian Mares for the “BioTex” Fall Seminar, and Araceli Landaverde for the “HuMusic Seminar.” To the right, Emma Mendoza won the eighth \$200 Dr. Charles B. Florio Award for leadership, Mendoza was the 2025 film director of the award-winning *Chicano Thermidor*, and also the NTCC chapter president of Phi Theta Kappa. Below left, winners of the 4th annual Cunningham Conceptualization Contest in Texas History, in honor of Emma (Shaw) Cunningham: Emma Mendoza, Xenia Ezparza, and Manuel Ramirez. To the right, winners of the annual Image Contest. Andrew Perez contributed a beautiful sunset over Lake Bob Sandlin, and Andrew Higgins, an image of a rustic road in Hopkins County.

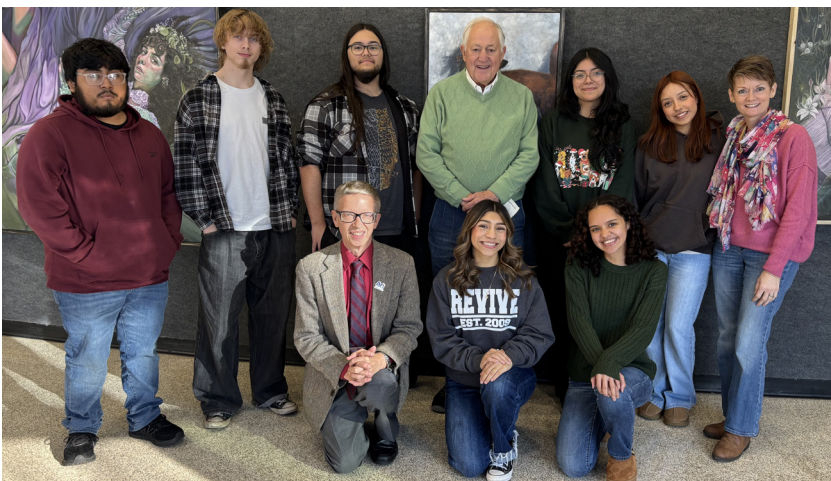




In October, the Northeast Texas Community College Foundation received a generous donation from Carol Hodges of Hughes Springs. These funds will help Honors Northeast to continue its legacy of unique special projects, annual feature-length films, public events, special trips of research, and scholarly contests. Pictured above are Dr. Andrew Yox--NTCC Honors Director, Estefani Garcia, Stephanie Hernandez, Carol Hodges, Andrew Higgins, and Yahir Garcia. Carol Hodges and her husband Bruce Hodges, now deceased, settled in Northeast Texas in 1976.



Honors Professor Chris McAllister's excursions in biological discovery concinue. Estefani Garcia uses a seine in Oklahoma (left). The group discovered a new species of myxosporean in the gills of a spotted sucker, *Minytrema melanops*. Right: Stephanie Hernandez studying samples taken from the Sabine. Hernandez has two articles accepted for publication in the *Taxonimst*, and the *Southwestern Naturalist*.

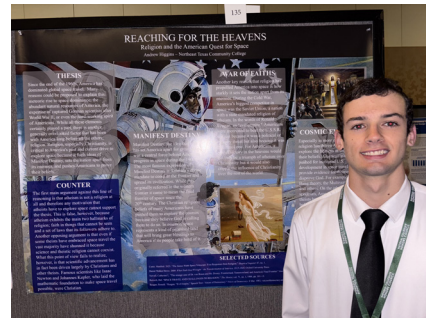


Getting Together: We thank Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery for our eleventh theatre trip, last December, to witness *Little Women*, in Kilgore (left above). Authors from every generation in American life since Louisa May Alcott first wrote the story in 1868 have tried to put their spin on this classic American story. Emma Mendoza, who had read the original tale, commented that the Kilgore play, was “wonderful,” and that “it is real treat to enjoy cultural experiences like this.”- To the right above, honors student officers: Emma Mendoza, Araceli Landaverde, José Fuentes, and Karen Hernandez.

Beneficent Benefactors



Every new month, it seems, presents us with a reason to thank Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery for their support. Our poetry and poster contests, our films, our excursions to see Shakespeare have stemmed from their gifts or the gifts of their friends.



James and Elizabeth Whatley not only contributed 2.6 million dollars to NTCC. Part of their 1.7-million dollar gift in 2007 established a yearly scholarship in honors. This year's winner of the scholarship was Andrew Higgins. Higgins, in turn became the point man for NTCC's 40 Stories in 40 Years video project.



The family of Dr. and Mrs Bradley Witt of Mount Pleasant established a special scholarship to aid the travel of one scholar to the yearly meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council. This year's winner was Estefani Garcia.

Our Film, *Chicano Thermidor, Art and Identity in San Antonio 1970-1995*



Our 2025 film was the first to focus exclusively on the Mexican American community, and the first to shoot both audaciously and successfully outdoors in an unregulated urban environment. Director Emma Mendoza showed how kindness and throughput could work hand in hand. Unit Production Director Hailey Randall showed that the crew and set could actually start filming by sunrise, and cinematographer/producer Johnathan Ventura, that it is fruitless to complain about the heat when the guy who has the pulse of the audio and visual of every scene is wearing a hoodie. Community support for the film was like caissons moored in bedrock. The Mowery and Stevenson families made time rather than funding the issue of concern. Composer Kenny Goodson not only made every deadline but greatly minimized the possibility of fumbling, or failing to hand off large domains of data. One actor fell sick but former Presidential Scholar Alison Majors jumped in at the last minute and performed beautifully.



The film premiered 19 February, and earned a \$600 Chapter Caldwell Award at the meeting of the Texas State Historical Association in Irving, Texas, as the best project in Texas history of any collegiate or university group.

Regional Vanguard



NTCC Scholars to the left have won their third set of \$100 Portia Gordon Awards of the East Texas Historical Association. Again, in the fall of 2025 they had the best student panel of any university or college group. They were anchored by S. Hernandez's prize-winning work, Y. Garcia's essay about our films, and E. Garcia's work on Mary Kay. To the right, Stephanie Hernandez won the student election of the Great Plains Honors Council in October. She thus represents the students of 70 honors colleges and programs from Nebraska to Texas. Hernandez won the GPHC's Britt Award last spring.



Fall Happenings

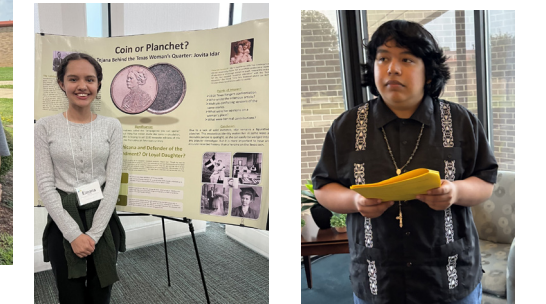


Winners of the 18th Northeast Texas Poetry Contest

We thank Drs. Jim and Paula Archer for our 36th day trip--to For Worth. What an amazing legacy. This time we enjoyed Starbucks, the United States Bureau of Engraving north of Fort Worth, the Fort Worth cultural district, and *Four Day Weekend Comedy*. Right, the winners of our 2025 Northeast Texas Poetry Contest, Adam Richards (1st), Johnathan Ventura (2nd), Stephanie Hernandez (3rd), and Yahir Garcia (4th). For this lucrative event we thank Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery, and



and other friends. Another special yearly honors scholarship that we have appreciated is the Gladys Winkle, won through the agency of the late Tom Wilkinson who was a special patron of the Humanities at NTCC. This year's winner is Emma Mendoza (below left). Mendoza, featured elsewhere in this *Alacrity* as our film director, and winner of the Dr Charles Florio Award for leadership, is the third of three sisters who have all been high-achievers in honors. Dr. Jerry Wesson, author of NTCC's history, *The Miracle on FM 1735*, and former Dean of Student Services, bears the name of another scholarship. His son, Scott enabled this in 2018. This year's winner is José Fuentes (below right). Fuentes is currently a Jack Kent Cooke semifinalist running for PTK's highest office.



Deo Gratias! "Reflections on the 40th" By Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director

As NTCC celebrates its 40th, the word that comes to mind is Dr. Wesson's 'miracle'. In terms of timing, the college was a phenomenon. The tri-county election that gave birth to the college in 1984 came after 15 years of anomalous, against-the-grain prosperity. Coal & oil-rich Texas, had been addressing the 1970s energy crisis, and had missed its associated depression. Had the election occurred a year later, after the terrible Texas oil glut of 1985 ended the era, could the college have gotten its votes? By 1984, Paris Junior College had maintained a ten-year base in Mount Pleasant. What if that had continued?

The college's just-in-time youth of the 1990s, and early 2000s gave it a vitality that attracted good professors, and allowed it to experiment. In recent years if "student success" can be measured objectively, that is, in relation to other colleges, there is a phenomenal aspect, that should be attracting attention. A college of 3,000 among the nation's 8.5 million community-college students, should not be winning Coca-Cola scholarships, All-USA Team designations, Hites, Guistwhite Awards, and Jack Kent Cooke citations like this. Its students should not be publishing essays in biology. It should not have had the last-8 elected student representatives of the Great Plains Honors Council. It should not be dominating Texas history scholarship with the TSHA and the ETHA. It should not be the only community college in the

country to have sent scholars to the NCHC since 2008. In relation to national narratives, NTCC is like a Kuiper Belt Object. Think of the planetoid Makemake (MAH-kee-MAH—kee), known for its remarkable brightness and distinctive orbital. No one sees it. But its not because its dull; its because its not where it is supposed to be. NTCC does not fit the narratives of how politics has overtaken scholarship, or how student minds have been "closed," or "coddled." It doesn't fit the "high-tuition hoax" or "death spiral" narratives, or even the "dual-enrollment/online takeover paradigm"—at least not—and God forbid--yet!

NTCC has a great team, with an incentivization corridor for students, a belief that mentoring can make a difference, wonderful patrons, concerted parents, audacious students, and college personnel willing to go above and beyond. We can give thanks for this miraculous time and circumstance, even if it escapes notice. For perhaps the only thing here to emulate is a degree of supererogation and sacrifice that few really want to emulate.

