

**SAFETY STEPS // MPHS CONSTRUCTION // SCHOOL FEATURES**

# **INSIDE MPISD**

**A PUBLICATION OF MOUNT PLEASANT ISD**

*Welcome Home*



**VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1**

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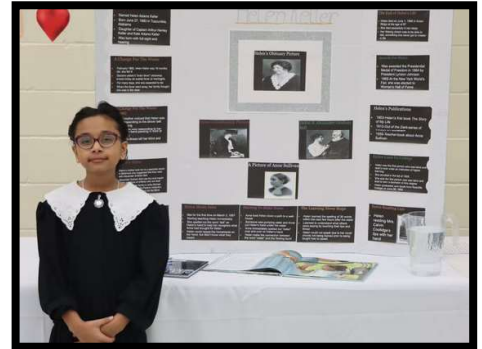


**Corprew Garden  
Pg. 18**

**Safety  
measures  
at MPHS  
Pg. 9**



**Veterans Day  
Pgs. 14-15**



**Sims Wax Museum  
Pg. 23**

# Contents

<b>Message from Superintendent</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Former students return to MPISD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Safety measures</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Remodeled MPHS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Campus Features</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>MPISD Foundation</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Catching up with Alumni</b>	<b>27</b>

**On the Cover: MPHS alumni return as teachers**

## INSIDE MPISD MAGAZINE

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# Superintendent Message

MPISD Superintendent  
of Schools Judd Marshall



## **We are Blessed**

With the holiday season upon us, this time of year reminds me of how blessed we are as a community and a school district. We have so many things to be thankful for and we truly have an outstanding school district. When I started working at Mount Pleasant Independent School District 25 years ago, I knew very few people in this community. Mount Pleasant had always seemed like a good place to me, and I was excited to start working here.

I came to Mount Pleasant High School as a teacher and a coach, and it did not take me long to realize that Mount Pleasant was a pretty close community with many familial ties. My first year at MPHS was exciting and I learned many great things about our school district.

One of the things that impressed me about our district was the amount of community support that we enjoyed. Families, businesses, churches, and alumni were involved in our school district and always supported our various extracurricular activities. I witnessed over and over again a large number of people in attendance at our sporting events and after school activities on all of our campuses. I firmly believe that successful communities and successful school districts take a lot of pride in what they do. Those communities put a lot of effort into their schools and place an emphasis on the education of their kids. This was evident in our community, and this led me to make Mt. Pleasant my home.

As I think about where we are today, I have never been happier to be a Mount Pleasant Tiger. I am proud of what we have accomplished over the past few years as our school district has excelled in so many areas. Our UIL Academic Teams are excelling like never before, we passed a \$55 million bond in 2019, our athletic teams work very hard to excel on the athletic fields, and our teachers work hard to challenge our students academically every single day. We have the best Child Development Center in the state, and our elementary schools are simply outstanding. We offer a true Dual Language Program for all elementary school stu-

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**As I think about where  
we are today, I have  
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a Mount Pleasant Tiger.**

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dents. Our middle and junior high schools do an awesome job of helping kids come together from the four elementary schools and learn at a high level. Both of those campuses are vital to ensuring that all of their students are easily acclimated to their new surroundings.

It is not an easy task to accomplish that feat at that age level. At the high school level, our Career Technical Education Programs, AP Programs, and Dual Credit Programs are the best in the state of Texas, and our students greatly benefit from those programs.

We have so many course offerings that I cannot even begin to address all of them, but I can assure you that we are ahead of the game in this area. Our high school graduation rate has averaged over 99% for the past five years and that is unheard of in most public schools in Texas.

In closing, we are truly blessed to live in and be a part of such an awesome community and school district. My two kids are growing up here, and they would never want to be anywhere else. My family is proud and excited to continue to be able to live here and call this place home. I hope each of you has a wonderful holiday season, and may God bless each of you and your families. Go Tigers!!

**Judd Marshall MPISD Superintendent of Schools**

# Home, Sweet Home

Jazmin Garcia

By JOHN WHITTEN  
MPHS Publications Advisor

When students graduate from college, the decision on where to start their professional career can be a daunting task.

Some seek the excitement of a big city.

Others like the lure of a smaller town.

Then there are some who prefer the comforts of home.

For some former MPHS graduates, coming back to MPISD was the perfect choice.

These are their stories.



Jazmin Garcia

## Taylor Bartlett

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

After graduating from college I was offered a job at Chapel Hill to teach 1st grade. I taught 1st grade from January 2022-May 2022. Halfway through the year I got the offer to come teach biology at MPHS. I immediately knew I was going to take the job. MP is home and very familiar. I had always known I would want to teach somewhere that I went to school and was very happy to get the offer to come back to MPISD.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I teach 10th grade biology but do have a few freshman.

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I enjoy making a positive impact on my students. Many of them do not have any one who is truly there and supports them. I like being able to be there for them academically but also personally. It is nice being able to have real life conversations and helping them navigate through their high school journey.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

As I was in high school I never thought I would come back and be a teacher. But I did know I wanted to go to college to help others. After being in college I later decided I wanted to be a teacher. I know so many teachers that had such a positive impact on me here at MP.

Now as I navigate through my 1st year teaching high school I look back at those teachers that had such a positive impact and try to model my teaching technique



Taylor Bartlett

after them.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

The two teachers that have inspired me the most while in high school and even now are Mrs. Young and Mrs. Karen Williams. I remember being in Mrs. William's biology class my freshman year and Mrs. Young's my senior year.

While going through both of their classes I remember thinking how knowledgeable they were and therefore made biology easy to learn.

Their classes both had interactive notebook that I still have today and often look back at them for teaching tools to use in my own biology class.

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

I was raised here in Mount Pleasant and went all my years to MPISD schools. I wanted to work close to home and when I was offered a position at MPHS, I thought it was perfect because I was already working at the school. I was already familiar with the campus especially after the new renovations and the staff were all so nice, so I couldn't imagine starting my first-year teaching anywhere else.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

9th Grade Algebra

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I enjoy being able to connect with the students and just being able to see my students' confidence grow in math everyday, especially those who mentioned to me initially that math was not their strongest subject.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

From elementary to high school, there were so many great teachers that I had who are still currently teaching for the district. Some of those teachers and staff made a difference in my life and I decided that teaching would give me the opportunity to be that person for other students.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

I had one teacher who inspired me the most to go into education and that was Mrs. Zaldivar. She was my soccer coach in high school, who not only pushed me to work hard on the field but also off the field. She inspired me to not give up on pursuing my dreams and to work hard for them. She was someone who saw potential in me and made sure I knew that. I was inspired to be the teacher that encourages and motivates students to not give up in and outside of school.

# Home, Sweet Home

## Rosie Gonzalez

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

I grew up in Mount Pleasant. The environment, people and teachers I had inspired me to want to teach as soon as I graduated. Mount Pleasant has always been my home and I could not imagine teaching in any other place.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

2nd Grade - One Way Dual Language (ELAR, SLAR, Math, Science/Social Studies)

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

One of the things I enjoy the most about being an educator is becoming someone important in a child's life. The power one person can hold to impact a child in or out of school is an amazing feeling. I love being able to connect with my students through different ways, not just through curriculum.

I love being able to talk to my students and simply enjoy conversations even when they are giving me life advice (only being 7 years old.) I love how even though they are children they will say and do things to fill you with love and affection.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?



Rosie Gonzalez

Growing up I probably had some of the best teachers in the district. As I went through Annie Sims, E.C Brice, Middle School, Jr and High School I felt like I was receiving more than just an education. I was receiving life advice, love, affection, reassurance, support and inspiration to follow my dreams. Since Kindergarten I knew I wanted to be a teacher and

every great teacher I had only confirmed it as the years went by.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

It is so hard to just choose one teacher but the ones that truly impacted me were Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Walker, Coach D, Mrs. Turbyfill, Mr. Guzman, Mrs. Crowder, and Mr. Whitten. But the teacher who inspired me the most by going above and beyond to help me achieve my dreams was Mrs. Sweeden.

When I first started High School, I knew I wanted to be in the Ready, Set Teach Program but never knew it would impact me the way it did. Mrs. Sweeden always pushed me to do my best and to never stop even after I reached my goals. Through competitions, babysitting, tears and smiles I was able to learn a lot from her. She was the one who helped me apply to work for MPISD, who went out of her way to help me look for opportunities to attend college and that is the reason I am where I am today.

I could not have done it without her. She did not only support me as a teacher/student but emotionally and mentally. I was able to grow a bond with her that went above her simply being my teacher. She was, is and will continue to be my role model, mother figure and friend.

## Nancy Ibarra

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

I wanted to come back and teach for MPISD because of their educational system and how well everything runs under them, not to mention all the positive and helpful people I found along my journey who influenced me to choose MPISD. I felt very welcomed when choosing this district.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

Pre-K dual language

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I love knowing that at the end of the day my students are leaving with smiles on their face yelling out that they love me. In pre-k you get to build that positive educational outlook towards school to help them begin their school journey. Being able to give them a positive, safe, and fun learning environment while they are in my class is my favorite part, es-



Nancy Ibarra

pecially to those students who need that extra happiness and love in their life. Knowing that I am the reason they go on to kindergarten with a positive mindset to actually enjoy school fulfills me.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

While in high school, I got the opportunity to shadow several teachers in the district during my time in the program Ready, Set, Teach. And now I'm very thankful Mrs. Sweeden helped me discover my calling.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

Funny story, Mrs. Sweeden, my former teacher at MPHS, told me I would love this field and that I should try it. It wasn't my thing until I finally gave in and started the program. I loved every moment of it and knew this was what I needed to do. I'm very thankful for her for always believing in me and pushing me to give it a try.

Two other teachers who still inspire me today are Mrs. Yani and Mrs. Sandra, teachers at the Child Development Center.

I had the opportunity to do my student teaching with them and loved how passionate and amazing they are at their job. I'm very grateful for them as well.

# Home, Sweet Home

## Allyson Ingram

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

I came through MPISD as a student, and I couldn't imagine working anywhere else because of the time I've spent in the district. I always have been and always will be a Mount Pleasant Tiger.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I teach General Education at Vivian Fowler Elementary. The grade level I teach is fourth grade, and I feel so blessed to be in these students' lives.

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I have enjoyed getting to know each of my students. They are all so different, and they are equally incredible in their own ways. I think just being in a position to have an impact on my students' lives has been my favorite part about being an educator.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

I was in FFA in high school, and every year, we participated in an event called, "Education Day." Kindergarten-aged students would file



Allyson Ingram

into the ag pavilion behind the civic center, eager to learn about what agriculture had to offer. I was blessed with the opportunity to work in the Texas Farm Bureau trailer for the four years I was a part of the organization. I taught the students about cow and pig by-products as well as their primary uses like meat. I think that each

time I was given the task to teach, I realized more and more how much I loved developing young minds.

MPISD impacted me by giving me the opportunity to find my passion for teaching. They also impacted me by providing me with the education to impact the younger generation in a way that might provide them with a pathway to strive for their own goals.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

I feel like multiple teachers inspired me in one way or another to go into education. One teacher I can think of is Mrs. Tolson. During my senior year of high school, Mrs. Tolson immediately stood out to me because of her bubbly, unique personality.

She loved each and every one of her students individually. This was something I deeply appreciated. Not only did she have the ability to get a student into ELA and actually enjoy it, Mrs. Tolson truly did anything she could to help her students.

I remember her telling us that past students would send her college essays to review. I tried this for myself one time, and there she was doing anything she could to make me successful. Mrs. Tolson was definitely an educator I look up to because she never failed to go above and beyond.

## Crystal Jackson

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

The love and loyalty I have for MPISD inspired me to step out on faith and pursue my dream.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I'm in charge of ISS and I coach girls athletics at the Junior High.



Crystal Jackson

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I enjoy the students most of all. Not only do they learn from me daily but I learn from them as well.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

Superintendent Judd Marshall and HR Coordinator Deb Malone played a big role in my decision to join MPISD. Their hard work and support of the students, staff and community made MPISD my top choice.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

Teaching wise, Mrs. Richardson and Mrs. Thomas both were teachers at Brice, and they both treated all of their students the same. They made learning fun and easy and still to this day when you see them around Mount Pleasant, they remember all of their students and embrace each with a smile and hug. Coaching wise, Judd Marshall was my coach my senior year of HS. He taught me how to win and lose on and off the court. He was there when I signed my athletic scholarship to Sam Houston and now he is on the sideline watching me coach at my alma mater.



## James Moore

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

The thing that inspired me to come back to MPISD is the family atmosphere this school district has. We have a lot of people in this district that truly care about each other, as well as great leaders that do everything that they can for these kids and teachers.

See Moore, Pg. 8

# Home, Sweet Home

## Jennifer Mora

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

MPISD is where I attended school my entire life, so it only felt right to come back to where it all started but this time as an educator to give back to the community that I call my home.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I teach Algebra 2 and Advanced Quantitative Reasoning (AQR)

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I've always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a little girl. Now having the opportunity to do so, I've enjoyed the relationships that I build with my students. I get to impact these students' lives and help them become successful not only in my classroom but outside in the real world. I cannot wait to see how much my students grow and hear all their successes.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

Because of MPHS, I was able to be part of the Ready, Set, Teach program which allowed me to have some experience in the educational field before I went to col-



Jennifer Mora

lege. This program definitely helped me get prepared for what is expected when I start a university level teaching program. Also, if it wasn't for MPISD I wouldn't have experienced having amazing educators who shaped me into the educator I am today.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

I've had amazing teachers all throughout my education career at MPISD, but some that have stood out to me is Mrs. Turbyfill, Mrs. Sweeden, Mrs. Jenkins and Mr. Mendoza. They have all been amazing ed-

ucators and have each played an important role in my life as people who I can look up to and go to for any help.

Mrs. Turbyfill was my GT teacher in Junior High and has always taught me to think outside the box and to never be afraid of being myself. Mrs. Sweeden allowed me to get the experience in the teaching field before I graduated high school by allowing me to be part of the Ready, Set, Teach! Program. She pushed me to keep pursuing my dreams and has been there every step of the way cheering me on.

Mrs. Jenkins inspired me to go into secondary math education. She was an amazing teacher who cared for her students and made calculus easier for me and is now an amazing department leader. Mr. Mendoza was my bus driver when I was in high school and I was his teacher aide my senior year. He is a teacher who you keep in touch with even after you graduated. He has always cheered me on in any of my accomplishments during and after high school. He's always been a teacher who is willing to help when I need it. A huge shout out to all my teachers I've had, if it wasn't for you all, I wouldn't be here today teaching. Thank you

## Zac Rolf

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

The immediate investment in the community inspired me to come back and teach at MPISD. After spending a year in the metroplex and a year in Tatum I saw firsthand how facilities and great leadership can completely change the landscape of a school district. Looking from the outside in during my first two years in education I saw how our superintendent, school board, and community were investing in the physical and cultural landscape of MPISD.

Upgrades to athletic facilities, promoting from within, a nearly brand new High School campus, and change in leadership of the athletic department brought excitement from not only community members with current ties to the district but former students and faculty the same. All these things made me want to take part in where MPISD is going!

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I teach 9th grade World Geography and



Zac Rolf

coach Baseball and Football.

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

Building relationships with students and setting the foundation for their life outside of High School.

Consistently serving and investing in kids is what I enjoy most.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

Coaches and teachers impacted my career choice. My favorite parts of my years at

MPHS are still available to me everyday. As a coach I get to be around the games I love and made me the man I am today through what each uniquely brings to the table, and from a creative standpoint I am able to use the skills I learned in Mr. Whitten's class to create graphics for social media and spotlight our students each week.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

This question can only be answered three fold. First, with my mom being a teacher and coach for the district for 20 years, I got to see first hand just how much she meant to her students and the impact she had in their lives.

Second, Coach Windham inspired me with the relationship he built with me and all the lessons in life I learned under his direction during his tenure as Head Baseball Coach.

Lastly, Mr. Nash inspired me to try out the classroom. What always sticks out to me about my time in his classroom was how he made us smile every single day. He was one of the most consistent men I've had the privilege to be around.

# Home, Sweet Home

## Kendel Thompson

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

MPISD has always had a special place in my heart. Growing up, I absolutely loved school but never really knew why. Looking back, it was the teachers and staff at Mount Pleasant that encouraged me to do my best and took every step to make sure I was successful in my education. MPISD has always been and will always be my home and that is why I chose to come back to this district over any other.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

I teach second grade general education

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

As an educator, I most enjoy the relationships I get to build with each of my students. It has been super fun getting to know



Kendel Thompson

their personalities and how they learn best in the classroom. They will always hold a special place in my heart.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

I have not always wanted to be a teacher. When changing my major in college, I had no idea what to do. I have always wanted to

make an impact in my career, and I thought about all of the wonderful teachers I had in the past at MPISD. They impacted me in SO many ways, from Kindergarten to Senior year.

I knew I wanted to make that kind of impact in at least one child's life. MPISD truly impacted my education in many ways, including my career choice!

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

The former teacher that inspired me the most to go into education is Mrs. Debbie McClenan. She was my third-grade teacher and was the one who pushed me to try my best in school. I could say many amazing things about Mrs. McClenan but I will keep it short.

She is always positive, smiling, and thrives off of her love for education and the children. She has been one of my role models for many years and I appreciate her more than she knows. She made a huge impact on my career choice.

## Joel Whitaker

### 1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?

Mount Pleasant has always been home. Life took me around to the neighboring cities to live and even to Texarkana to work for the last 5 years, but my whole life is centered in Mount Pleasant. It was an honor to feel wanted by MP and I jumped at the chance to come home.

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

9th Grade English

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

I thought this may be the case going in, but I was unaware of the level that it would take. The connection to the students is by far the most enjoyable part so far.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

The incredible teachers that I had throughout my time growing up in MP made the decision fairly easy every time I would weigh my options. I know I did not go straight into teaching, but it was always in the back of my mind.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

There are so many to choose from including Mrs. White, Mrs. McClenan, Mrs. McCollum, The Russells, Mrs. Jenkins and

Mr. Newman, but the one teacher that has always stuck with me was Mr. Cardenas. When we arrived in his Spanish 2 class, I would say most of the students were not prepared for Spanish 2 and Mr. Cardenas figured that out pretty quickly.

I have always respected that he went back and changed up his lessons to go back to the basics and bring us along instead of just pushing along hoping that we would figure it out. It inspired me to be the teacher that cared more about making sure every student understood and was prepared more than checking off a list of things to do.



Joel Whitaker

## Moore from Page 6

### 2. What subjects/grade do you teach?

The subject that I teach is Physical Education for 5th and 6th grade boys at P.E. Wallace Middle School, and I am also an assistant Basketball Coach at the High school.

### 3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?

The thing that I enjoy most about being an educator is being able to come and allow these students to have fun every day. I know a lot of students really look forward to my class and I'm glad I can allow these students to work hard and have fun.

### 4. How did MPISD impact you in your career choice?

MPISD had a big impact on my career choice. When I was told about the opportunity to potentially come back, I jumped at it because this school has done so much for me, and I'm thrilled to be able to give back.

### 5. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?

The former teacher/coach that inspired me to get into education was Coach Chism and Coach Barkley. Both were my basketball coaches in high school and have always supported me in every way that they could, and they were the ones who really motivated/inspired me to get into education.



# Home, Sweet Home

## Krissa Woods



Krissa Woods

**1. What inspired you to come back and teach in MPISD over another district?**  
Mount Pleasant is my home. I honestly wouldn't teach anywhere else. I was really looking forward to coming back and coaching soccer and sharing my passion for the sport.

**2. What subjects/grade do you teach?**

9th grade Environmental Systems & coach volleyball and soccer

**3. What do you enjoy most about being an educator?**

I'd have to say that what I enjoy the most is seeing student's perceptions of themselves change. To see a student begin to believe in themselves is an incredible experience.

**4. What former teacher inspired you the most to go into education and why?**

Although I had many amazing teachers at MPHS, one that always stood out to me was Mrs. Jenkins. She is the kind of person who knows exactly how to put a smile on your face, even on your worst days. She makes every single student feel like they matter, because to her, they do.

She never belittled us or made us feel like we couldn't do something, but instead she was patient with us and taught us how to think through situations and solve them on our own. I knew that if I ever were to become a teacher, I wanted to be one like Mrs. Jenkins was to me.

## Safety is key priority for MPISD

BY NATHALI ROJAS  
INSIDE MPISD Writer

An unfortunate shooting tragedy in which 19 students and two adults were killed at a Uvalde elementary school led many districts around the state to update their safety measures.

MPISD was no different. The district made many changes at the campuses. One of the campuses that saw many changes was the high school.

Among the big changes were gates installed to help protect students and staff.

"We decided to put gates in their locations for security reasons and to help control traffic flow in and out of the high school campus," Superintendent Judd Marshall said.

Marshall said the district has also taken other safety measures.

"The Guardian Plan, better cameras and more cameras, access control to all campuses, improved communication among all campuses regarding any concern, and monitoring of people coming and going from all campuses in the district are some of the measures we have taken," Marshall said.

Marshall said "most definitely" when asked if the school needs more safety precautions.

"We can always improve in this area and unfortunately, we have to continue to improve," Marshall said.

"We have added a lot, so I think we are doing a good job in this area. We will con-



### Gates and door fobs are key safety measures taken to protect the high school

tinue to monitor and adjust as necessary."

Marshall points to cameras and controlling access to campuses as key safety measures. All high school buildings have a fob entrance now to ensure safety.

"Access control and cameras have both helped tremendously because they will help us to act quickly when we see a problem or a threat," Marshall said.

Marshall is confident in the safety measures the district has taken.

"Yes, I do believe what we are doing is working. I pray every single day that we are doing a super job in this area because the safety of everyone is paramount."





# State of the art: New-look high school stands out

BY NATHALI ROJAS  
INSIDIE MPISD Writer

When MPISD taxpayers passed a \$55 million school bond in 2019, one of the key components was the renovation of the academic buildings at the high school.

Three years later, that vision of a new-looking school has come true. MPISD Superintendent, Judd Marshall, MPISD Director of Facilities, Van Bowen, and MPHS Principal, Craig Bailey, took time to address the impact of the new high school has on the district and the challenges that came with a renovation.

**1. How do you think the construction has changed the look of the high school campus?**

**Bowen:** “The moment a person either drives by or walks onto the Mount Pleasant High School campus, they will see a modern, classy, state of the art facility. Every building on campus has been completely remodeled as well as the addition of three new structures and a new entrance to the competition gym. Finally, the new parking lots really make the campus look fantastic.”

**Marshall:** “Simply stated, we now have a high school campus that everyone can be proud of, and we are able to serve all students much better than we could prior to the school bond passing.”

**2. What impact has the new construction had on the district?**

**Marshall:** “We are now able to provide a much safer environment for all stakeholders, and we are able to provide better education to all of our students because of what we have done. Our staff is now able to teach in an environment that is much more conducive to learning than ever before. Go Tigers!!!”

**Bailey:** “Our district is able to utilize the new space and updated areas to better serve other campuses and host district events. It is always a joy seeing the positive reactions to the changes and updates to our school. Our students and staff love the additions and renovations. The turf area is especially a favorite of our students!”

**3. What were some of the major challenges with the construction?**

**Bowen:** “There were many challenges from supply issues to weather but the biggest challenge in my opinion was creating West Campus to accommodate the relocation of half our campus population from buildings being

demolished and remodeled. Every period of everyday up to 800 students attended classes on West Campus. Our teachers and administrators did a superb job making this difficult situation a success.”

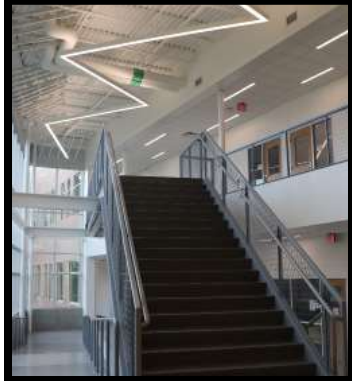
**Marshall:** “First of all, getting the school bond passed was hard work. Convincing our taxpayers that we needed to spend \$55 million was no easy task. Next, it took a year of planning just to figure out how we were going to complete the task in front of us. Last, rearranging all of the classes for two years was very difficult, but our high school administrators and staff did an outstanding job of working together and I am proud of that. Wait...Did I forget to mention COVID-19??”

**4. What do you see as some of the highlights of the construction?**

**Bailey:** “There are so many benefits and additions it is hard to name them all! Our culinary restaurant is a beautiful facility where teachers and our community can go for a delicious meal. Our health science department mirrors the look and technology of the 21st century medical facility. Cosmetology allows our students to see the look and feel of a beauty salon and spa while on campus. Each of our classrooms received updated technology and furniture to support innovative instruction and high-yield educational strategies. We are blessed and thankful!”

**Marshall:** “The fact that every single department and program received improvements is also something that I am very proud of, and everyone

**See Construction, Pg. 11**



# High School Happenings



Camdon Johnson, left, and Reese Ball were named MPHS All-School Boy and Girl by the staff.



The MPHS Go in Gold Band has enjoyed a great marching season. They took seventh at Area, making it out of the prelims for the first time since 1989. They also were second at the AT&T Stadium Classic. Pictured from left are Colorguard Co-Captain Yasenia Paloblanco, Drum Majors Manoa Bagsic, Sebastian Campos and Shpat Zeqaj and Colorguard Captain Abby Phelan.



Congressional Debate state qualifiers include front row from left Regional winners Angelina Hernandez (2nd), Anthony Orellana (1st) and Merlin Cardona (3rd). Alternates are Eli Rider and Gopi Amin.



Cross Country runners Geovanni Calderon, left, and Lee Davis, right, qualified for the state meet. They are pictured with Coach Jesus Garcia.

## Construction from Page 10

needed the upgrades. Another thing is when you drive by our “new” high school, what you see is an amazing campus that is very welcoming to everyone. Last, our students are no longer embarrassed to have other students visit their high school.”

**Bowen:** “All the construction improvements to the campus were great, but the major highlights would have to be the new 86,000 square foot, two story addition in the front of the high school. The new band halls were a much needed addition as well as the state of the art, new Tiger Doll building which includes a gymnasium size maple wood dance room. With all that being said the most popular addition to the campus seems to be the new entrance to the competition gym. Spectators can now enter the gymnasium directly from the parking lot rather than having to walk halfway around the gym to enter.”

5. What satisfaction do you get with how well everything has turned

out? Has it met your expectations?

**Marshall:** “I am very proud of what we have accomplished over the past three years. I have never been prouder to be a Mount Pleasant Tiger, and I have worked in this district for 25 years. We are the best school district in the state of Texas, and our high school campus mirrors all of our successes as a district. The construction has definitely met our expectations, and people from other districts tell us how awesome MPHS looks!! Go Tigers!!!”

**Bailey:** “Our space exceeds all expectations. Our community championed our kids and staff and supported us with an incredible facility. I am so thankful for the work of our school board and Mr. Marshall in securing this project. MPISD is a great team and represents our community’s focus on education. We benefited in every way possible with the construction and are forever grateful!!”

# Eagle scouts finish their projects

By IDANIA CASTANON  
INSIDE MPISD Staff Writer

Becoming an Eagle Scout does not come without hard work and effort.

And that effort includes a requirement to do a service project that will benefit your community, church or school.

Three junior high students were able to complete projects over the summer and finalize their Eagle Scout status.

Cooper Rider, Daniel Kimbrough and Conley Johnson, all students at Mount Pleasant Junior High, spent part of their summer fulfilling their duty to build projects that would be beneficial. All three students did projects for MPISD elementary schools.

Rider cleaned and painted the playground area at Annie Sims. He painted basketball lines, including adding a chessboard, four square court, hopscotch, tic-tac-toe and a chalk drawing area for the elementary students. The project took three weeks of planning and securing a sponsorship and another week of working 3-4 hours daily shifts with his troop.

"I was very excited to give back to my former elementary school, Annie Sims," Rider said. "I had so many great memories there and really wanted to give the students something they could use and enjoy. The process to come up with the idea and execute it gave me a sense of pride."

Rider said he has learned many lessons during his scouting life.

"Being a scout has taught me many life skills that can help with my future career and expand my opportunities," Rider said. "An Eagle Scout is the highest rank and honor that can open even more doors in my future."

Rider said the most difficult part was painting the lines correct and accurate. He received a sponsorship from Home Depot which covered the cost of the paint, brushes and several other materials. He said what he enjoyed most was being able to give back.

"My favorite thing was knowing that I was adding to the playground where I spent so many years," Rider said. "It is a special feeling knowing that future students can enjoy something I created."

Kimbrough chose to build a Gaga Ball Pit at E.C. Brice Elementary for his project. It took almost a month to get things started, waiting for the materials and hav-



Rider with the redesigned playground at Annie Sims Elementary.



Kimbrough is shown with Brice Principal Amanda Jones.



Johnson is shown with Corprew Principal Karen Williams with pit.

ing meetings to plan the project. The actual pit itself, he said, took two hours. He chose this project to help the school and the community.

His favorite thing about the project was being able to have his fellow scouts come out and help him. He felt very accomplished to be able to create something that will make a difference in the community.

"My favorite thing about being an Eagle Scout is to see how far I've come through scouting and how much experience I have gained from it," Kimbrough said.

"I've been in scouts for a very long time and have had so many experiences and had lots of fun."

Johnson also chose to build a Gaga Pit

with his project benefitting Corprew Elementary.

He thought that it was nice to make something that not only he would enjoy but the community can also. This project started when the school reached out to the scouts. He said it was a good way to give back and connect with the community.

"The hardest part about it was staying focused and not going off track with other things that I was doing," Johnson said. He said it was a goal of his to earn his Eagle Scout status.

"I decided to get my Eagle Scout so that I would have a goal to go towards, and because it opens many doors down the road," Johnson said.

# Junior High Journal

## Students build outdoor shelter

The Mount Pleasant Junior High Outdoor Adventure class has been working diligently on a practical application project that could come in handy in the real world. Students were put into groups with the task of building a shelter from things they found in the woods behind the junior high. Each group had a leader who assigned jobs to group members.

The shelters had several requirements including a solid foundation, good structure for water runoff, a roof with leaves and pine straw to prevent leakage, at least one wall on the north side, and a floor or drainage system so they would not be sitting directly on the floor or in water.

“The goal of the project was to not just build a shelter that could get them out of the elements if they were stranded or if they were out hunting, but it was to promote peer leadership and how group members responded to peer leadership,” said MPJH Outdoor Adventure teacher Travis Buchanan.

“The biggest thing we wanted the kids to learn out of the project was leadership and job responsibility from peers. The overall goal of Outdoor Adventure is to get the kids outside as much as possible and use hands-on skills for life outside.”

Outdoor Adventure is a fun and exciting co-ed



**Students are shown with outdoor shelters they built.**

physical education course. Students are taught life-long skills by using integrated curriculum of science, math, writing, critical thinking skills, and computer technology.

The focus is on outdoor activities such as archery, orienteering, survival skills, first aid/

CPR, trip planning, angling, tackle crafts, hiking, backpacking, camping, outdoor cooking, conservation and environmental issues with certifications offered through the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the American Heart Association.



## Students earn All-Region Choir honors

Twelve choir students have earned places in the Junior High All-Region Choir. To earn a place in the choir, each singer had to learn three selections and sing parts of each in a blind audition.

Those selected include eighth-graders Itzel Bello (alto), Micah Fulbright (tenor),

Xo’Najah Henderson (alto), Conley Johnson (bass), Daniel Kimbrough (bass), Liz Liera (soprano 2), Lachlan Miles (tenor), Zach Nichols (tenor), Hector Sierra-Rosales (bass), Sarah Vanhooose (alto), and seventh-graders Emily Crabb (soprano 2), and JJ Duenez (soprano 2).

“I couldn’t be prouder of the choir students at MPJH,” Junior High Choir Director Joshua Miles said. “Their hard work, dedication, and efforts at after-school rehearsals have paid off. I can’t wait to see everything else they accomplish this year...and the years to come.”

# Dancer Takes on NYC

By IDANIA CASTANON

INSIDE MPISD Writer

Wallace Middle School fifth grader Piper Hearron, 11, has been dancing ever since she was 3 years old when her mom first signed her up for tap and ballet classes.

All those classes paid off this summer, when Piper was given the opportunity to audition for the Joffrey Ballet School summer intensive program in New York City.

In May she got the call that she had made it into the program. Over the summer she was able to dance and live out her dream over a four-week period.

"I was honestly shocked," Piper said. "I just auditioned for fun not thinking I was ever going to make it."

She was able to experience this journey with her mom, Tiffany, and see what New York had to offer. Piper took part in classes from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., working on technique, skills, and various dance genres such as street jazz, Latin jazz, improv, hip hop and theatre.

Her favorite class, she said, had to be improvisation.

"It was a new style of dance to me and it was so fun!" Piper said.

"We even were taught by the guy who was in the Broadway musical *Aladdin*."

Piper was also under the direction of many talented people, including Broadway stars currently playing major roles in productions on stage in New York.

When she dances, she prefers the music of Olivia Rodrigo.

"She's my favorite artist," Piper said. "Her music just makes me want to get up dance and scream. It's so fun dancing to."

Piper loves to dance more than anything and can see herself pursuing this in the future. Her dream is to dance for the famous Radio City Rockettes. Piper says that one of the most important things to know about ballet is flexibility and control. Being able to stretch and stretch a lot gives you more control to make good turns and leaps. Piper is always dancing, she dances whenever she can, including while she brushes her teeth.

She got to experience many things while in New York, but her favorite thing was when she was being taught by the choreographers.

"We had so many different teachers and I loved how different each one of their dance style and personality was, there was a lot that I learned," Piper said.

There were also many new things that she got to experience for the first time. She learned how to use the subway system, and she went to the largest Lego store that she's ever seen. Piper also says that if she were able to dance in any Broadway show that it would be the Michael



## Piper Hearron spent a month in New York City.

Jackson Broadway show.

"It was the most amazing show," Piper said. "The guy who played Michael did such a good job."

Piper and the other dancers took the stage at Symphony Space on Aug. 12th for their final performance. Piper is so thankful that she was able to have this experience in the big city.

## Piper's Picks

Favorite food: Tacos

Favorite Dessert: Apple Pie

Favorite Restaurant: Nardello's

Favorite Candy: Green Apples

Favorite Singer: Olivia Rodrigo

Favorite Movie: Elf

Favorite Holiday: Christmas

Favorite Animal: Elephant

Favorite Subject: Recess

Favorite Place to visit: All places. I want to travel the world.

## Wallace honors veterans in ceremony

BY KELLY COWAN

MPISD Director of Communications

Veterans and their families filled tables on the floor of the P.E. Wallace Middle School Gym on Friday, Nov. 11, at the Wallace Middle School 25th annual Veterans Day Program. Wallace students and MPHS Student Council members served lunch to the veterans and their families while they were entertained by music from the past played by the MPHS Jazz Band. Local businesses donated gift cards and gifts that were presented to the audience members as door prizes.

Started 25 years ago by then principal, Rodney Huffman, and teachers Jana Milam and Vicki Sinclair, the program was created to fulfill two purposes: to honor military veterans and to help Wallace students understand the role and sacrifices of those who serve in the military. Wallace Principal, Nathan Rider, paid tribute to Huffman, Milam, and Sinclair on the 25th anniversary of the program, with MPISD Board of Trustees Pres-

ident, Yvonne Hampton, presenting each with a commemorative plaque.

"Twenty-five years ago, three people came together and created a program to honor our military veterans and to help our students understand the sacrifices of those who serve," said Rider. "Until you have seen this program you cannot understand how important it is not only for our veterans, but also for our students. From its humble beginnings in the school library to what it has grown to today, this program is because of the vision of those three special people."

This year's veteran's address was given by Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Will Chitwood.

The program was full of music provided by the MPHS Jazz Band, the Wallace 5th and 6th grade Honor Choirs, the "Andrews Sisters" made up of Fowler music teacher Julie Merrill, Corprew music teacher Ashley

See Veterans, Pg. 15

# World of Wallace

## Students display art at Hispanic Heritage

By DANA ARMSTRONG  
Wallace ELA Teacher

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, Wallace Middle School held its first annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration on Sept. 22.

In preparation for the fun filled evening, Artist David Freeman collaborated with the Tiger Time Art students and teacher Janie Moreno and created beautiful murals of historical Hispanic figures. The murals included Selena Quintanilla, Dolores Huerta, Frida Kahlo, Rita Moreno, Roberto Clemente, Ellen Ochoa, Lauro Cavazos, Julia Alvarez, and Sonia Sotomayor. The murals made a great backdrop for the celebration.

Wallace teachers and organizations set up game booths such as ring toss, basketball throw, face painting, pie in the face, a dunking booth, and musical chairs for students and their families to enjoy. DJ Michael Zepeda provided the music and Pollo Bueno, Jorge's, Autentico Taco, and Chill on Wheels provided the delicious food and treats.

Thank you to the following sponsors: Jonathan and Lacy Campbell, Warrior Tax, The Castillo Team, Miss Behavin, Print Works and Big Tex Trailers, their support helped make the celebration a huge success.



## Veterans from Page 14

Sterrett, Brice music teacher Nan Verner, Wallace 504 Coordinator Tracie Johnson, MPHS Choir accompanist Deanna Warren, MPISD band director Alicia Hargett, and Wallace music teacher Diane Swiger on piano, with solos by United States veteran and MPHS graduate, Kristian Luker, and Wallace sixth grader, Kaidence Norman. Wallace Middle School teacher, Jason Barfield, played "Reveille" and MPHS junior, Orion Senence, played "Taps" to open and close the program.

Eli Rider, Cooper Rider, and James Smart of Boy Scout Troop 6101



posted and retrieved the American and Texas flags, while Wallace students Michelle Hernandez (Army), Jimmy Aguilar (Navy), Cassidy Burns (Coast Guard), Chelsi Campbell (Marines), and Abigail Verner (Air Force) presented the military branch flags. Wallace student Dream Veasley presented the POW-MIA flag, which was accompanied by a moment of silence.

Military widows, active military members, military mothers and recipients of military awards for Valor and Purple Hearts were honored. Special recognition was given to Ellis Moore, now 98-years-old, who served in World War II and was present in the audience.

Sixth grade student Hannah Martinez was recognized for her Pilot Club award-winning essay, "I'm Proud to be an American." Pilot Club member Susan Old presented Martinez a certificate for writing the winning essay. "On behalf of P.E. Wallace, we want to thank all of our veterans," said Rider. "I hope those who were able to attend enjoyed the food, entertainment, and company. I want to thank Rodney Huffman, Jana Milam, and Vicky Sinclair for founding this program 25 years ago. It has been P.E. Wallace's honor to thank and celebrate our veterans. I would also like to thank our staff, PTO President Lacy Campbell, the MPHS Student Council, and our community sponsors."



# Brice student eyes being a teacher, succeeding in dual language program

By KELLY COWAN

MPISD Director of Communications

McKenzie Rose Beltran is a 4th grade student at E.C. Brice Elementary School. She has attended Brice for five years and is a student in the MPISD Dual Language program. Dual Language is a full time program with rigorous instruction in two languages.

There is active participation of native English and native Spanish speaking students in the program. Students work together to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. Michelle Luck, MPISD Director of Instructional Support, said, "If you can read, write, speak, and understand English and Spanish, you can communicate with 80% of the world." Over 1800 students are currently in the MPISD Dual Language program which starts in PreK at the CDC with the initial Dual Language cohort reaching 9th grade this year.

Students in PreK-1st grade take Language Arts in their native language. Once they reach 2nd grade, they begin taking one section of language arts in English and one section in Spanish. In the elementary grades, math is always taught in English while science and social studies are always taught in Spanish. This year, McKenzie's school day consists of math and one section of language arts in English with science, social studies and an additional section of language arts in Spanish.

McKenzie's favorite year at Brice was first grade because she has a lot of fun memories like playing with friends and going on field trips. For McKenzie, this was the year just before the pandemic when schools were closed, activities were cancelled, and our world was turned upside down. Her favorite subject is math which she says comes easily to her.

She was just recently inducted into the National Elementary Honor Society where she was elected Vice President of the Brice chapter. She also placed 2nd with her speech this year in the annual Titus County Fair Academic Rodeo. She is looking forward to playing softball this



**Beltran's favorite part about school is seeing her friends.**

spring and maybe taking dance in middle school.

When talking to McKenzie, one theme kept coming up: people. Her favorite thing about school was seeing her friends. And when asked about leaving Brice and going to Wallace Middle School next year, she said she was most looking forward to making new friends.

So, it was no surprise that she said she

might want to be an elementary school teacher when she grows up because she could help people learn and help them with their lives. And because of the MPISD Dual Language program, perhaps she will be able to help even more bright, caring, and energetic students just like herself.

McKenzie is the daughter of Dixie Hipolito and Miguel Beltran.



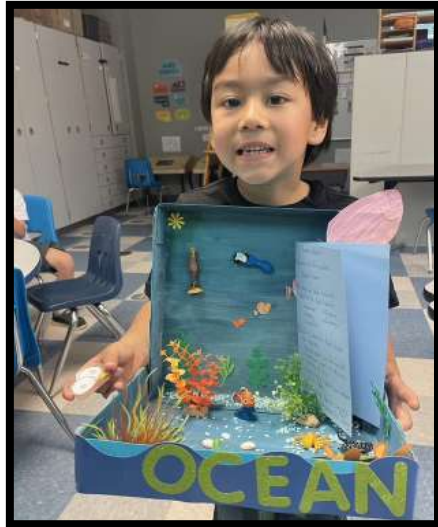
# Brice Beat



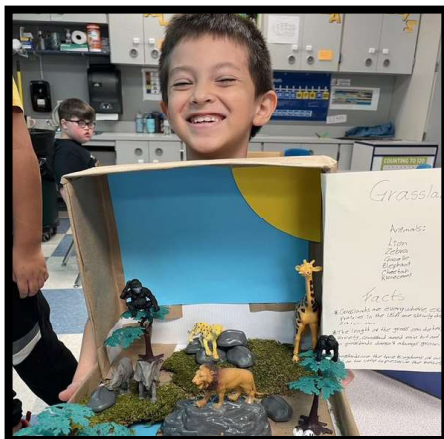
## Fall Festival

Students got to show off their favorite costumes at the annual E.C. Brice Elementary Fall Festival.

The festival gave the students the opportunity to not only dress up, but play games, jump in bounce houses and fill up their baskets with candy.



## Habitat Project



## Book Character Day





**Sophia Rodarte and Evelyn Cordova dump mulch into the garden.**



**Angely Gutierrez, Alexander Arrington and Jackie Benitez plant crops.**

# Corprew garden plants seeds of learning for NEHS students

Students receive education in a variety of ways. For some, they learn best from books. For others, technology is the key to understanding concepts and is their preferred learning module.

Then there are students who need the hands-on experience. For a group of Corprew Elementary students, getting their hands dirty in the soil and building a garden is providing an education that could last a lifetime.

Corprew School Counselor Cassie George explained the garden and its impact on the students taking part.

## **1. How did you decide to start the garden?**

**George:** We decided to create a raised bed garden because we had the space and some supplies from a previous project. So I decided to revamp it so we could produce more fruits and vegetables than the previous set up without as much maintenance.

## **2. How does having a garden help education students?**

**George:** The garden helps our NEHS students in their education because they get to see first-hand the life cycle of a plant. They also get to see their hard work come to fruition when we harvest our first crop in a few weeks. Then, they will learn what a blessing it is to give to others when they have the privilege of donating what we harvest.

## **3. What crops do you grow?**

**George:** Right now, we have collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, swiss chard, broccoli, cabbage, and radishes. In the spring we plan to do tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, strawberries, green beans, watermelon, and cantaloupe.

## **4. What has been the best part about building a garden?**

**George:** The best part has been seeing the students' excitement to be involved in something like this. When we were in the planning

stages, their eyes lit up when they learned that we were growing produce to donate to others. They all started voicing different ways we could package it or who we could donate to! I can't wait to see the joy on their faces when they actually get to make our donation.

## **5. What do the kids like best about the garden?**

**George:** So far, I think the kids have liked getting dirty the best!! They have been excited about every stage so far but when it came time to dig in the dirt, they were ALL in!!

## **6. How do the students get to help with the garden?**

**George:** The students come in small groups during specials or recess weekly or bi-weekly, depending on the weather, to water and maintain the weed growth.

## **7. Are there future plans to expand the garden?**

**George:** After seeing how much the students love it and how dedicated they are to our mission, I plan double our space next year so we can include even more varieties of fruits and vegetables!



**Christian Banda and Jamie Douglas are hard at work on the garden.**

# Corprew Connection

## Math Carnival

Students and families enjoyed many stations of math carnival games and ate nachos under the main tent in the cafeteria!

All Corprew students that attended were entered into a drawing for a Kindle tablet and our winner was 4th grader, Angie Dormes.



## Academic Rodeo Winners

### Kindergarten

Poster - 1st place Diego Tristan

### 2nd grade:

Math - 3rd place Hadassa Arroyo, Jackson

Bailiff, Angel Paco, Nakoa Sharp

Speech 2nd place Lucas Ridenour,

3rd place Milia Johnson

### 3rd grade:

Spelling - 1st place Nylah Bell

Speech 1st place Carmelo Green

### 4th grade:

Speech - 2nd place Zariah Ivery



## Wax Museum



# 50 years... and counting

## White reflects on long career

BY DESIREE AVILA  
INSIDE MPISD Writer

A lot has changed over the last 50 years in the world of education, but one constant has remained and that is Lois Mae White.

For 50 years, White has faithfully served as a teacher at MPISD. She reflects on her long career and changes in education over the years.

**When and where did you graduate high school/college?**

1968, Booker T. Washington High School in Mount Pleasant; 1972, College-Texas A&M-Commerce (East Texas State)

**What are the names of your family members?**

J.C White, and Natalie White

**How did you get into teaching?**

After taking basic classes, education just seemed to be my interest at the time.

**What degrees did you receive when graduating college?**

Bachelor's degree in 1972 and Masters of Education in 1974.

**Why did you want to start teaching?**

I worked in a summer program as an aide to a teacher, and grew to love it.

**What was one of your main goals as you started out teaching?**

To see a child grow and feel confident in him/herself.

**What are some of your important days/dates in your life when growing up?**

Christmas and Birthdays

**What inspires you to keep teaching every day?**

Making a difference in a child's life. I want children to be able to read, think, and communicate.

**What advice would you give a new teacher?**

To love the children regardless of color

**How did it feel to be honored at The Living Legacy Gala?**

Overwhelmed and elated, it was an unexpressable feeling. I felt loved.

**How long do you want to keep teaching?**

Not sure, maybe until I'm 75.



**White started her career at MPISD in 1972.**

**What schools, grades and subjects are you teaching now and in the past?**

Second-fourth grades— all subjects

**If you could go back and start over, would you have chosen teaching?**

Yes

**What church do you attend? And what are some of the roles you play at your church?**

Maranatha Church of God in Christ -- Missionary, Assistant secretary, finance committee, teacher and singer.

**If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why there?**

The Holy Land. It would be great to walk where Jesus walked.

**In your opinion, what is the best part about being an educator?**

“Seeing the lightbulb come on in a child's head. And the joy of knowing you've had a difference.”

**What or who influenced you to start teaching? Why?**

I was asked to teach a Sunday school class at church. I think that's what got me started. I really enjoyed the small children. Also my first grade teacher was such an inspiration to me; the love and companionship that she showed toward children. She inspired me to be the best that I can be.

# Fowler Features

## Fall Festival



## Fourth Grade Pumpkins



Keila Torres Perez



Adrian Atrisco Hernandez



Jamie Flores



Josue Robles

## Thanksgiving Lunch



# Take Me Out to the Ball Game

## *Annie Sims teacher sings National Anthem at Rangers game*

By JOHN WHITTEN  
MPHS PUBLICATIONS ADVISOR

Stepping on to a professional baseball field to sing the National Anthem can be nerve-racking in itself. Throw in a little mishap prior to the game and the nerves could skyrocket.

But for Annie Sims third grade teacher, April Driggers, she wasn't going to be deterred from her opportunity to sing the National Anthem prior to the Texas Rangers game on Aug. 4 of this year.

"I was already excited about the performance so I was fairly nervous, but on the way to the game I was in a car accident. I was ok thankfully, but by the time I got to the game, the adrenaline from the accident and the nerves from the performance were crazy high!" Driggers said.

"However, they were very gracious and treated me so kindly while I was there. Walking through the tunnels behind the scenes and coming out of the dugout onto the field was definitely a surreal moment! I was thankful that I had lots of family and friends who had come to support me!"

Driggers' opportunity to sing the National Anthem at Globe Life Field came about after her publicist Paulette Hopkins with BluSpark Agency, in Rockwall, submitted a video to the Rangers marketing director.

"In order to be selected, you have to submit a video of you singing the anthem in less than 1 minute 30 seconds. This was a bit difficult because the song has to be sung faster than the normal to fit in that time constraint!" Driggers said.

While this was her first time to sing at a Rangers game, Driggers has had experience singing at several WWE wrestling events as well as the Mesquite Rodeo.

She stays busy singing throughout the year.

"I regularly sing at least twice a week at venues with my band. We also play at fairs and festivals. This year, we were able to perform at the Titus County Fair and several of my students came out to support us!" Driggers said.

Music is a passion for Driggers and with that comes a different range of emotions.



**Driggers with Rangers Mascot Captain**

"I have days when I second-guess everything I do. I feel like I can do nothing right, but when I'm in the studio or on stage, all of those insecurities disappear," Driggers said. "I find a part of me that I had lost many years ago and it feels so good to have it back! I am able to meet new people through my shows and that has led to a lot of great friendships. My band members are like family. I often say that I have eight brothers because that's exactly how we act towards each other.

"I know that they are behind me 100% and I will always work to have their backs as well. My music career keeps me incredibly busy, but when you are living your dream, it doesn't feel much like work!"

Driggers' favorite type of music is country even though she listens to other music as well.

She also has an artist that she wants to see.

"One of the most talented singers to ever grace a stage is Ashley McBryde," Driggers said. "I've seen many of my idols in concert, but haven't gotten the pleasure of seeing her live and it is on the top of my bucket list!"



**Driggers has taught at Sims for 7 years.**

A show choir singer while a student at Daingerfield High School, Driggers also sang in college and was able to foster lifelong friendships.

"Through that program, I was offered a scholarship to Southeastern Oklahoma State University where I was a member of an international show choir called The Corvettes. I made lifelong friendships with several other members that I keep in touch with to this day," Driggers said.

Driggers next goal is to sing the National Anthem at a Dallas Mavericks game.

Along with singing throughout the week, Driggers has recordings available to buy and download.

"I have put out three albums since 2005, have appeared on a few television shows, and been out on a radio tour to promote singles," Driggers said. "You can find my music on Apple, Spotify and Amazon."

Her Spotify link is: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/2vDIN1kd7WW5eYFdlx-g7tq?si=T6K0DYlcSDyZ7bafPXwoPg>

She also has a website at [www.aprilnsmithmusic.com](http://www.aprilnsmithmusic.com) or find her on Facebook and Instagram by typing in [@aprilnsmithmusic](https://www.instagram.com/aprilnsmithmusic).

# The Sims Scene

## Veterans Day



## Wax Museum



## Splash Bash





# CDC Zen Den aims to help staff with their mental health, wellness

By **KELLY COWAN**  
**MPISD Director of Communications**

Zen: a state of calm attentiveness in which one's actions are guided by intuition rather than by conscious effort. When you enter the Child Development Center “Zen Den”, you are greeted by just that...calm. Water runs gently in the background. Birds chirp softly. The lights are dim and calming items are available at every turn. There are foot massagers, neck massagers, calming teas, and an infrared heat mat, just to name a few of the many items available to staff. On the day of my visit, Principal Jamie Cook colored in an adult coloring book using soft pastel markers available at a large group table while Assistant Principal Katie Fite and Mental Health Manager Rachel Barkley warmed tea while wearing hot neck wraps.

The CDC Zen Den was born out of Head Start initiative 1302.93, which states, in part, that a program must make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance, and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness, and health education.

Enter Barkley who joined the CDC staff just after the COVID shut down of 2020 when COVID funds were made available to schools to provide for staff wellness.

The foundation behind the Zen Den is combatting teacher burn out. Staff at the CDC work with the youngest aged students where teachers are most vulnerable. Barkley's goal is to support a healthier way of processing stress which in turn helps with staff retention, helps staff know they are valued, and provides a safe place to be a normal human and experience stress. Barkley leads Sharing and Caring monthly which is a time for small group support and encouragement. And every Monday afternoon you will find her

leading yoga in the Zen Den for CDC staff.

Teachers are welcome to come to the Zen Den during their conference periods, at lunch, and after school. Some teacher teams use the space for team planning. The space is also available if a staff member needs a break from the demands of caring for their young students. On the wall, staff members will find several different issues ranging from back pain and headache to anxiety and discouragement. Under each are suggestions for what items or therapies available in the room might help. There are books on tapping, a technique involving tapping specific points on the body in a particular sequence to reduce stress, items for sound therapy which combines sound and vibrations to bring on a sense of calm, and an acupuncture mat designed to relieve tension.

In addition to self-wellness, the Zen Den also promotes a family atmosphere with a Staff Care notebook, Belonging Buddy program, and supplies available to write an encouraging note for a co-worker. The Staff Care notebook has a list of every staff member and some of their favorite things, inspiring team members to lift up co-workers by bringing them their favorite snack or comfort item. The Belonging Buddy program has paired staff members from different areas of the building to encourage one another and to connect staff across campus. And there are notecards, paper, markers, and pens available at all times to help staff members leave encouraging notes for fellow personnel.

Teachers in a state of chronic stress will impact their students. The CDC Zen Den aims to empower employees to promote the healthiest versions of themselves. For years the CDC has used the acronym S.T.A.R. with their students which stands for Stop, Take a deep breath, And Relax, helping students self-regulate during moments of frustration. And now, thanks to the Zen Den, the staff at the Child Development Center can do the same for themselves.



# Celebration CDC

## Q and A Time

**“What is your favorite thing to do at CDC?”**

The MPISD Child Development Center serves children 0-5 years of age in high quality preschool classrooms as well as pregnant mothers. The CDC offers Early Head Start providing early learning, care, and enrichment experiences, Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten engaging children and families to prepare for Kindergarten, and the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD). For more information and to apply, visit [www.mpisd.net](http://www.mpisd.net).

Some students took out their time to answer the question, **“What is your favorite thing to do at CDC?”**



**“Arts Centers”**  
--- MaKena Davidson, 5



**“Reading Books”**  
--- Cassidy Herndon, 4



**“Playing outside on the playground”**  
--- Kind Battle, 3



**“Playing in centers and building tall towers with my friends”**  
--- Lucas Rodriguez, 4



**“Playing with the toys and cleaning up”**  
--- Joshua Delacruz, 4



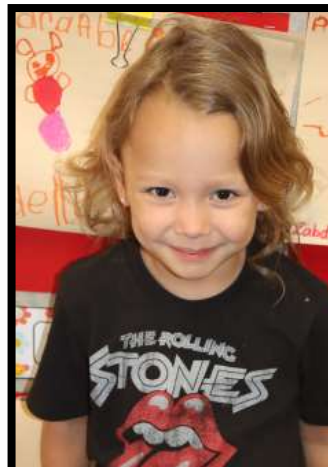
**“Playing with the counting bears”**  
--- Owen Hollingsworth, 5



**“I love learning”**  
--- Ariel Alvarez, 5



**“Painting unicorns”**  
--- Dahlia Gomez, 5



**“Playing in the bears center”**  
--- Victoria Villa, 4



**“Playing with the blocks”**  
--- Ze'Khi Savage, 5

# MPISD Foundations awards grants



It was a pep rally atmosphere as MPISD celebrated “Grant Day” on Nov. 4 with a great deal of excitement and fanfare provided by members of the MPHS Goin’ Gold Band, Tiger Dolls, and Varsity Cheer squad. The MPISD Education Foundation proudly awarded \$34,995.32 to 42 individual staff members on seven different campuses.



# MPHS senior discusses importance of scouting, his community project

By JOHN WHITTEN  
MPHS PUBLICATIONS ADVISOR

MPHS senior Eli Rider completed an Outdoor Learning Center at Wallace for his Eagle Scout project last summer. Eli, who has been in scouting eight years, took time out to discuss the project and what being a scout means to him.

**1. What made you want to become an Eagle Scout?**

Being an Eagle Scout means you’ve embodied and practiced an array of qualities that make you a better leader and overall person. I decided to become an Eagle Scout because I know these qualities will get me far in life.

**2. What was it like to create something that you know will make a difference in the community?**

Part of earning your Eagle is having a project that makes a difference in your community. For me, my aim was our education. If you do some research you’ll find my project, an outdoor classroom, has tons of benefits to children’s education. Knowing that what you are doing is going to make a difference is a surreal feeling.

**3. What do you think was the hardest thing about your project?**

My project was no easy feat. The greenhouse was



**Rider salutes at Wallace Veteran’s Day.**

probably one of the most painstaking tasks I’ve done to date. The process of building it wasn’t actually that bad; the problem was the company that sent the greenhouse had left out parts. I strategically decided where I was going to leave holes in the greenhouse in hopes they would come in soon.

Unfortunately the parts took about two months to arrive so when it came time to add the pieces to the greenhouse had actually shifted and the pieces didn’t fit. So, my brother, Gavin Rider, and fellow Eagle Scout John Paul Avila and I tirelessly worked through the night to disassemble and reassemble it.

**4. How did your sponsors help you?**

My project would not have been possible without contributions from the school, Home Depot and my dad, Nathan Rider.

**5. What did you like best about your project?**

My favorite part about my project was probably being able to plant the flowers in the planters because it really tied my project together.

**6. Is there anything you wish you had done differently?**

If I had to redo anything, I probably would wait to put in the greenhouse.

**7. How long did you spend on the project?**

My project took about 2 days to complete but when you count the 2 months it took for the shipping of the parts they didn’t send, I guess you could say 2 months.

**8. Why did you choose this project?**

I chose this project because of the benefits it would have on the children.

**9. What materials did you use for this project?**

I used a multitude of materials, but I used a ton of power drills. I went through about 20 battery lives.

**10. What is your favorite thing about being an Eagle Scout?**

My favorite thing about being an Eagle Scout is probably how good it looks on an application.

# Alumni Notes

Compiled by Editor John Whitten



## Madyson Arzate

2021 graduate

**CURRENTLY:** Attending Kilgore Junior College, majoring in journalism and an 83rd line member of the Kilgore College Rangerettes.

**HOW DID MPHS EXPERIENCE IMPACT YOU?** My MPHS experience prepared me for college in many ways including the hardships between friendships and sports, focusing academically to reach a specific goal, and just having life moments that created the person I am today.

**FAVORITE MPHS MEMORY:** I have so many favorite memories from MPHS. My most favorite memories include performing at every home football game with Tiger Dolls on Friday nights. If it weren't for those experiences, I don't think I would be on my dream dance team that I am on today.

**ADVICE TO STUDENTS:** To not wish time away or take anything for granted. In high school, things will get hard and rough sometimes. But, it is those moments that create the person you become. I am very grateful for every happy, sad, and rough experience I faced in high school. That's part of the high school experience we all wish to gain.

**COLLEGE EXPERIENCE:** College has been a whirlwind of emotions. I went to a university first then transferred to a junior college to live a dream I have always wanted. High school taught me to never miss an opportunity, even if it is the wrong time. But because of that wrong time, it made my college experience something to always cherish and never forget. I now get live a dream that very few get to live for only 2 years. Because of this, my college experience is better than ever.

## Caroline Rose

2020 graduate

**CURRENTLY:** Attending Texas A&M University, College Station, majoring in International Studies with a concentration in Politics and Diplomacy. I also have minors in French and Business.

**HOW DID MPHS EXPERIENCE IMPACT YOU?** My experience at MPHS, particularly in participating in the Speech and Debate program, greatly influenced the path I have chosen in college. Throughout my time at MPHS I was exposed to a variety of perspectives that expanded my own. Through debate, English, and History classes I was equipped to interact critically with the materials that I study in my undergraduate liberal arts education.

**FAVORITE MPHS MEMORY:** My favorite memories from my time at MPHS were the early morning and late night car and bus rides with the debate team. We would always listen to music and joke around to keep ourselves awake and have the best time!

**ADVICE TO STUDENTS:** My advice for high school students would be to value your education and work hard in the classroom but give yourself the grace and room to also enjoy your high school experience. High school can be a very stressful period, but it is best when you find a good balance between your studies and your social life.

**COLLEGE EXPERIENCE:** My college experience has been quite interesting in that, for the most part, my first year was online due to COVID. However, my second year was back in person and through joining a couple of on-campus organizations I was able to make some great friends! I have thoroughly enjoyed my classes, particularly those within my major, on topics such as Politics of The European Union, War Crimes, and War and Memory. This semester I am studying abroad in Grenoble, France. I am living with a French family and studying at a French university. Therefore, I am fully immersed in the French language and culture. It has been an amazing experience and I cannot wait to expand on the experience in my thesis that I will be writing in my last semester at TAMU this spring.



## Nathon Segovia

2018 graduate

**CURRENTLY:** Attending United States Military Academy at West Point, majoring in Physics.

**HOW DID MPHS EXPERIENCE IMPACT YOU?** While attending MPHS/MPISD, the mentorship my UIL/Debate coaches and teachers provided inspired my motivation for learning and pursuing excellence in the personal-driven environment of college. Because of their care, I have been able to jump onto cutting-edge research, organize my studies and social life in a constructive and healthy manner, and develop a new sense of purpose in my undergraduate and future graduate academic aspirations.

**FAVORITE MEMORY:** My favorite memory was going on the band trip to Disney World and Universal Studios!

**ADVICE TO STUDENTS:** My advice is to be open-minded and constantly pursue new ideas, concepts, and perspectives! From a Physics major's perspective, I promise the more you learn...the less you actually know!

**COLLEGE EXPERIENCE:** As a cadet in the Army and West Point, my "normal" is not the same as other college students. However, I wouldn't trade any of the toughest developmental days for going anywhere else. West Point is a leadership laboratory where the environment allows you to grow as a person and leader. However, while it gets stressful and tough here, my professors, mentors, and, most importantly, my buddies make every single day worth it!

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