

CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

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Community Plaza grand opening set for Jan. 23

What started as a mission by Commerce ISD administrators to provide English as Second Language classes to Hispanic families almost two years ago has blossomed into Commerce becoming a Mexican Consulate-sanctioned Community Plaza site with the purpose of educating Hispanic

young people and adults for success in life and work.

The grand opening celebration of the Commerce Community Plaza will be held from 6-8 p.m. Monday, January 23, 2012 at A. C. Williams Elementary School at 615 Culver Street in Commerce, Texas. Dignitaries from the Mexican Consulate in Dallas, Texas A&M University-Commerce and Commerce ISD as well as families who will be served by the Plaza will participate in the celebration of Hispanic culture.

Maria Garza has been hired by CISD as a part-time coordinator of the Plaza, which will be housed at A. C. Williams Elementary

School. Garza is a senior minister at the First Christian Church in Commerce and has experience coordinating community outreach programs.

Her initial job at the Plaza is to organize volunteers and invite the first cohort of families to begin services on February 6. Services include tutoring in basic literacy, elementary and intermediate level education; English as a Second Language instruction, GED in Spanish preparation courses and citizenship classes. The ten slots available have already been filled.

Community volunteers including students from Texas A&M University-Commerce and CISD staff will provide one-on-one tutoring as well as group instruction. Using a program developed by the Mexican National Institute of Adult Education (INEA), Garza will conduct diagnostic tests and then prescribe an individual course of study using the online curriculum.

Director of Curriculum Julia Robinson says the vision for the program has mushroomed since its inception. "We've learned of so many willing partners, volunteers and opportunities that we've had to step back and concentrate on basic services for the initial cohort," she said. Organizers see continued growth as interest develops and offerings expand.

With no other Plaza currently operating east of the Dallas/Fort Worth area, the Commerce site opening should have a positive impact in the northeast Texas area, according to Robinson.

"By helping Hispanic parents complete their education, we will undoubtedly help them support their own children in our classrooms, making it a win-win situation for us all," Robinson said.



Maria Garza, left, the new coordinator of the Community Plaza, was welcomed by staff at an early morning reception.



**Exemplary
Expectations**

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Tina, the Commerce Tiger (aka Jessica King, junior, CHS), participated in a charity event for a Hunt County resident who is suffering from MS. The event raised over \$7000 to help with Justin Kemp's living and medical expenses.

The Madagascar Connection



Earlier this school year, CMS used technology in the classroom to contact a former classmate who has moved with her family to Madagascar. The eighth graders asked Phoebe Hailes how her life had changed since moving there and what the family's life was like in such as distant country. Using Skype both groups could see and hear each other.

Jobanet Flores wins art contest



Freshman Jobanet Flores was chosen as the Grand Prize Winner of Downey Publishing's "Art for Education" contest. Her artwork is on the front cover of the 2011-2012 Hunt County Telephone Directory and she will receive a \$500 savings bond.

In addition, Commerce Middle School was awarded the \$500 school prize.

Two other Commerce Middle School students, Zahraa Al Fashkhi and Tyrone Alex, were chosen runners up. They will each receive a \$250 savings bond and their artwork is also inside the directory.

Jobanet (right) is shown with CMS art teacher Debora Lytle.



CHS students and staff laughed in the face of superstition Friday the 13th by walking under ladders and crossing in front of black cats.

CHS Principal Virdie Montgomery is asking students to recommit to Rachel's Challenge, a program that promotes kindness and compassion throughout the school. The campus is in its fourth year of participating in Rachel's Challenge, a program begun by Darrel Scott in memory of his daughter who was the first victim of the Columbine High School shooting.