

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Educational Development Center

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Save the Date

**Texas Parent to Parent
(TxP2P) Conference
July 10-11**

**Woodridge DDD
Coming Fall 2020**

**3rd Annual Caroline
Gose Inclusion 5K-
April 4,2020**



Start of a new school year:
Mr. Albert, Cab and Ms. Blanca

Charles Augustus Beaver IV, better known as Cab to friends and family, is a happy 3rd grader at Woodridge Elementary. Cab has never met a stranger; everyone he meets instantly wants to be his friend. He is smart and sweet and has worked hard to accomplish so many of the things the rest of us take for granted. Cab has spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy or spastic quad CP, for short. It's the most severe of the three types of spastic cerebral palsy because it affects all four limbs, and in fact, his whole body. Spastic CP occurs when the



brain sustains trauma and the affected part of the brain sends incorrect neurological messages to the body, impeding normal motor function. Cab's story wasn't always fraught with medical jargon, his birth was highly anticipated and mom, Hannah, had a normal, uncomplicated pregnancy. Nothing could have prepared them for everything their baby boy would soon go through. Hannah and Charles, Cab's parents, were thrilled at the birth of their first child and named him after his father. Shortly after birth, Cab contracted meningitis which wasn't initially detected. Cab's condition quickly turned urgent; he stopped breathing and his heart stopped beating. Cab required intubation and was placed on life support. Machines forced air into his lungs and pumped blood through his little body for an excruciating week. In the chaotic struggle to keep Cab alive, the intubation was done improperly, and his body didn't receive the amount of oxygen it needed, resulting in two strokes. Both the initial insult of the meningitis and the two subsequent strokes caused what doctors later called "catastrophic brain injury". Doctors told the Beevers that many areas of Cab's brain were impacted by the injury and warned them that Cab would have many health difficulties ranging from blindness to the possibility of being in a permanent vegetative state; but even then, Cab proved to be a fighter. After spending six weeks in the hospital, Cab was finally discharged. Those first months with Cab home were fairly easy, but at around six months old, Cab began vomiting what seemed to be non-stop. He started losing weight and his pediatrician declared that he was failing to thrive. To compound a difficult time, Hannah began to notice that Cab didn't seem to know when she came to his crib unless she made a sound. When Cab was about nine months old, the Beevers learned that he was legally blind. A month before his first birthday, Cab had a feeding tube put in, but it did little to improve his situation. In those early years, Hannah and Charles took turns at night watching Cab to make sure he didn't choke in his sleep. Hannah recalls that life was nearly unmanageable for well over three years. Hannah and Charles saw numerous doctors to try to find out why Cab couldn't hold food down. They finally introduced a new rigorous diet and the vomiting stopped. Cab was able to eat for the first time and began to gain a little weight. Hannah credits the diet with healing Cab's gut and putting an end to the constant vomiting. Their reprieve would be short lived when around age four, Cab's spasticity set in and his little body began to hurt all the time. Cab had no way of relieving the stiffness in his muscles. He was miserable and there was little that his parents or doctors could do to make him feel better. To make matters more difficult, Cab had become sensitive to noise; even the sound of his family's laughter would set off Cab's tears. Last year, Cab had spinal surgery to relieve the spasticity and greatly reduce his pain. Hannah says Cab is like a different child since his surgery. Hannah reflects, "We are finally getting to know our child for the first time. He's a happy little guy. We have always loved him, but now we are absolutely falling in love with his sweet, hilarious, loving personality."



Cab crawling for the first time.

Hannah looks back at the eight grueling years before Cab's surgery and credits their faith with helping see them through it. She points to all of the progress Cab has made and knows in her heart that they're miracles that she and Charles prayed for. She knows that having a special needs child can put a strain on a marriage but thinks that her and Charles' marriage is stronger for it. "He's the greatest partner I could ask for on this bumpy road," she shares.

Cab began Early Childhood Intervention thru Easter Seals at about *eight weeks old*. The

Beevers lived in a condo then but had planned to make their home on the family ranch in Pearsall where Charles had been raised. They were about to start building their dream home when Cab was born. Cab's therapist at Easter Seals told the Beevers about the Special Education program at Alamo Heights; it was then that they decided to stay in town and purchased their home in Terrell Hills to ensure Cab would attend Howard when he turned three.

Easter Seals therapists came to the Beevers' home through what seemed like a revolving door. Therapists began initially with feeding therapy but quickly added physical therapy, occupational therapy, visual impairment therapy and nutrition services. All in all, Cab had nine therapies a week. When Cab turned three in early September of 2013, he began ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education) at Howard. Hannah knows firsthand the caliber of teachers in special education in Alamo Heights. Beginning with Ms. Callie and Ms. Sandra, his teacher

and aide, respectively during his time at Howard to his speech therapist, Ms. Kim, and his current team at Woodridge, Cab has had an amazing support team. Albert Cruz, better known to kids as Mr. Albert, has been Cab's bus driver since Cab started attending Howard. Hannah says of Albert, "you can tell he truly loves what he does, and the kids know it too. He is a calm and gentle presence and riding with him is a great way to start and finish each day." Head and shoulders above everyone else, however, is Blanca Padilla. "Blanca can push him in ways no one else can. She truly understands Cab, in the way I understand him. I don't think he would be doing all he is doing today without her."

Hannah describes Blanca as a "constant in our turbulent world. She's one of the few people we can always count on." Hannah says she doesn't worry about Cab at school, "there is nothing more comforting than being able to pass him over to her daily and know that she has him." The affection is mutual. Blanca says she was instantly drawn to Cab the first time she saw him during the annual kindergarten visit. She got down to eye level and started singing to him. She remembers that he brought his face close to hers and looked right into her eyes and smiled. Though the connection was immediate, the year was not without bumps. Blanca worked at gaining his trust and building a relationship



Cab and Ms. Callie.



with Cab. She loves that she's been able to watch him grow and progress. Blanca says of Cab, "He is basically best friends with the whole school." As Hannah expected she would be, Blanca is humble about her role in Cab's life. She earnestly believes that knowing Cab has made her a better person; "he has taught me to never give up, no matter where in life you are. His eyes are full of hope."

The last year has been an amazing one for Cab. The years of rehabilitation, therapies and early intervention that the Beevers invested in for Cab are paying off. The school works with Cab's private OT, PT and speech therapist to implement his plans at school and Cab is flourishing. Many of his friends have been with him since Howard and accept him for who he is. Cab loves books, music, the band Queen and has delighted his family with his burgeoning sense of humor. He's beginning to express himself more and more. With the increase in expression, the Beevers are working on finding out what sort of extracurricular activities he'd like to take part in. When asked about what she hopes for Cab's future, Hannah is cautiously optimistic. She says she tries to stay in the moment and not let worry take control. "We are working on helping Cab be everything God made him to be. As long as he's learning, we will keep finding ways to help him advance". If the past progress is any indication of what is possible for Cab's future, I'd say it looks like a bright one.



The Beever family- Charles, Cab, Hannah and Katen.

Cambridge Elementary

Ashley Gonzalez, Resource Teacher



Cambridge Elementary has seen a lot of change this school year. A new playground on the main campus and a smaller one across Ogden, a new teachers' parking lot, the new track and turf field, which completed the improvements made to the specials area which was debuted in early May last year; all were in place to welcome students for the 2019-2020 school year. Another change was the addition of new resource teacher, Ashley Gonzalez. Though new to Alamo Heights, Ms. Gonzalez is not new to the world of Special Education. Ms. Gonzalez comes to our district from NEISD where she worked for 4 years. She found her passion working with special needs children while working in a social services setting and decided to focus her talent as a teacher in special education.

Asked about how she feels about her work, Ashley says, "there is no other position in the classroom I'd rather have than as a special education teacher." One of the many things Ashley enjoys about her current role is being able to work with students and teachers in different grade. Ashley supports students in classes from 1st through 5th grades and serves as a case manager for many of the same students. Part of what she loves about her job is that she works with teachers and interventionists to create plans for student success and helps in the implementation to ensure students have everything they need to be successful. She loves that each child's needs are as unique as they are. She enjoys getting to know each of them and finding out what works best in each situation. Her ultimate goal is to make them as independent as possible.

Ashley wants to help parents as much as she helps her students. Her advice is to ask as many questions as needed. She understands that the Special Education realm is full of terms and acronyms that may be confusing and encourages parents to seek clarification. She also recommends that parents speak to their child's case manager prior to an ARD (Annual Review and Dismissal) meeting to ensure that a parent has input in the creation of the goals that will make up the child's Individual Education Program (IEP). Her last piece of advice is to talk to your case manager if you're child isn't making the progress you'd expect; it might be a good time to review your child's goals or reconsider the services that are being provided. Ashley is happy to talk to parents about their child. The best way to reach her is via email at Agonzalez@ahisd.net with questions or to set up a conference.

On a more personal note, Ashley hails from Laredo and moved to San Antonio to attend the University of Texas, San Antonio. At UTSA, Ashley studied anthropology and minored in biology. She worked with Child Protective Services and The Children's Shelter prior to becoming a teacher. It was in there that Ashley knew she wanted to work improve children's lives by becoming a teacher. She has lived in San Antonio for 14 years and now considers the Alamo city her home, but still has extensive family in both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, so she still visits often. She and her husband have two Boston terriers, Zero and Donut.

Ashley enjoys camping, cooking, traveling and attending concerts but loves to redecorate and remodel the home she shares with her husband. Ashley is enthusiastic about her role and her new school district. She says, "I don't think I've ever worked in a more positive and supportive environment; I feel so lucky to be here." We're glad you're here, Ashley!

"There's no other position in the classroom I'd rather have than of a special education teacher."

Cambridge Elementary

Orlando Villegas, SST Teacher

Orlando Villegas is the new lead teacher for the Student Support Team classroom at Cambridge. He's been a teacher for thirteen years, both as a middle school math teacher in the general education setting as well as a teacher in special education.

Orlando has worked in San Antonio ISD and most recently in Judson ISD before coming to Alamo Heights. Orlando has always had a passion for helping people, so education was a natural path for him. He says he particularly likes being in special education because working with a smaller number of students affords him the opportunity to get to know his students better and give them each more individual attention and instruction. Orlando teaches math, science and daily living skills to students in the SST classroom. He helps each student make progress towards his or her individual goals through a specialized and individualized curriculum. It's that one on one time with each student that allows Orlando to get to know each student so well and gives him the opportunity to understand how each one is uniquely gifted. He shares, "It's a privilege to watch them grow and accomplish so many things." Orlando encourages parents as their child's primary advocates, "attend as many workshops and information sessions as possible" from the many organizations and agencies in San Antonio "to learn and begin to explore available services." Orlando is available by email at ovillegas@ahisd.net to answer questions, discuss a child's progress or to set up a conference.



Orlando has been a lifelong citizen of San Antonio having attended public school here then St. Mary's for his undergraduate work in marketing and Trinity University for his masters in School Administration. He and wife Lauren have two young children, Emma and Alex. The family spends their winter and summer breaks in Steamboat Springs, Colorado where Lauren's family has a home. The family skis in the winter and hikes in the summer Orlando enjoys playing rugby for exercise and to relieve stress. He became interested in it in college when a friend introduced him to the sport. He was assistant coach for the Alamo Heights rugby team in 2016 and 2017 and head coach in 2018.

Cambridge Lunch Bunch

Kelly Masters' lunch bunch is THE place to be at Cambridge Elementary. Kids who come to her class know that Ms. Masters has their back, no matter what. She's their biggest cheerleader and encourager, doling out high fives and hugs on demand. The kids don't just love Masters because she's nice, they love her because she sees their potential and *expects* them to do well once they've been taught *how*. Kelly is big on modeling appropriate interactions to teach her students social skills as well as how to regulate their emotions and actions. It's no wonder her peers selected her as the campus Teacher of the Year for the 2018-2019 school year.



3rd grade Lunch Bunch buddies: Luke Carraway, Conrad May, Vivienne Gonzalez, Gavin Quintero and Sebastian Lorenz working cooperatively to build the tallest Lego tower.



Kelly Masters, Behavior Support Teacher, Cambridge Elementary

“Engaging All Students in Meaningful Learning- All means all, and I teach some of the toughest students to reach. I am relentlessly creative in finding ways to teach a student who is not responding to interventions. Because this behavior is data-based from a student’s day, it is very meaningful. It helps a student have friends, manage frustration, do their work, start a conversation, ask for help, and take a break. I also share behavior data with students so that they can see that the daily report card means something and so they can see their own progress and what they are working on and what they are doing well. This is embedded in everything we do.”

Principal, Jana Needham, shares, “Kelly is a student-centered teacher. Every child is unique. Each one is a “super hero.” She is flexible in how she serves her students in the general education classrooms. She is compassionate, insightful, creative and reassuring. She ensures that every child knows they are cared for, safe, and loved. She is extremely patient with her students, even on the toughest days.”

Welcome Back!

Heather Craig is no stranger to Cambridge. After the birth of her son in 2015, Heather decided to work part-time and joined the team at Howard, teaching preK but she found she just couldn’t keep away from the work she loves doing most and rejoined the Student Support Team (SST) class at Cambridge this fall. Heather has worked in education for 15 years. After graduating with a degree in psychology, Heather worked in a residential facility for abused and neglected children. The work was emotionally taxing but she knew she wanted to continue working with children. She took a job as a para-professional at Woodridge elementary and it was then she knew she’d found her calling and passion. She transferred to Cambridge in 2005 when the lead SST teacher role opened up and has come full circle. Much of Heather’s satisfaction working in special education comes from getting to know her students so well. Being their primary teacher several years in a row, she’s formed bonds with not only each of her student, but also with their respective families. When asked what she enjoys most about her work, she says, “I love knowing that my students can learn anything!” Heather is passionate about working in the best interest of her students and enjoys the collaboration between home and school. She encourages parents to keep informed of their child’s rights and to always feel comfortable advocating for them. The best way to contact Heather with questions is by email at hcraig@ahisd.net





Woodridge Elementary

Valyn Mendoza, Resource Teacher

Valyn Mendoza's career took a turn from her original trajectory when she took her current job at Woodridge elementary. Before coming to Alamo Heights, Valyn worked as the district liaison for the City of San Antonio for seven years. Her responsibilities for the city found her spending a lot of time with students in special education at the Junior School. The relationships she built with the students and their families compelled her to transition into education. Valyn is currently completing the last phase of an alternative certification program under the supervision

of Woodridge staff and a program supervisor. In her role at Woodridge, Valyn provides academic support in the areas of math and English language arts to a number of students in 2nd and 4th grade. She serves the district as case manager for several students and works collaboratively to assist children with any needs that may arise, whether in a different academic area or a social/behavioral area. Asked about what she enjoys most about her role, Valyn says, "I truly enjoy their creativity and seeing them grow in their academic and personal skills. Every day is different, and I enjoy helping students accomplish their goals and overcome their challenges." Because of her previous work for the city, Valyn understands that parents new to the ARD process can find it challenging and intimidating. She encourages parents to speak freely and advocate for their child's needs as they know their child best. She suggests parents familiarize themselves with the TEA website as it offers great resources to help parents understand the process. Valyn also encourages having direct communication with a child's teacher and case manager should a parent need support. Valyn is available daily during her conference from 2:30-3:20. Parents should email her with questions or to set up a time to speak by emailing her at vmendoza@ahisd.net.

Valyn has lived in San Antonio for 13 years, but is originally from Deer Park, just outside of Houston. She graduated with a BA in Government from UT and earned a masters degree in Public Administration from UTSA. She shares her home with two rescue dogs, Ninfa and Juno and recently added a third four legged friend named Ringo. During free time and summer, Valyn loves traveling. Some of the places she has traveled to are France, Italy, Spain, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Canada, and last year she took a 17 day road trip along the western coast of the United States. She loves reading, trying new foods and listening to music to unwind. Valyn feels it's an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to work in Alamo Heights ISD and to serve the children and families in this community. She looks forward to sharing her passion for her job with each family she works with for years to come

Alamo Heights Junior School

Mario Guerra is a new face at the Junior School, but he isn't new to teaching. Mr. Guerra comes to Alamo Heights after working in special education in Somerset ISD for 18 years where he taught 5th and 6th grade/ special education in the area of inclusion support. At the Junior School, Mr. Guerra works with Mrs. Sadosky, Ms. Jobe and Mr. Wilson. Together they support students academically by teaching Reading, Writing and Social Studies.



In addition to teaching English and Social Studies Mario serves as case manager for six students. A large part of that responsibility involves coordinating all IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings as well as ARD (Annual Review and Dismissal) meetings and all the paperwork that pertain to a student's classroom accommodations/ modifications. The amount of paperwork involved in implementing a teaching plan can be daunting, but Mario's passion for reaching his students is even stronger. He takes great satisfaction from watching his students grow academically, socially and emotionally. When asked what his advice to parents is, Mario underscores the importance of helping "children feel safe and allow and teach them to advocate for themselves". He also wants to reassure parents that there are no un-important questions.

Mario is originally from Monterrey, Mexico but has lived in Somerset for over 30 years. He attended The University of Texas A&M San Antonio. Mario has been married to his wife (Patricia) for 28 years and they have 5 children, two daughters and three sons, ranging in age from 18 to 32. They also have two dogs, a boxer named Emory and a mix named Gino. Mario enjoys working on his yard and having barbeques and spends his summers playing golf with family and friends.

Mario says he's excited to be working "for such a fine school district with students who are willing to learn and parents who are involved in their children's education". Mario has daily conference times during 5th period (12:05-12:50) and 9th period (3:15-4:00) periods and welcomes your questions. The best way to reach him is to email him at mguerra@ahisd.net

Alamo Heights High School

Sarah Rossi, English and History SST Teacher



Sarah Rossi has always known she wanted to be a teacher. As a child, she remembers being the student who loved being a teachers' helper as well as making her brother sit in her "class" along with her dolls. Her love for teaching took a turn towards special education in high school where she was a peer tutor. And the rest, as they say, is history. Sarah comes to AHHS from Lubbock ISD where she worked in a self-contained special education classroom. At Heights, Sarah teaches English, reading, and US History and serves as case manager for six students. In her English and reading classes, Sarah helps her students with grammar, spelling, reading, writing and sight word practice. In History, they focus on learning important dates and events in our country's history. As a case manager, Sarah is responsible for monitoring her

students' progress on their academic and non-academic goals, working on goals for the coming year and acting as a point of contact for parents and guardians. When asked what aspect of her job she enjoys most, Sarah says, "It's seeing the progress that my students make throughout the school year. I love seeing how much my students are capable of when they have the right support; I love watching them grow as the year goes on." Sarah believes so much in the capacity and resiliency of her students that she advises parents to push their children to be more independent by asking them to help out more around the house. She believes that showing them that they are valuable contributors to their family increases both their independence and their self-worth. Sarah also encourages parents to teach their children to perform self-care activities on their own and to have their children make as many of their own choices throughout the day as possible to further encourage independence. To speak to Sarah more about your student, please contact her via email at srossi@ahisd.net to schedule a meeting either by phone or in person.

Sarah is a graduate of Texas Tech Universtiy where she studied and majored in Education. She moved to San Antonio over the summer to take her job with Alamo Heights. Sarah and her fiancé, Lane, are planning a wedding for April. She and Lane have a goal of visiting all fifty states together, so when time allows, they try to travel and cross another state off their list. She enjoys visiting both municipal parks and state historic monuments and spending down time with Lane and her dog Bentley. Sarah says she's happy to be in Alamo Heights and grateful to be part of such a supportive district.

AHHS ACE Teacher

Libby Rokowski

Libby Rokowski has come full circle. She's back at Alamo Heights High School where she first discovered her interest in teaching when she was a peer tutor in Kari Butt's class. When Libby graduated from Heights, she went off to study psychology and philosophy at the University of Richmond in Virginia and a Masters in Education from Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. After college, Libby worked in Boston as a special education teacher at a residential school for children with autism for 6 years. She returned home to San Antonio three years ago with her husband and taught in the SST (Student Support Team) class at Cambridge for three years where she attended elementary school. This is her first year teaching in ACE (Alternative Classroom Environment) at the high school. Libby's day to day activities focus on helping each student work to their potential. She does this through a combination of direct instruction of behavior and social skills and reinforcement of those skills in the natural environment- the subject matter classes her students attend. As their case manager, Libby checks in on her students to ensure they're on track for the day and if they're having difficulty, problem solves with them on how to get back on track. Libby says that's her favorite part, being able to help students apply the skills they've learned in her class to every day situations. Libby's advice to parents is that they communicate to their child's case manager prior to the ARD the goals they hope their child will work on in the coming year and to follow up with teachers and all support personnel if they have a question or don't feel their child is making adequate progress as soon as possible so that supports can be adjusted.



When Libby isn't helping her students, she enjoys spending time with her husband Alex and their young family, 3 year old Jack and baby Kate born earlier this year in February. Libby also enjoys working off steam by working out and gardening in her yard when it isn't too hot. Libby says of her return to Alamo Heights, "I love this job and am so happy to be working in AHISD". Libby welcomes collaboration from parents and can be reached via email at erokowski@ahisd.net or during her conference times daily from 10:35-11:29 and 2:25-3:10.

Know a group or individual who make for a great feature article for the spring newsletter? Email me your suggestions at mharrison@ahisd.net. #AHISDMyStory

AHHS ACE Teacher

Tim Brown



Although this is his first year teaching for the district, Tim Brown is no stranger to either Alamo Heights or to special education. Tim has worked with individuals with special needs all of his life. When Tim graduated from college with a degree in Therapeutic Recreation, he went to work at Charis Hills, a special needs camp for youth aged 7-18 with disabilities such as ADD, ADHD, Asperger's, high-functioning Autism and other special needs. Tim began his five year tenure at Charis as a camp counselor but was the assistant director when he left to get his teaching certification. While working on certification, he provided respite care to the families of several students with disabilities who were Cambridge students in Natalie Malitz' classroom. This marks Tim's 11th year in special education. Tim has worked at Krueger Middle School for the last nine years. He served his students as either co-teacher or resource teacher in the special education setting for four years but has spent the last 5 years as a behavioral support teacher assisting his students in the general education classes as well as with social skills acquisition. Tim brings this experience and his ability to connect with his students to AHHS; Tim teaches in the ACE (Alternative Classroom Education) class to help students acquire and implement social skills, coping strategies and organizational skills to boost their success. Tim also serves as a case manager for thirteen students. Case Management involves working closely with each student's multiple teachers to develop the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), monitoring the student's progress towards the goals and adjusting the plan as necessary to increase the likelihood of achieving said goals. One of the things Tim has already help initiate at the High School, is "student led IEPs". Tim has a knack for incorporating a student's voice into the meeting and including the student in the process. He does this by encouraging students to select a joke, a meaningful song, or by having them share an interest with the ARD committee. This is one of the ways that points to the fact that Tim doesn't think strictly in terms of academic success, he considers the whole individual. One of his personal goals is to help students find ways to be successful in social situations where they might not naturally. He thinks a key way of doing that is by building relationships and connections with his students so that they know and trust him. With an eye towards the future, Tim encourages parents to arm their child with as much information as possible about their qualifying condition and to review their goals with them. As students become older, it's important to encourage them towards self-determination; to have a voice in what they want their lives to look like once the high school years come to a close. That begins by teaching social skills and problem solving as much as teaching math and history. Tim has conference times during 6th and 9th periods but can make himself available at other times by appointment. Parents can contact Tim at tbrown2@ahisd.net Asking Tim where he's from might get you a reply something like, "I wasn't born in Texas, but I got here as fast as I could." Tim was born in California, grew up in Laredo but has always considered San Antonio home. Tim's ties to Alamo Heights began when he began working

with families with children in the SST program at Cambridge. Tim was working with students in their home to continue some of the goals their teacher had put in place. Tim met and later married his sweet wife, Natalie after being “set up” by fellow teacher Heather Craig and the students’ mother, and the rest, as they say, is history. Natalie is the Special Education coordinator for Cambridge and Woodridge and has herself been interested in special educations since her days as a peer tutor at AHHS. Together they have a smart, sweet daughter, Emery, a 2nd grader at Cambridge and 15 month old Travis. Tim enjoys playing the guitar and coaching many of Emery’s sports teams. When school is out for breaks, the Brown family enjoys traveling around the country including an annual ski trip to Park City and many weekends on Lake LBJ. Tim also loves supporting his Texas State Bobcats and his adopted Baylor Bears and when time and energy allow, playing golf.

Discovering Disabilities Day 2019

On October 29th, Cambridge Elementary hosted Discovering Disabilities Day in partnership with Kinetic Kids, a local non-profit that provides sport and fine arts programs to children with special needs. The goal for the day was to educate and enlighten students on different disabilities and raise awareness on inclusion. At the event, students had opportunities to participate in hands on activities to experience what it's like to have different abilities, speak to Kinetic Kids coaches and community partners about their experiences living with disabilities, and walk away with a better understanding of how to adapt activities to be more inclusive of their peers and members in the community. The day was a resounding success in part due to the close involvement of parent volunteers, staff who gave their time and expertise and the help of the AHHS PALS team.



L: Top Row(L-R): Grace Carter, Randy Jones, Alex Hood, Grayce Lyssy, and Emmie Chaney

Bottom Row (L-R): Miriam Perez, Katelyn Jones, Emily Scott and Claire Gunter.

R: student playing adaptive basketball.



JS Unified Champions Club

The JS Unified Champions Club has been busy preparing for Word Warrior Week with grant money it was awarded through David’s Legacy Foundation. The initiative is a school-wide effort to “identify the origin of negative/offensive verbiage that is commonly used through various modes: face to face and technology and a commitment to bury these words in an effort to encourage positive growth.” Club members have been working to beautify Everybody’s Garden by adding more planter boxes, refreshing the mulch and adding a mural. When they return from the break, each class will choose a word that they will “bury” in the garden and commit to erasing derogatory verbiage by placing their thumbprints on the Word Warrior Wall.

Working in the garden

Right: Holly Nash, Daisy Flores, Evan Williams and Mya Gonzales



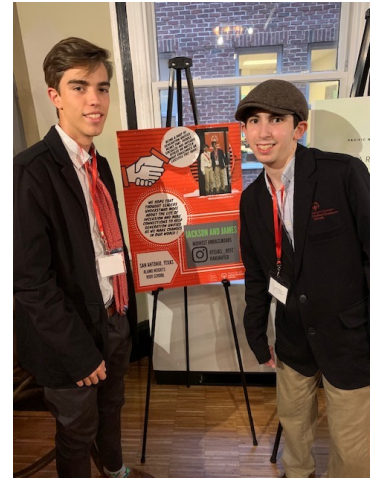
Left: Evan Williams, Hugh Jones, Gia Barrera and Wyatt Harrison

Right: Adam Lopes



HS Unified Champions

Jackson Escamilla and James Ramirez recently represented Alamo Heights as Unified Champions Youth Ambassadors at the Unified Champions Youth Ambassadors Leadership Summit. The weekend conference was packed with various breakout sessions on developing leadership skills and being youth ambassadors for their peers. Be sure to check out the spring edition of our Parents as Partners newsletter to learn about Jackson and James experience and what they hope to accomplish at AHHS.

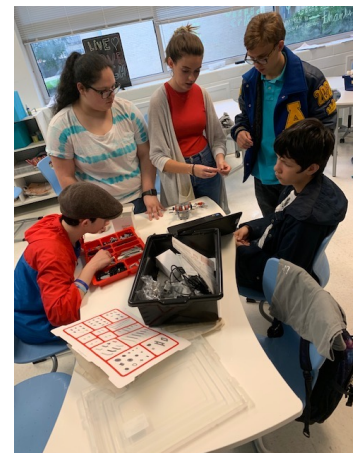


2019
Unified
Friendsgiving

In keeping with their mission to break barriers and live unified, members of the Unified Champions club launched the district's first Unified Robotics teams.



Left: The Gearbots- Macy Helmer, Henley Stephenson, Isaac Garza and Rafael Diaz.



Right: The Robros-James Ramirez, Alexandria Alvarez, Belasandra Stephenson, James Veeder and Joel Lisowski.

Dear Alamo Heights Family,

People tell you that you will know when it is time to retire. Well, I am at that realization. I can't tell you how much I have loved my career as a special educator and as a director of special education. I often hear people complaining about having to go to work on Monday and, for me, Mondays were the start of a new week filled with mysteries.

Being a special education director for the past 30 years (23 in Alamo Heights) has been a gift. I have worked with so many great staff members, school board members, families and children. I have loved the fact that I could walk into a classroom and know the children by name. In many cases, I was there when the children first came through the door at Howard to when they walked the stage at High School. I have witnessed parents in the grieving stage when their child was first diagnosed with a disability and then again when their young adult has achieved goals that allow them to be responsible citizens ready to face the world.



When I first came to the district in 1997, a group of parents and I created the mission for special education in Alamo Heights. I have tried to keep this mission in all decisions I made over the years. I hope you will agree.

*The mission of the Special Education Department is to promote individual worth, facilitate parental involvement, encourage social participation in school and neighborhood, and foster business partnerships in order to graduate responsible, **self-reliant, citizens** with self-determination and employability skills who will succeed and be valued members of the community-at-large.*

This district has never forgotten even one child. I have gone through many school board members over the 23 years and every one of them has been supportive of our kids. I have worked with three different superintendents. All three are dedicated to our kids. I have worked with numerous principals, all whom have cared for ALL kids. I have worked with 5 wonderful parent liaisons who have been champions for families with students with special needs. Lastly, I have had the privilege of working with all of you. I could not have been more blessed to have this type of support.

Thanks for everything!

Sincerely,

Kris

“Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion.”



Welcome Melissa!

Melissa Benavidez will be joining us full time beginning on January 6th as our new Director of Special Education. Melissa has served as a special education administrator for the past 16 year in NISD, most recently in the positions of Assistant Special Education Director (7 years) and also Principal of Holmgreen HS (2 ½ years). Prior to that service, she was a special education teacher in Harlandale and in NISD (behavior, resource, life skills).

Farewell, Kris!

As 2019 comes to a close, I can't help but feel introspective. In my short time working under Kris Holliday's leadership, I've discovered just how much I have to learn. As parents to children with special needs, we learn a whole new language to discuss our child's diagnoses, therapies, medications and the particulars of their education plan. It's a daunting task for most people but Kris has been an articulate and passionate advocate for hundreds of children in our district for 23 years. So rather than share an overview of my year, I thought it fitting that this space be used to share the thoughts of some of the people who have worked alongside Kris as she has improved Special Education in Alamo Heights. Farewell, Kris. Enjoy your retirement, you've earned it! -

-Michelle Harrison, Special Education Parent Liaison

"What I've always loved and appreciated so much about Kris is that she has ALWAYS encouraged me to **'be a school psychologist'** and has always given me the green light to try different interventions/strategies in working with kids/families." -David Sanders, AHHS LSSP

"Loyalty - Kris always had our backs.

Endurance – Kris never stopped fighting for our students, whether they needed a bigger classroom, more staff, special curriculums – she made it happen."

-Sara Womack, ST, reflecting on some of Kris' most effective leadership traits

"..during my first few months on the job, I had a question regarding a new student. Kris told me, 'Well, I can give you the answer-or I can teach you to fish.' She encouraged me to look in the Legal Framework. At first I was frustrated.... but I realized as I pored through the legal framework website that I learned a lot! When she asked if I had figured out the answer, I replied 'I caught a trout!'"

-Shannon Stepan, CE & JS LSSP

“Kris Holliday is an amazing talent! I’ve been so fortunate to have worked with her for the past 24 years. I can still remember the incredible support she provided to me when I served as principal, and that support continued in my various roles over the years. Her dedication and commitment to AHISD students has really transformed the way that we offer and support students in our Special Education program. Her heart for kids is first and foremost in all the decisions she makes, and she never shies away from tough decisions or difficult conversations. I’ve been inspired by her leadership. Our district is such a better place today because of her commitment over the years. I’m grateful for her service and I’ve treasured her friendship over these years!”

-Dr. Dana Bashara, AHISD Superintendent

“She is an amazing boss/leader for many reason. First and foremost she makes work fun! She has an open door policy and is always there to support, explain, or find the answer if she doesn’t know it which is almost NEVER. She respects each of us and provides us with the autonomy to do our jobs.”

-Traci Thomas, OT All Campuses

“Kris has been an angel in our lives. She was always a compassionate guide, a wise decision maker, and a close friend. The district will surely miss her.”

-Meggan Leonard, Parent and former Parent Liaison

“The questions she asked lit a fire in me that easily made me express the passion and love I have for education. I walked out of Howard and thought to myself, “That was so much fun!” It didn’t feel like an interview at all.... This is my 5th year at Howard, and I feel so blessed and honored to be a part of such an amazing district and a team that truly puts children first.”

-Stephanie Hargrove, HECC Special Ed Coordinator, sharing about her interview with Kris

“Sometimes the worlds of special education and the assistant principal collide. There is a lot that an AP needs to know legally for regular ed. The info needed for special ed is vast. Without Kris’ help on many occasions, we in the admin office at the high school would not have known how to proceed other than guessing. While we could talk to the lawyers, Kris’ insight was invaluable because she also knew the family and the student(s). So often Kris was our guide. Kris’ expertise and ability to explain in a way that made sense to us, made us more effective. In the end, that is what was best for students.”

-Norm Collins, Interim Athletic Director and former HS Asst. Principal

“From the time I joined AHISD in fall 2001, I learned that Kris personally knew every student in the special education program, and she ALWAYS had their best interests in mind when making decisions. I have always been impressed by how well Kris knows each student, their history, and their needs, and how central she keeps the student’s individual needs to our decision-making. I have learned a lot from her, but that student-centered focus and heart for kids is the impactful thing I take away from working with her all these years.”

-Dr. Frank Alfaro, Asst. Superintendent for Administrative Services

“In spite of limited funding and never-ending demands, Kris is a problem-solver who ensures that things just work for children. She is a tireless worker, putting in tons of extra hours because of her tremendous sense of mission to serve. Kris has impeccable integrity and is a courageous leader. She doesn’t mind making difficult decisions when she believes they are the right thing to do. She knows the complexities of special education law and policies and is a very competent leader.

Those of us who know Kris well enjoy her wonderful sense of humor, her effervescent personality, her positive energy and her sense of caring and compassion for everyone. Kris created a culture in the special education department that is student-focused, innovative and highly effective. She has touched the lives of thousands of children in her career, including mine. She will be missed greatly!”

-Dr. Kevin Brown, Executive Director, Texas Association of School Administrators

“Kris was always accessible, informative, and supportive whenever I had a question or needed her help. She has an enormous amount of knowledge, passion, and energy for the students and their families... On a personal note, I always felt supported as an employee, as a friend, and as a parent of a child with special needs. Kris encouraged me and never hesitated to push me to take a step back as a parent and let my son grow and learn from experience. I will always be grateful to Kris for her generous nature and kindness.”

-Tracy Maxwell, parent and former Parent Liaison

Kris is an amazing lady with a huge heart for all kids! I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work alongside her and to get to know her professionally and personally. She is one of the best and will be dearly missed. I wish her all the best in her retirement. She is so deserving of all that is good

-Patti Pawlik-Perales, Communications Coordinator



Merry Christmas
and a
Prosperous New Year!



You can help reshape our community’s system of care for people on the autism spectrum.

Autism Lifeline Links (ALL) is a collaborative of non-profit agencies and service organizations working together to positively effect change for people on the autism spectrum.

Joining forces with **ALL** can help everyone living with autism in many ways, including:

What you GET when you register	What you GIVE when you register
<p>Referrals – You will be linked to a team of community providers for diagnosis, therapy, respite, and other support services regardless of where you are on the spectrum now and in the future as your needs evolve.</p> <p>Care Coordination – You will be linked to a Care Coordinator who will provide seamless referrals to ALL member agencies and information on other community services requested. If no referrals are needed, a Care Coordinator is available for future support and contact.</p> <p>Resources - Visit our website to view our <i>Community Resource Guide</i> designed specifically for individuals with ASD and their families/caretakers.</p>	<p>Advocacy - Help shape legislation relating to autism issues. One voice is important. Many voices can make the difference.</p> <p>Contribute - Visit our website to recommend resources for our Guide, helping others get connected.</p> <p>Hope - Your registration in ALL will help us continue to identify the current gaps in services for people with autism, educate our community on barriers, build awareness and improve the system of care for people living with autism.</p>

Can we count you in?

Visit <https://autismlifelinelinks.org> to learn more

To join click the button...

Registration information is confidential.



For special needs children ages 6-18 and their siblings ages 5 & up

FUN EVERY FRIDAY | 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

<p>WURZBACH MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>-----</p> <p>SPRING 2020 PARTIES</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Arc of San Antonio Pam Stephens Ctr. 6530 Wurzbach Rd. San Antonio, TX 78240</p> <p>\$100</p>	<p>STONE OAK MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>-----</p> <p>SPRING 2020 PARTIES</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Crown of Life Lutheran Church 19291 Stone Oak Pkwy San Antonio, TX 78258</p> <p>\$180</p>	<p>MW MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>-----</p> <p>SPRING 2020 PARTIES</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Morgan's Wonderland Event Center 5223 David Edwards Dr. San Antonio, TX 78233</p> <p>\$100</p>	<p>SEASON PASS</p> <p>-----</p> <p>ALL SPRING 2020 PARTY LOCATIONS</p> <p>-----</p> <p>\$355</p>
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SIBLINGS OF MEMBERS: \$10 per party
NON-MEMBERS: \$25 per child w/special needs
\$15 per additional sibling prior to event
additional \$5 at the door

Need financial assistance? Complete a scholarship application at www.specialreach.org/scholarship

ANNUAL APPLICATION REQUIRED
 AVAILABLE AT **SPECIALREACH.ORG/PARTICIPANTAPPLICATION**

(210) 788-0010 | INFO@SPECIALREACH.ORG

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR SCHEDULE



For special needs children ages 6-18 and their siblings ages 5 & up

FUN EVERY FRIDAY | 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED PRIOR TO EACH EVENT

Winter Party	1/10/2020	Morgan's Wonderland
Glow Party	1/17/2020	Crown of Life Church
Safari Party	1/24/2020	Crown of Life Church
Rockstar Party	1/31/2020	The Arc of San Antonio
Superbowl Party	2/7/2020	The Arc of San Antonio
Valentine's Day Party	2/14/2020	Crown of Life Church
Rodeo Party	2/21/2020	Morgan's Wonderland
Carnival Party	2/28/2020	Crown of Life Church
Spring Luau Party	3/6/2020	Crown of Life Church
St. Patrick's Day Party	3/20/2020	Morgan's Wonderland
Spurs Fan Night	3/27/2020	The Arc of San Antonio
Prom Night	4/3/2020	Crown of Life Church
Fiesta Party	4/10/2020	Morgan's Wonderland
Spring Celebration	4/17/2020	Crown of Life Church
Super Hero Party	4/24/2020	The Arc of San Antonio
Hollywood VIP Party	5/1/2020	The Arc of San Antonio
Beach Party	5/8/2020	Crown of Life Church
Patriotic Party	5/22/2020	Morgan's Wonderland
End of the School Year Party	5/29/2020	Crown of Life Church

(210) 788-0010 | INFO@SPECIALREACH.ORG



WINTER 2020 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Registration begins
JAN 8 @ 9PM

For children who use a wheelchair For children who use an assistive device For children who walk independently

FAMILY FUN

AT BAT WITH THE APACHES • FREE •
Kinetic Kids and their siblings join the Antonian High School baseball team for a fun morning of baseball skills, drills, and scrimmaging.

Saturday, February 1, 11am-12:30pm
Antonian High School, 6425 West Avenue 78213

WHEELCHAIR DANCE • FREE •
Kinetic Kids who use a wheelchair for most or all mobility are invited to learn choreography and celebrate with a short performance.

Saturday, February 8, 2-3:30pm
KE Dance Center, 1242 Austin Highway 78209

DRUMMING AROUND • \$15/child •
Kinetic Kids enjoy some drum circle fun, making beautiful music while exploring rhythm and beats!

Saturday, February 15
Champions 9:30-10:30 | Allstars 10:45-11:45
University United Methodist Church, 5084 DeZavala Rd, 78249

DRIVE FORE DREAMS

Join us at Sonterra Country Club (North Course) for a day of fun and friendly competition at our NEW Drive For Dreams Charity Golf Tournament benefiting Kinetic Kids! Contact Isabel Jones for event or sponsorship info at 210-371-3323 or isabel@kinetickidstx.org. To register, visit *Events* at www.kinetickidstx.org. **Monday, March 2 | 8am shotgun start**

PARENT & ME

Children ages 18 months to 5 years with special needs who are unable to participate in mainstream sports and recreational programs due to a limitation related to their diagnosis. Each participant is partnered with a parent.

GYMNASTICS • 6 weeks • \$75 •
Gymnasts explore trampoline, bars, beam, vault and floor with parent participation.

Sundays starting January 26, 3-3:45pm
Sundays starting January 26, 4-4:45pm
Aerial Athletics, 4335 Vance Jackson #300 78230

SWIM • 6 weeks • \$75 •
Swim allows children and parents to explore water in a safe, controlled environment and progress swimming skills.

Sundays starting January 19, 5-5:30pm
Emler Swim School, 6044 FM 3009, Schertz 78154
Sundays starting January 19, 5-5:30pm
Emler Swim School, 15502 Huebner Rd 78248

CHAMPIONS

Children ages 5-18 who need assistance following directions or staying in line in a group setting. We strive to provide 1:1 assistance for Champions.

BASKETBALL • 6 weeks • \$75 •

Players learn FUNdamentals of basketball through skills, drills and scrimmaging.

Tuesdays starting January 21, 5:45-6:30pm
Nellie Reddix Center, 4711 Sid Katz Dr 78229

Wednesdays starting January 22, 6-6:45pm
Mission Road Developmental Center
8706 Mission Road 78214

DANCE • 6 weeks • \$75 •

Dancers learn routines and celebrate with a performance at the season's end.

Sundays starting January 26, 1:45-2:30pm
Dance By Design Studios
1551 N Walnut Ave, New Braunfels 78130

Sundays starting January 26, 4-4:45pm
Palo Alto College, 1400 W Villaret Blvd 78224

GYMNASTICS • 7 weeks • \$75 •

Gymnasts explore trampoline, bars, beam, vault and floor.

Sundays starting January 19, 3-3:45pm
Sundays starting January 19, 4-4:45pm
Aerial Athletics, 4335 Vance Jackson #300, 78230

KARATE • 6 weeks • \$75 •

Participants learn basic forms, defense techniques and karate skills in a safe and controlled environment.

Thursdays starting January 30, 5:45-6:30pm
Connect+Ability at Warm Springs, 5101 Medical Dr 78229

SOCCER • 6 weeks • \$75 •

Players learn FUNdamentals of indoor soccer through skills and drills. Concludes with a scrimmage and awards.

Tuesdays starting January 28, 5:45-6:30pm
Soccer Zone, 8020 Pat Booker Rd, Live Oak 78233

SWIM • 6 weeks • \$75 •

Swim allows children to explore water in a safe, controlled environment and progress swimming skills.

Sundays starting January 19, 5:30-6pm
Sundays starting January 19, 6:45-7:15pm
Emler Swim School, 15502 Huebner Rd 78248

Sundays starting January 19, 5:35-6:05pm
Sundays starting January 19, 7-7:30pm
Emler Swim School, 6044 FM 3009, Schertz 78154

Sundays starting January 19, 6-6:30pm
Sundays starting January 19, 7:15-7:45pm
Emler Swim School, 20210 Stone Oak Pkwy 78258



Woodridge Elementary: Coming Fall 2020

1 goal

Use hands-on experiences to raise awareness of the variety of **'differently-abled'** individuals in our schools, families and community

8 different special needs will be introduced:

- vision
- hearing
- autism
- gross motor delays
- fine motor delays
- head injuries
- prosthetics
- orthotics

talking points

- Everyone is differently-abled. Some kids are great artists, some can hardly draw a stick figure. Some children need a wheelchair, others do not. Encourage children to find something in others they admire and focus on what others do well.
- Teach children to focus on what they have in common with peers like sports teams, movies or books.
- Educate yourself and your family about different disabilities so your children are not afraid of approaching people who are differently-abled.
- Always address the person first: "child with a disability" not "disabled child"
- Other acceptable terminology: person with physical disability, person with cognitive impairment, person with fine motor or gross motor delays.
- When referencing a person with an intellectual disability it is inappropriate to use "retarded" or "mentally retarded." Discourage your children from taunting anyone (differently-abled or not) using those terms.
- Resist saying a person with a prosthetic limb has a "fake" arm or leg.
- A person uses a wheelchair for mobility instead of wheelchair bound

dear parents,

While your students will momentarily experience what it feels like to have a special need, many children and adults live with disabilities for their entire lives and are often misunderstood.

Two keys to acceptance and integration are education and exposure...and there is no better place to start than home. The more you discuss disabilities in your home, the more readily your children will accept their peers with disabilities into their lives. Use the talking points to spark conversations.

28%
of US households are impacted by special needs

190,000
Bexar Co. residents have a special need

www.kinetickidstx.org • 210.478.5860

Starfish Social Club

Facilitating fun, friendships,
and flexible brains!

www.starfishsocialclub.org

1117 Patricia, San Antonio, 78213

Now enrolling for our year-round school
and our evening social groups for kids,
teens, and adults with social learning
challenges!



Respite Care Presents

After School Care



**FOR CHILDREN
WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS
AGES 5-14**

**327 W. CRAIG PL
M-F 2:00-6:00**

\$125/week

**CCS APPROVED
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE**

**YEAR ROUND
PROGRAM
INCLUDES
GUARANTEED
CAMP SPACE!**

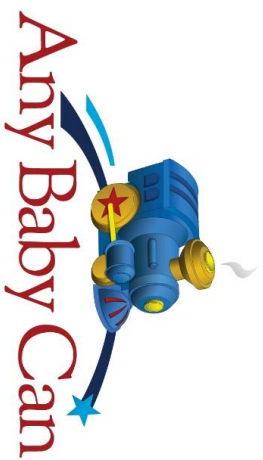
Transportation Coming

January 2020!

**TO REGISTER CONTACT KATIE
AT 210-737-1212 OR
KBENSON@RESPITECARESA.ORG**



**OUR PROGRAMS AND LICENSED
FACILITY ARE STAFFED
BY QUALIFIED CARE GIVERS**



Since 1982, Any Baby Can has been the safety net for families with children and youth facing serious health or developmental challenges.

AGES SERVED

Children and youth ages 0-21 yrs.
Ages may vary for each program

DIAGNOSES

Serving all medical conditions and developmental delays both diagnosed and undiagnosed

ELIGIBILITY

Serving Bexar County and the 18 surrounding counties at no cost to families, regardless of income

LOCATIONS

Offices in San Antonio, New Braunfels, Kerrville, Methodist Children's Hospital & Children's Hospital of San Antonio

NEW BRAUNFELS

1620 S. Seguin Ave. New Braunfels, TX 78130
800.524.3755

KERRVILLE

819 Water St. Ste. 109 Kerrville, TX 78130
830.792.4222

CASE MANAGEMENT

Long-term comprehensive support service designed to build a stable family foundation in order to increase the quality of life for the journey ahead



AUTISM SERVICES

Training, counseling, and resources for families facing autism

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Nutrition and exercise classes for individuals with unique learning abilities

PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Providing access to free or low cost prescription drugs

SIBLING SUPPORT

Support group for siblings of children with special needs

CENTER FOR INFANT & CHILD LOSS

Supporting families who have lost an infant, child, or youth due to any cause

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