

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

COMMERCE ISD E-LETTER • OCTOBER 24, 2008

Positive parent contact fosters success

Parents and guardians turned out in force Wednesday, October 8 as the district held its first report card pick up day of the year.

At the elementary campuses, teachers scheduled conferences with each child's parent. CES Principal Bobbie Thurman estimates that 90 percent of all parents met with their child's teacher.

Julia Robinson, ACW principal, said that only 12 report cards were mailed out because parents were unable to attend the conferences.

As students progress through the system, contact with middle school and high school parents lessens; however, Principals Wes Underwood and Virdie Montgomery reported a good turnout.

"We made sure we saw parents of students who were struggling this six weeks," Underwood said.

CHS Principal Montgomery welcomed parents with hot dogs, chips and a drink as they visited his campus for Dog Day Afternoon in the Tiger Path. Parents could visit with counselors and teachers about their child's progress.

Research shows that positive parental contact is important to a student's success. Another report card pick up is scheduled for January 28.



Pre-kindergarten teacher Jeanie Putman meets with a mom and her son.



Senior Elizabeth Tarrant and parents grab a hot dog before picking up her report card.



Above: Third grade teacher Diane Stegall meets with a parent of one of her third grade students.



Left: Middle school parents sign in to retrieve a report card before visiting with teachers.

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS



Above, CHS students sign up to accept Rachel's Challenge to start a chain reaction of kindness and compassion in their school.



Volunteers are always welcome in the Communities in Schools program. People who are interested in mentoring, tutoring or reading to young children should contact one of the CIS offices at ACW 903 886-3758 or CMS at 903 886-3795.

Schools start a chain reaction with Rachel's Challenge

On the morning of September 10, middle school and high school students and staff witnessed an amazing change take place in the atmosphere of the schools. Darrell Scott, father of Rachel Scott, talked to the students about Rachel's Challenge, a school program designed to eliminate school violence and prejudice.

Rachel Scott was the first person killed at the tragic Columbine shooting. Through her journals and school writings, her family has created a program in her memory. She believed in "starting a chain reaction" of kindness; one smile can change someone's day. The program was inspired by an essay written just weeks before her death "My Ethics, My Life".

One of the programs within Rachel's Challenge is Friends of Rachel (FOR). CHS has over 200 students in FOR and hopes to grow soon. The Rachel's Challenge Web site is also host to FORSpace, a place for students from all over the country to communicate back and forth and to reinforce their positive atmospheres.

Lillie Wyatt, a junior at CHS, is a member of FOR. Lillie says that her inspiration for joining Friends of Rachel is to help others. CHS has already been nationally recognized for having the most members on FORSpace.

"I was very moved by Rachel's Challenge. It really helped me to understand other people's feelings," says Lillie.

Currently, Friends of Rachel is raising money for Terrence Walker, an injured football player. So far FOR has raised \$300 for Terrence and his family to help with his medical bills.

Tiger Band continues success

The CHS Sound of Pride is back and better than ever. This year's show is music from Cirque Du Soleil, a French circus. Participation is up this year with 64 students marching.

The band competed at its first marching competition, the Mesquite Marching Festival, and got a rating of II, equivalent to excellent. They also competed Saturday October 11 at the Plano Marching Festival. The final marching competition was held in Mesquite October 15 and the band repeated its excellent rating, bringing home a II.

JenAnne Shumway, a senior at CHS, is also head drum major this year. "It was really good for the new members to have such great success with their first marching competition. It makes them really excited," says JenAnne. Allie Stauffer, another senior, is the Assistant Drum Major.

Band practices started August 4, three weeks before school started. They spent two weeks having all-day practices to work on music and marching. They also had the band director from Texas Christian University come to work with them on their show. The last week before school started, the band had only night practices.

This year, the band is also doing the Dodge Hometown Scholarship. When you donate \$5 to the band, you get a T-shirt and the chance to win a new 2008 Dodge Ram.

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS



Bus safety training required for all students

Commerce Elementary School was the first CISD campus to complete bus safety training which is required by the state for all students.

Students practiced or pretended there was a dangerous situation so they would know what to do in a real emergency, according to Lorrie Murdock, CES teacher. The students practiced sitting safely on the bus and exiting from the front and back. The students were taught to stand in a safe place away from the bus until the bus drivers tells them to move. They also learned to not answer questions from people passing by, except to say “ask the bus driver!” They were instructed to never leave with anyone (even relatives) in another vehicle, but to stay with the bus driver until it is safe to return to the bus or get on another bus to go to school or home.

Each campus must train students on bus safety two times during a school year.

Teen leadership developed in new class

A new Teen Leadership class is being offered at Commerce Middle School and Commerce High School this year. In the elective class, students learn principle-based decision-making, choices have consequences, public speaking, personal responsibility and many other emotional intelligence and leadership skills.

Recently, the seventh grade class, taught by Christina Blake, gave speeches to brush up on their public speaking skills. Topics included how to give a speech and how to develop relationships with friends.

At the start of the year, the CHS Teen Leadership class, led by Glenda Henderson, created social contracts with each other defining how they would treat each other in the classroom. Each student committed to treating classmates with respect, kindness and consideration every day. Mrs. Henderson said the class focuses on relationships not only in class, but in school, at work and at home with their families.

Other areas of study include conflict resolution, peer mediation, healthy relationships and resisting peer pressure. Community service is also encouraged in the class.

Both teachers attended a Teen Leadership conference last summer sponsored by the Flippen Group to learn how to conduct the class.



Upcoming student holidays

*Thanksgiving week
November 24-28*

*Christmas Holidays
December 22-Jan. 2*

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

Student Council sets busy agenda

The ACW Elementary School Student Council has planned an ambitious roster of fall and winter projects. The three council sub-committees are building a float for the Commerce Christmas Parade, helping with the Fall Carnival and planning an election at their school.

Principal Julia Robinson says that participation in student council not only helps develop leadership skills, but it shows students that they can have an impact in their community and their world.



Students ran for posts and were elected from each homeroom as representatives to the council. With the busy fall schedule, the group is meeting weekly with sponsors to develop plans.



CMS students celebrate with Strike-Free Party

Over 200 CMS students earned the opportunity to participate in a Strike-Free Party Friday, October 17. The students were rewarded for not have any strikes on their cards for the six weeks. Strikes are minor infractions in conduct that are noted on a card carried by students. In addition to having lunch outside, students were allowed to wear blue jeans to school.

