



# Lone Star

JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Volume 133 • Number 1

[www.tsd.state.tx.us](http://www.tsd.state.tx.us)

Spring 2012

Texas School for the Deaf  
*Class of* **2012**

# Lone Star

JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

VOLUME 133, No. 1

Spring 2012

(ISSN 0893-2964)

[www.tsd.state.tx.us/lonestar](http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/lonestar)

## Front Cover

The Graduation Class of 2012 during the Commencement Ceremony.

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## Letter from the Editor

Springtime at TSD is a busy time. With spring comes new beginnings and it is a time when we say farewell to our graduates. With every Commencement Ceremony, we have the opportunity to be part of one of the most important days for our students, a day that will last in their hearts forever.

So many activities, news and events happened during the end of the school year. I hope you enjoy this issue and the stories presented. Many thanks to all the people that made this issue possible and helped with their input, pictures and ideas.

As spring is a reminder of renewal and new beginnings, we are also reminded of the fragility of life. We were saddened by the loss of Mark Gobble. All of the TSD family will fondly remember him.

For more information and happenings, please visit us at:  
[www.tsd.state.tx.us/lonestar](http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/lonestar)

Thank you,

Fernando Muñoz

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## Lone Star

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**Special thanks to:**  
Diana Poeppelmeyer, Cynthia Foss, Russell O. West,  
Steve Barbin, Donna Altuna and April Sullivan.

**Photography:**  
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## Subscription Info

A one year subscription to Lone Star, the quarterly journal of the Texas School for the Deaf, costs \$10. Send check and mailing address information to:

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1102 South Congress Ave  
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# Message from the Superintendent

Is it 1880? Are we back at the Milan Congress believing we have the right to declare the uncontested superiority of one method or approach to educating deaf and hard of hearing children over another? Do we really believe that we can dictate the culture, values and views of families? At the expense of deaf and hard of hearing children—do we really believe it is ethical to advocate the economic advantages of one educational option over others and are we once again trying to polarize our field and force our community to come out fighting for a child and family’s fundamental human right to educational choice, language access and communication options?

Sadly, it seems we are once again at this dangerous precipice. Some of the propaganda and tactics that we have seen are quite disturbing. We recently identified a flyer titled “Auditory-Oral Education: A Sound Choice for Success and Savings”. This following are sample claims made in the flyer:

- 3:1000 babies are born deaf.
- 96% of the children born deaf are born to parents with normal hearing.
- 98% of hearing parents choose spoken language vs. sign language when given the choice.
- 1:5000 people are fluent in sign language.
- Most ORAL DEAF children who attend Auditory-Oral schools will enter regular elementary schools and complete on par with typically hearing classmates.
- The average SIGNING DEAF child graduates high school reading on the fourth grade level and requires the aid of sign language interpreters for life.
- Clarke and DePaul School are the only Auditory-Oral programs in PA recognized as member of OPTION Schools and possessing LSLS supervisors and faculty.
- \$178,000 nationwide average cost per student annually at signing schools.
- \$33,000 nationwide average cost per student annually at Auditory-Oral schools.

- The average signing student will cost the public 1 million dollars MORE over their lifetime.
- Auditory-Oral students will be able to become taxpayers as opposed to tax consumers.

While these comments are disturbing, my goal in presenting them is not to engage in further battles, or to paint these naysayers with too broad a brush. We know for certain from our own experience in Texas that there are many oral programs and OPTION schools that respect parent choice and support the continuum of services and placements. Why then do I raise this controversy? I do so to introduce you to the Child First campaign being driven by the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) and other national



organizations that advocate for the educational rights of deaf and hard of hearing children. Our campaign is based upon a number of core values and research based practices-- but the overarching one is that the population of deaf and hard of hearing students in this nation is diverse, and their needs for access to language and communication are diverse as well. These include access to American Sign Language and English and the full array of communication options. Child First promotes quality access to language and communication and we recognize that there are multiple pathways to language learning, and that no one size fits all approach is plausible. We believe that the time is now to bring back the “I” in IEP. Our campaign, though specifically designed to focus the lens on deaf and hard of children and their often long, winding, and occasionally treacherous road to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), advocates for all children with disabilities.

The full contents of Child First brochure is included in this issue on page 16 to 19.

*Claire Bugen*  
Claire Bugen



# 14th Annual End of Year (EOY)

# Celebration

By Claire Bugen

On June 1 about 7:30 am the line started forming for tickets to the Café de Paris breakfast in honor of all the fabulous patrons (TSD staff) that contributed to another successful school year where we...

## Reached New Heights

Our terrific and talented staff enjoyed a menu of Vegetable Soufflé, French Toast, Fruit, Croissants and Bacon followed by the Moulin Rouge Run of Show (highlighting the achievements of the school year), Rare Vintage Leaving the Vineyard (aka our retirees), and our Champagne Service Awards.

Amid the celebrations and recognitions staff took time to set off champagne poppers, blow bubbles and respond to the ever-popular raffle drawing for prizes.

As always we recognize that the EOY Celebration is made possible through donations from the TSD Foundation, Dominican Joe Coffee Shop, and Central Market.



The recipients of the 5 Year Recognition.



With 20 Years of Service: April Meers, Jim Johnston, Paula Branson, Mary Beth Bruton, Gary Threadgill, Avonne Brooker-Rutowksi, Jacklene Young and Ellen Weed.



TSD Employees received the 10 Year Recognition.



With 30 Years of Service recognized, Diane Canzoneri.

With 35 Years of Service recognized, Anne Duke-Shaw.



With 15 Years of Service: Bill Ashness, Gary Stein, Bonnie Ervin, Matt Thompson and Patti Smith.

## Retirement Party 2012

On May 21st TSD celebrated the achievements and hard work of our retirees, and we thanked them for their dedication and service.

At the MPR room we said thank you and shared memories with the retirees and their families and friends, this year we recognized Robert Alcalá, Fred Seghetti, Michele Seghetti, Susan Sien, Karen Carlson, Galia Harrington, Charles Reddy, and James Sharpton.

We will miss you and we wish you a happy retirement, and remember here at TSD we never say goodbye, we always say 'see you soon'.



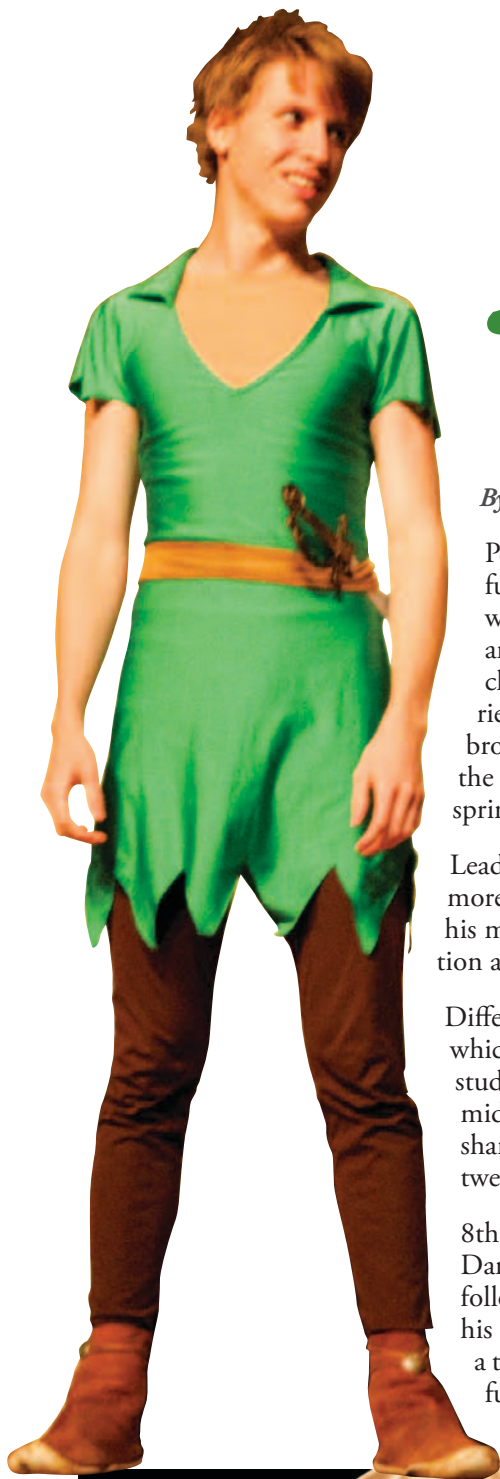
Robert Alcalá



Fred Seghetti



Susan Sien



*The boy who refused to grow up visited TSD!*

# PETER PAN

*By Clint Sadler*

Peter Pan: the name of a boy who refused to grow up. Neverland: an island where growing up is forbidden, lessons are learned, and battles are fought. The classic tale written by Sir James M. Barrie at the turn of the 20th century and brought to life by TSD Thespians brought the adventures of Neverland to TSD in this spring's drama production.

Leading the cast as Peter Pan, was sophomore, Conner Miers, who reprised the role his mother played, in a May 1982 production at the Louisiana School for the Deaf.

Different from previous TSD productions which have been performed by high school students only, in this performance both middle school and high school students shared the stage in the iconic battle between Captain Hook and Peter Pan.

8th grader Ben Beyer starred as Michael Darling, the youngest of the children to follow Peter to Neverland. When asked of his experience with the cast Beyer says, "As a teenager, it was fun to perform as a playful child. I felt like I was 4 or 5 again! At first I was nervous but I'm grateful

we've have the opportunity to share the stage with others, it will help us adjust to performing again at the high school level."

8th grader Dalton Taylor, who plays a 'Lost Boy' in Pan, says, "I feel a stronger bond with students who I will be in school with next year, creating relationships that will help me transition to the high school".

Taylor also comments that "memorizing the script was new for me but I enjoyed meeting new people and working towards the same goal. The final product gave us all something to be proud of and it was nice to see all our work come to life on stage here at TSD".

Peter Pan brought out the kid in all of us reminding us to keep a youthful spirit alive no matter how old we are.

Co-Directors Joann Benfield and Gabrielle Nocciolino worked aside Producer Clint Sadler and a cast of 33 students to help bring this timeless story of adventure to TSD as part of the ZVRS festival.

From our very own TSD Neverland, we thank the staff, students, families and friends who supported the show and the TSD Peter Pan family through the production.





# Commencement 2012

The Graduating Class of 2012 took center stage in a ceremony filled with emotions and encouraging messages.

By Claire Bugen

58 TSD Seniors began a new chapter in their lives on Thursday evening May 31st before a packed auditorium of family, friends and staff. Our Valedictorian, Emily Oberrender, and Salutatorian, Jamie Utzman, gave inspirational speeches about shooting for the moon and launching big dreams.

Superintendent Bugen outlined a challenge to continue to Reach New Heights with Passion, Persistence and Possibility.

Among these graduates were four Honor Graduates, 35 students with college acceptances in their pockets, 32 scholarship recipients and a host of stories still unwritten. Mr. Mark Seeger gave an inspirational and moving commencement address about milestones in the life of his accomplished Deaf parents. Mark told the graduates “ You have to find what you love in both work, personal life and family.” “Follow your heart”, he said, “don’t fear what you will lose, and celebrate what you can accomplish!”

TSD Kindergarteners and members of the Senior class performed the TSD School Song, while high school students performed the National Anthem. The TSD Sign Choir and Dynamic Studio provided exciting musical performances for their fellow graduates utilizing their technology and performing art skills and the whole house was rockin’ along with them!

That night they let the world know there is nothing quite like the Class of 2012.



Top (L-R): Governing Board members Beatrice Burke, Connie Sefcik-Kennedy, Angie Wolf; SND Principal Jan Reed-Anderson. Bottom (L-R) Superintendent Claire Bugen, Mark Seeger; President of the Governing Board, Walt Camenisch; High School Principal, John Serrano and CTE Principal Susan Sien.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.

1. Families and friends at the R.L. Auditorium.

2. Valedictorian Emily Oberrender, Salutatorian Jamie Utzman, Honor Graduates Darby Layton and Charles West.

3. Jose Manrique gives a "Thumbs Up" to the crowd.

4. This year's Commencement Speaker, Mark Seeger.

5. Valedictorian, Emily Oberrender after her video presentation.

6. Class of 2024 with graduates that have been at TSD since Kindergarten.

7. Salutatorian, Jamie Utzman.

# SENIOR CLASS



Emily Kay Oberrender § (V)



Jamie Rae Utzman § (S)



Darby Kathleen Layton §



Charles West §



Antonio Barron Jr.



Jenny Guadalupe Cruz Coreas



Christian Valentin Davila



Joel Angel DeHoyos



Ramiro Eliutt Dominguez



Shawna E Duncan



Martika Giacona



Edwin Alan Gonzalez



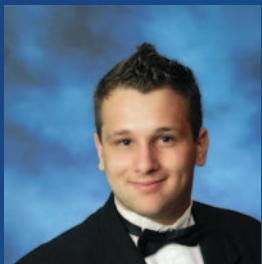
Fynlan Crae Green



Armando Guerrero III



Krystal Leann Hayes



Ronald Eugene Hume Jr.



Eric Lamont Knox Jr.



Marti Jo Lail



Tory Lee Lawson



O'CeAnna Mun'Shi Lewis



Joshua Tyler Moore



Ernest Joe Parra



Maggie Rose Pierson



Brandi Prater



Monica Krystal Ramirez



Erick Sotelo Monroy



London Leandrae Steber



Karina Gonzalez Tapia



Dominic Oscar Valdez

§ Honor Graduates  
(V) Valedictorian  
(S) Salutatorian



# CLASS OF 2012



LeGina Sue Barry



Stephanie Nicole Cain



Alyssa M. Castro



Jessica Dyane Comeau



Leticia Guadalupe Corralejo



Anthony Santana Duran



Kimberly April Engle



Jonathan Bernard Ford



Valeria Fuentes



Yelisa Yanet Garcia



Kacie Marie Hays



Horacio Eloir Hernandez



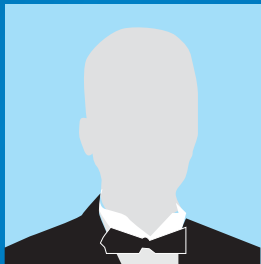
Keisha Beatriz Hernandez



Theandria Antoinette Hernandez



Luis Esteban Huerta Jr.



Joshua James Longoria



Taylor James Lotton



Miguel Angel Lucena



Gerardo Maldonado



Jose Estuardo Manrique



Oscar Rodriguez Escobedo



Brennan Carl Ruffin



Adrian San Miguel



Evelyn Louise San Miguel



Tozzie Ace Smith

Class Colors  
Black & White



Omar Valdovinos Rodriguez



Rigoberto Vieyra



Chelsea Lynn Webb



Jasilyn Williams

# BOOTS & Bling



By Anne Adams

Once again the Texas School for the Deaf and its Foundation joined hands with the fabulous staff from Hilton Austin to host an unforgettable evening of fine food and wine, lively auctions and great camaraderie.

Culinary Arts students, under the direction of Diamond Chef Mark Dayanadan, served an incredible meal including Mussel Soup Montgolfier, Flank Steak Roulade and Peach Tatin with Chocolate Pate and Strawberry Cream. Each course was paired with delightful wines specially selected by Jon Wolf, who works for St. Michelle Estates and is the parent of two TSD students.

This year's Partner of the Year Award was given to longtime TSD supporters, Alex & Toni Abadi, whose company, Image Microsystems, supports and employs students

through the TSD Work Study program.

The gala serves a dual purpose of showcasing the talents of our students and raising money for the school. This year's silent and live auctions featured trips to Denmark and Florida, several golf outings, beautiful jewelry, and exciting dining opportunities. A huge thank you to the Diamond Gala Committee whose year-long efforts helped create an exceptional evening.

Both the school and Foundation warmly thank all of our wonderful sponsors and over 200 guests and volunteers who joined us to support TSD in its quest to provide all deaf and hard of hearing children in Texas with an exceptional education tailored to their specific needs.

To see more pictures of the event, please visit [www.tsdfoundation.org/diamond](http://www.tsdfoundation.org/diamond)



Overview of the Gala from the silent auction tables.



Live Auction.



Diamond Chef Mark Dayanadan with Culinary Art students Jose Manrique, Jasmina Sifuentes, Brandi Prater, Stephanie Cain, Amanda Wolf, Jade DeLaO, Jonathan Franco, Leticia Corralejo, Tamel Smith; Teachers Susie Giuntoli and Lori Ann Taylor. Below: Joshua Moore, Daniella Reyna, Brandon Henry, Dalton Etkie, Trevor Anderson and Saria Webb.

## Austin Sertoma Club's 7th Annual Pancake Breakfast

By Keena Miller

TSD is humbled by the continued generosity of the members of the Austin Sertoma Club. Longtime supporters of the school and often sponsor of student programs, Austin Sertomans have been loyal partners of the school for more than 34 years.

Through a variety of fundraisers, the club provides annual scholarships to TSD's graduating seniors, covers trav-

el expenses each year for the Middle School MathCounts team to compete nationally, sponsors the National Heritage contest each spring, and supports countless other programs and student activities year-round.

We always look forward to Sertoma's annual pancake breakfast held at the school on the first Saturday in February. With live music and all-you-can-eat breakfast, the club hosts one of the

most favorite events on our campus. With the help of TSD's expert cafeteria staff in 2012, almost 700 were served and almost \$3,500 earned for Sertoma's sponsorships and pet projects.

The date is already set for 2013! The 8th annual event will be held Saturday, February 2, 2013, so mark your calendars to attend and support our extraordinary friends of Austin Sertoma Club.



# Alex and Toni Abadi & Image Microsystems Partner of the Year

by Keena Miller

As a loyal, long-time partner of TSD's Career and Technology Education (CTE) Program, Image Microsystems provides important career experience and job training for TSD students, along with long-term employment opportunities available to TSD graduates, as well as others with disabilities in our community.

Image Microsystems started with a vision to revolutionize the reverse logistics industry with their recovery of returned and obsolete computers and technology equipment. Now an industry leader in innovative technologies that refurbishes, reuses and recycles materials - Image Microsystems is the only certified, zero landfill, reverse logistics provider that also manufactures and markets quality, environmentally friendly products made from recycled e-waste. Image Microsystems leads the industry with awards and honors received for its sustainability, commitment, technical innovation and community initiatives.

In 2011-2012 alone, Image Microsystems has employed 23 high school

seniors from TSD, and is one of the few employers who offer minimum wage hourly pay to student workers. In addition to gaining valuable employability skills, students take great pride as contributing members of the Image Microsystems team. Many are able to pay for their graduation cap and gown, their senior trip, and have extra spending money.

TSD proudly honors the work of Image Microsystems - and the personal commitment by the Abadi's and the entire Image Microsystems family. THANK YOU!



**IMAGE**  
MICROSYSTEMS





# TSD Going Once...Going Twice

By Keena Miller

**T**exas School for the Deaf (TSD) was the grand prize winner of Global Green USA's first Green School Makeover Competition presented by Pureology Serious Colour Care. Nominated by Francisco Villa of Austin's Francisco's Salon, TSD's proposal was selected from more than 220 public, private, and charter K – 12 school entries across the country.

"Global Green USA has been greening schools for more than a decade so children can have a healthy learning environment," said Matt Petersen, President and CEO of Global Green. "We are deeply excited to bring green school benefits to the students and teachers at the extraordinary Texas School for the Deaf."

TSD's Green School Makeover valued at \$130,000, included \$65,000 for energy efficiency and sustainability upgrades, and \$65,000 worth of technical support, including a film documentary of the entire makeover project. TSD's Going Green proposal included:



Marisa King, Jai Leverton from Francisco's Salon, Linda Morgano, Green Building Program Associate with Global Green; Amelia Hamilton, Jenni Bingham, Director, Integrated Communications for Pureology; Matt Petersen, CEO of Global Green USA and Trevor Anderson.

• Updating facilities to allow for improved energy

efficiency: By retrofitting light fixtures, the school was able to install energy efficient bulbs. Cost savings from the energy efficient upgrades will be re-invested back into the education programs.

- Initiating water conservation tactics: We are reducing water usage and consumption by placing rain barrels to collect for watering the school grounds and installing hands-free faucets in lavatories. Hydration stations replace the need for plastic, bottled water so students use refillable water bottles instead of buying bottled water.
- Implementing waste reduction tactics: With new hands-free hand dryers in restrooms which use less paper and save materials from going to the landfills, TSD is reducing supply costs, cutting down on waste and reducing staff time replenishing paper towels and emptying trash.
- Educating student body on recycling: With more recycling bins across campus now, they're readily available next to every trashcan, making recycling easier.

Special guests from Global Green USA, Pureology, and Francisco's Salon helped TSD kick off the project in February with a pep rally celebration, including the entire TSD student body and a variety of entertainment featuring the talents and skills of our students, teachers and staff.

The makeover allowed TSD to:

- Install three rainwater collection systems connected to rain gutters: one in the Elementary garden, and one each for the Human Resources and Admissions buildings.
- Install two Brita tap water filtration stations: one



# ...Going Green



Texas House Representative, Eddie Rodriguez, Francisco Villa and Jai Leverton with Elementary Students.

in the Cafeteria, and one in the Transportation building.

- Install automatic hand dryers and faucets in all student lavatories in our five education buildings: Elementary, Special Needs, Middle School/High School, Career & Technology Education and in the Kleberg buildings.
- Install two Dyson hand dryers at each end of the Cafeteria, and one in the kitchen area for staff.
- Retrofit light fixtures and install energy efficient bulbs in the hallways of all three floors of the Middle School/High School

building.

- Improve campus recycling by adding more recycling bins all around campus.

Students also entered in a Going Green Art Contest to further educate campus members and demonstrate their creative talents. Guest judges from the local community scored the entries, and Texas House Representative, Eddie Rodriguez, presented awards to the winners. Representative Rodriguez is now showcasing some of the winning TSD student artwork in his State Capitol office.

As the project wrapped up near the close of the semester, representatives from Global Green USA, Pureology, and Francisco's revisited the school and invited the community along to see the completed campus upgrades. Students lead guests through a guided tour of TSD's Green improvements and explained the cost savings the school expects as a result of the Green School Makeover.

"We are so excited that Pureology, Global Green, and Francisco's have given us this opportunity", said TSD Superintendent Claire Bugen. "Unlike other public schools, we live on this campus 24 hours a day and we generate a lot of waste. This prize will help us take our fledgling recycling efforts to the next level and install some important tools, like automatic faucets, to help us become more sustainable. We are grateful for the support and partnerships we've built with the grant sponsors."

"Pureology is proud to support Global Green USA and help improve the lives of students and teachers at TSD," states Shae Kalyani, Vice President of Marketing for Pureology. "We are thrilled the Texas School for the Deaf won."

For more information about TSD Going Green  
visit our website:  
[www.tsd.state.tx.us](http://www.tsd.state.tx.us)



# *Your child...your road... to your child's success!*

By Lisa Crawford

Family Weekend Retreat (FWR) 2012 has come and gone but the memories and new friendships made will remain for the 47 families (199 people) that attended. This year's theme was "Your child...your road...to your child's success!" which reflected all the various options that families have to consider for their child, related to communication, educational placements and more. Being the parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing does not come with an instruction booklet and we recognize what works for one child and family may not be the best choice or choices for another child and their family. What does this mean for parents? They need to be involved and informed so they can monitor their child's progress, ensure it is age-appropriate and navigate the various services and programs available to their child and family. Parents need to be strong advocates when it comes to identifying and securing services that support their child's education and social/emotional growth. The goal of FWR is to give parents the opportunity to gain knowledge and resources and also to network with and learn from others who have walked similar paths.

Presentation topics for parents included technology updates for hearing aids and cochlear implants, using social media safely, ASL classes, listening and spoken language techniques, ASL/English bi-lingual education model, transition resources and more. Our children's programs included activities for all

ages and a Sibshop, for hearing siblings, was offered again this year. The families had fun in the evenings at the ice cream social hosted by Texas Hands & Voices, swimming at the pool and playing the FWR version of Minute to Win it!

We were fortunate to have the support of various program partners this year, including the Gallaudet University Regional Center (GURC) and the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID) who both sponsored keynote speakers. Other partners included Texas Hands & Voices and their Guide By Your Side (GBYS) Parent Guides, who assisted throughout the weekend with our family evening events and moderated various presentations and discussion groups. Two Texas Hands & Voices Board members also presented breakout sessions during the weekend. The Center for Hearing and Speech sponsored a speaker for a breakout session and we had exhibit tables for the first time this year. Representatives from DARS-Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS), Sunshine Cottage, RIT/NTID, Texas Hands & Voices, and GURC all hosted information tables and gave valuable information to families.

Thank you to all our partners for your support and thank to the wonderful staff at TSD for all their hard work during the weekend! And thank you to all the families that took time out of their busy schedules to learn how to support their deaf or hard of hearing child on their road to success!

# Deaf Smith's 225th Birthday



In front of a Deaf Smith wax figure (L-R): Miss Deaf Texas Sericia Jackerson, Claire Bugen, Steve Baldwin, Mr. and Miss TSD, Trevor Anderson and Amelia Hamilton.

By Steve Baldwin

Erastus “Deaf” Smith, a famous spy, scout and soldier of the Texas Revolution, had his 225th birthday celebrated with a special exhibit and ceremony at the Texas Capitol on April 18-20.

The exhibit featured 16 unique displays, including various historic paintings, photos and knives, a taped one-act play, a wax figure of Deaf Smith, and even a curious street sign. The displays also represented the artwork of eight artists from different periods and different mediums.

Smith settled in San Antonio, where he married Guadalupe Ruiz Duran in 1822; the union produced four children, all recorded by the Daughters of the Texas Republic. Because of his gradual hearing loss, Smith always hunted alone, avoided crowds, spoke too loud, and taught his dog to alert him to surrounding sounds.



Personally chosen by General Sam Houston, the ever-taciturn Smith took over the spy and scout unit of the Texan army. His greatest contribution to the war was his pivotal role in the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836.

“It is my vision that this exhibit will bring attention to Smith’s amazing feats,” said independent researcher, historian, author and retired educator Steve Baldwin, Ph.D.

He added, “Deaf Smith’s contributions underscore the fact that people with disabilities made Texas what it is today.”

The Deaf Smith exhibit was endorsed and supported by the TAD, Texas Humanities, Texas School for the Deaf, Greater Austin Foundation for the Deaf, ViUDA Bistro, Communication by Hand, and Gallaudet University Regional Center-Southwest.

More information at [www.deaftexas.org](http://www.deaftexas.org)

## Book Signing, Presentation and Q&A with Author of “Austin’s Gift”

By Keena Miller

Lauren Aggen, is a transplant recipient that has a very special place in her heart for Austin. On March 23rd she presented her book “Austin’s Gift” and answered questions with 8th graders and High School students leaving the audience with an inspirational tale for days to come.

A transplant survivor, Aggen is now a third year student majoring in Multidisciplinary Studies at Rochester Institute of Technology’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf (RIT/NTID).

At only eight days old in a Chicago hospital, Lauren Aggen received a miraculous gift from Austin Texas – a donor heart that saved her life.

“I traded certain death for a long-term medical condition, she says, I’ve been very fortunate that my heart matched and has done so well. Thanks to a family that made a precious gift, I have had many wonderful opportunities.”

In her book, Aggen - who fondly named her heart donor, Austin - chronicles her life and pays tribute to the family that gave her a second chance at life by donating their child’s organs.

“It is truly a miracle that people whom I never knew, and who never knew I existed, were willing to do that, so that I could be here today to write my story. Austin and his family have taught me a very important virtue: every day is a gift. I’m able to tell you my story because of Austin’s family, who, despite their great loss, were able to give a gift that will last me my entire life.”



Claire Bugen, Lauren Aggen and Dr. Gerard Buckley, NTID President and RIT Vice President and Dean.



## **EQUALITY AND QUALITY EDUCATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN: A STATEMENT OF CHILD FIRST PRINCIPLES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

While the deaf and hard of hearing communities and the special education world in general have debated the meaning and reach of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for more than 30 years, it is beyond contention that when provided appropriate language learning and academic opportunities deaf and hard of hearing children can and do attain high levels of achievement. The population of deaf and hard of hearing children is diverse, and their needs for access to language and communication are diverse as well. These include access to American Sign Language and English and communication through sign language, spoken language, sign and voice, visual technology, auditory technology, and other supports and services. When access is not provided, children fall behind in linguistic and cognitive growth and ultimately educational achievement. Support for each child's language and communication development is the key to the child's success.





## **QUALITY ACCESS TO LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IS A HUMAN AND EDUCATIONAL RIGHT**

This right is fundamental and indispensable in the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for deaf and hard of hearing children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Sadly, however, the implementation of IDEA does not protect this human right to language for deaf and hard of hearing children.

## **LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION IS DISABLING**

Being deaf is not what disables a child—it is language deprivation that results from diminished exposure and access to meaningful language and communication. Ongoing access to language and communication is essential for normal cognitive functioning and development and is taken for granted for every hearing child. Without comparable access, deaf and hard of hearing children lose the opportunity to become thinking, literate, self-sufficient individuals. Instead, they experience disadvantages and delays that can become impossible to overcome. All too often inaccurate information is disseminated about the best way for deaf and hard of hearing children to learn language. Renowned researcher, Laura Pettito, said it best when she said that the brain does not discriminate between signed and spoken languages, people do. (Pettito, 2009)

## **ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

As with other students receiving their education through special education, a “one size fits all” approach cannot be used to determine a deaf or hard of hearing child’s IEP goals or subsequent placement. Each child’s unique strengths and needs must drive these. Every child must have an education and learning environment that goes beyond mere physical inclusion – it must provide accessible language development and interaction opportunities so that the child is a true member of the school community. Proximity alone is not integration.



## **RESEARCH SUPPORTS NEED FOR FULL ACCESS TO ALL INTERACTIONS**

Research shows that children and adults learn more from human social interactions and active learning than from anything else. Early-unrestricted access to language is critical to developing cognitive abilities and world knowledge. (Slobin, 1980; Kegl, 2002; and Gardner and Gardner, 1985) All children need to have ongoing access to and be connected with a variety of peers and adults with whom they can communicate spontaneously and effectively. As fundamental as this issue is, such genuine opportunities are all too often elusive for the deaf or hard of hearing child at schools where placement is based on a rigid interpretation of LRE.

## **THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) DETERMINES THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) FOR A CHILD SERVED UNDER IDEA**

The IEP identifies the unique educational needs of the child, which ultimately leads to the choice of placement. IDEA requires a continuum of alternative placements to be available, as any single placement cannot be the LRE for all students. Because LRE varies by student – a setting that meets the needs of one may not necessarily meet the needs of another - all placements on the continuum, including specialized programs and schools, are equally valid and necessary. Discussions about LRE that focus solely on location without taking into account the quality of education, support services and social interactions a child experiences in that environment are misguided.

## DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO AN IEP WHICH SAFEGUARDS:

### Multiple Pathways to Language Learning

Each deaf child acquires language in his or her own unique way. Individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing depend on multiple learning modalities. Research supports the need for full and accessible natural language and interactions regardless of modality. Pedagogies should be designed to support language and cognitive growth. (Easterbrooks and Baker, 2002).

### Family Involvement

A critical factor in the language development of deaf and hard of hearing children is the family. Parents of deaf and hard of hearing students have the right to be informed participants in their child's educational planning and be knowledgeable about all developmental and educational opportunities. This is true for parents of infants and toddlers in the Part C early intervention programs as well as for parents of children in the Part B program. Educators have a responsibility to ensure that a balanced and informed decision-making process is available to all families which includes trained professionals from the field of education of the deaf and hard of hearing. All too often educators do not share accurate and complete information critical for parents to become equal partners.

### Placements Based on Individual Needs

The LRE for a deaf or hard of hearing child is one that supports the child's strengths and meets the child's needs for meaningful language and communication access, social interaction and educational achievement. This environment includes quality, on-going, and interactive participation in planned and incidental learning opportunities with a variety of peer and adult role models both in and out of the classroom. The LRE

is a language rich environment where the child is an engaged learner achieving age appropriate language and learning benchmarks. All too often the literal interpretation of LRE as a location closest to home and non-disabled peers is counterintuitive to the unique needs of deaf and hard of hearing students.

### Instruction by Qualified Personnel

In order for an educational placement to be appropriate, deaf and hard of hearing children must be provided with qualified and certified teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, assessors, administrators, interpreters, and other support personnel who understand their unique needs and are specifically trained to address them effectively. These personnel should be proficient in the primary communication and language mode of the deaf and hard of hearing child and share a single goal of ensuring that the child succeeds linguistically, educationally, socially and intellectually using all available tools.

### Educational Progress Monitoring

It has been said, "What works for the child is the right choice." However, given the low incidence of deaf and hard of hearing students, many well intentioned professionals lack experience in understanding what deaf and hard of hearing children need to succeed and the levels to which they are capable of achieving. To address this, progress monitoring of appropriate developmental and educational benchmarks is necessary to validate the child's progress. Early intervention programs and schools must be accountable for ensuring that their students achieve appropriate educational objectives and goals. If the child is not achieving, the placement should be re-evaluated to provide the student with further options.

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## CHILD FIRST: A CALL TO ACTION!

**CHILD FIRST** is a national campaign to ensure that educational programming at the national, state, and local level is driven by the IEP and appropriately addresses the educational, language, communication, and social needs of deaf and hard of hearing children. Child First was developed and is being driven by national organizations that advocate for the educational rights of deaf and hard of hearing children and that believe that policy guidance is needed to ensure these rights are protected.

**CHILD FIRST** recognizes that at the time IDEA (then the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) was passed in 1975, children with disabilities were precluded from going to school, either by law or by schools that were not equipped to teach them. Today this landmark law with its subsequent

amendments requires states, local school districts, and schools to protect the rights of, meet the individual needs of and improve the results for students with disabilities and their families. Although we celebrate the core principles of IDEA that have led to significant national progress, we also note the continuing challenges for the low incidence population of students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Those challenges include:

- **Accessing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** that provides opportunities for direct communication access and opportunities for direct instruction with age appropriate peers and adult role models.
- **IEPs** that include consideration of the child's language and communication needs, including communication with peers and professionals that daily enhances the child's intellectual, social and emotional development.
- **Evaluations** that are conducted by professionals who have knowledge and expertise about these unique needs and how they are translated in the IEP and how they impact the classroom. Too often, this does not occur.
- Ensuring that a **continuum of alternative placements**, including special schools, is available. Too often, LRE is misapplied for deaf and hard of hearing children, and they are placed in linguistically limiting and socially isolating educational environments.

**CHILD FIRST** campaign members are working to insure that the nationwide educational policy and practice for deaf and hard of hearing children starts with addressing their language and communication benchmarks through the IEP. Only then can educators move forward with placement decisions that address LRE. Furthermore, the children's IEPs and educational placements must facilitate full language and communication development.

**CHILD FIRST** believes now is the time to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing students across the United States experience the same kind of access to language development, social interaction, and academic opportunities experienced by their peers. Deaf and hard of hearing children are as diverse as any other group of children and the choices in communication, educational placement options and other decisions are complex and need to be individualized. Child First believes educating all deaf and hard of hearing children without regard to their individual differences can create irreparable harm—one size does not fit all.

**What you can do:** To find out how you can support improved outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students go to [www.ceasd.org](http://www.ceasd.org) or contact [nationaloffice@ceasd.org](mailto:nationaloffice@ceasd.org).

***LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS IS NOT A STRATEGY:  
ACCESS IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN AND EDUCATIONAL RIGHT. (Siegel, 2000)***



# Mark Gobble

June 11, 1974 - June 10, 2012

## Reflection:

*It will be a long time before our memory of Sunday, June 10 finds its place in each of our respective psyches. Mark's sudden, unexpected and traumatic death shattered our world. It's a loss that does not make sense or as so many in our community have said, "It seems surreal." The safe world we once knew seemed suddenly to have disappeared. I still struggle as I am sure many of you do thinking what can we do to make Mark's short but important life remain prominent in our hearts and minds.*

*Of course I immediately think of supporting Leslie—and I know each of us is doing that in our own way, but most of my thoughts go to Shanna and Trent. As is often the case—with Mark's passing we are sharing many stories about what an incredible Father he was and it is those stories that made me realize that, we, TSD, are in a position to give the perfect gift—the very best education possible for Mark's beloved children. It's a gift each of us can contribute to. It's a gift that pushes us toward the new heights that Mark would have demanded of us and serves as an additional motivation to help us do what works for kids and ensures Shanna and Trent's TSD journey to learn, grow and belong is the best that it can be. I will do my best Mark—to deliver this gift.*



### Memorial College Fund for Trent and Shanna

Contributions can be made at the Texas School for the Deaf Cashier or through any Wells Fargo branch or electronically at routing # 111900659 acct. # 8176397266.



*By Max Bridges for The Daily Texan (Published on June 13th, 2012)*

Mark Gobble, a 2012 UT alumnus, died in a hit-and-run incident while jogging on a sidewalk near West Slaughter Lane and Vinemont Drive in southwest Austin on June 10th, 2012.

Gobble, 37, was a husband and father of two children, a proponent for the deaf community, a UT PhD candidate, a teacher, a motivator and an avid skater and the founder of the skate shop Mark Skateboards.

"We will treasure our time with Mark, the teacher, mentor and leader and his role as middle school social studies teacher and associate and high school principal," said Claire Bugen, superintendant at Texas School for the Deaf. "His passion for new knowledge is what led him to UT for advanced study and I believe his work would have made major contributions to our field and we grieve that loss among so many other losses. Mark loved challenges, be they the mountains of Everest or the thrills of innovation in designing his own custom skateboards."

Gobble was active in the TED community and served as a host for TEDx presentations focusing on issues affecting the deaf and hard of hearing community, said DJ Kurs, co-organizer of TEDxIslay. A presentation that Gobble was the host of, "Deaf in the Military," was featured on the front page of TED.com.

"Less than one percent of all TEDx talks make it to TED.com," Kurs said. "Mark was the emcee of the events and his presence added so much. He was able to frame the day into a context that inspired every attendee. He had a real passion for meaningful change and TEDxIslay was only part of his grand vision for the future. He had many academic and personal pursuits but above all, he was a husband and father."

Assistant psychology professor Stephanie Cawthon said Gobble was a dedicated co-worker.

"He loved research, participating on many projects, including several here at UT," Cawthon said. "Mark was very excited about his dissertation work and his upcoming move to Boston University. As a friend, Mark was a very loving and supportive person. Mark took on the world and never saw limitations in front of him, only opportunity. I will miss him greatly."

# SPARK 2012

*2nd year of the System of Participation Achievement, and Recognition Keeper (SPARK) was a great success!*



On April 25th the Office of Student Development announced the winners of SPARK for the 2011-2012 school year. SPARK is an acronym that stands for System of Participation Achievement, and Recognition Keeper. It is a good way to motivate students to do more for themselves and for their school. At the end of the school year, we reward students with incentives to show our appreciation for their time and service to TSD. We have 3 groups of acknowledgement for SPARK rewards.

In this, our 2nd year with the SPARK program, we faced new challenges as we strove to empower our students in a variety of ways. One of them was to have them track their own SPARK points by checking with our database. They also were responsible to get their SPARK cards signed by Coaches, Teachers, Sponsors, Day Residential Educators and Student Development Coordinators every time they were done with SPARK events. But the challenges paid off and we were able to recognize a number of students for their hard work with different rewarding activities. We took the top 8 SPARK winners to Lake Buchanan for the weekend. We stayed at a very nice summer lake house with

a swimming pool and did various activities throughout the weekend. One of the activities was riding on a zipline!

On May 10th, we took our second top 8 SPARK winners to Viuda Bistro for dinner and stopped at Amy's Ice Cream afterwards.

Finally, for our 3rd top 8 SPARK winners, we gave each a \$10.00 gift card to the Deaf Smith Center Snack Bar, also known as Kiss Fist Cafe.

| 1st Top 8 SPARK  | 2nd Top 8 SPARK  | 3rd Top 8 SPARK  |
|--|--|--|
| Trevor A.<br>Daniella R.<br>Amelia H.<br>Caitlin K.<br>Conner M.<br>Sarah C.<br>Tangina R.<br>Amy J. | Joshua M.<br>Page V.<br>Gerry M.<br>Marisa K.<br>Jonathan F.<br>Ian H.<br>Jose M.<br>Nicholas H. (tied)<br>Emma C. | Amanda W.<br>Erin L.<br>Jasmina S.<br>Omar V.<br>Kylene E.<br>Rigoberto V.<br>Jose Z.<br>Brandi P. |

## TSD Scores Big at Battle of the Books!

*By John Serrano*

Students from the Texas School for the Deaf did a great job at the Battle of the Books (BOTB) Of the FOUR divisions of play, TSD came in 1st place in TWO of them (Clerc and Foster) and 2nd place in the other two (Gannon and Galloway)! In the case of the Gannon division, we tied for wins/losses with MSD (the winner), so the split was determined by total points. MSD - 78; TSD - 77.

I was bowled over. The kids were PHENOMENAL! Thanks to those who took time to come up and watch some of the matches. It certainly motivated the students to see how many people were interested in the outcome.

THANKS SO MUCH to the students, the coaches (Oscar Ocutto, Gabi Nocciolino, Karol Hogan, Joey Hoover-Simon, and Coleen Utzman), to Sonia Bridges and Cassidy Gallindo for their work setting up the technology, and (most especially) to SANDY KIMBALL (BOTB Superstar!) for being there for almost every game and keeping things running smoothly.

Next year we'll be asking for more folks to help as it appears

that it is our turn to host once again. Thanks again and be sure to CONGRATULATE THE WINNERS, which means all of the students who participated.



For final results of this year's BOTB competition, which was hosted by Maryland School for the Deaf go to <http://www.msd.edu/bob/results.html>



# *2nd Annual* High School Science Fair

*By John Serrano*

Congratulations to all students and staff who participated in this year's 2nd Annual High School Science Fair. It was a huge success with the participation of our budding scientists presenting their projects, which were a culmination of months of hard work to prepare for this event.

We had judges consisting of selected TSD staff and community representatives such as University of Texas faculty and students. After hard deliberations, these judges were able to pick the winners listed below. Kudos to our High School Science teachers for their hard work to ensure the success of our second annual Science Fair.

## List of Awarded Project

### Overall Science Fair CHAMPION

Erin Lambert, Faith Weatherford  
& Saria Webb  
"Mind Games"

### 11/12th Grade First Place

Amy Johnson, Zane Howell  
& Matthew Reaves  
"Electric Motor Luge"

### 11/12th Grade 2nd Place

Darby Layton, Emily Oberrender  
& Monica Ramirez

"Dogs Affect on Human's Blood Pressure"

### 11/12th Grade 3rd Place

Austin Bishop, Chad Cummings  
& Alton Markel

"Do Athletes Have More Powerful Lungs?"

### 9/10th Grade First Place

Trevor Anderson, Vitaliy Dovgalyuk  
& Daniella Reyna

"Organic Ant Repellant"

### 9/10th Grade 2nd Place

Ian Hennig, Nicholas Holton & Tyler Rush  
"The Marshmallow Experiment"

### 9/10th Grade 3rd Place

James Hamilton, Cristian Leal & Carlos Word  
"How High Does a Basketball Bounce?"

# Artistic Fun in the Sun

By Jan Reed-Anderson, Beth Polo and Mindy Moore

Elementary students in Kindergarten through the 5th Grade enjoyed a day of fun and arts & crafts at Art in the Park on Friday March 23rd. This festival, which has been around for over 20 years, is a free event, which was hosted by VSA Texas and McBeth Recreation Center, and held at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center.

Art in the Park is a multi-art festival for Austin's school children, with and without disabilities, and is open to the public. The festival includes art booths, live music, performances on an outdoor stage, and a children's art exhibit. Art activities and performances are provided by local arts organizations, community groups, and Austin Recreation Centers. Over 500 children and adults, with and without disabilities, attend this festival each year.

Our students spent most of the day there experiencing hands-on arts & crafts that they were then able to take home with them. They made clay figures, beadwork, paintings, stamps, collages, and many other creative projects that they made from recycled materials. Also, Theron Parker, a Deaf performer, provided a 30-minute ASL show including ABC/123 stories, and the Austin Summer Musical for Children group performed.

This was our students' second time to attend the festival, and they are already begging our Art & Drama teacher, Mindy Moore, to arrange the trip again for next year. They learned so much at Art in the Park by having a day outside of the classroom to interact with peers, develop social and communication skills with students from other schools, and by being exposed to so many different cultures and forms of art.

It was a great way to get some fresh air, and get the creative juices flowing for the remainder of the school year.



## TSD Basketball finishes strong at the Iron 5 Competition



The boys and girls 7th/8th grade basketball teams concluded their seasons by competing in the annual Iron 5 Competition in Riverside, California this past weekend. The event was a wonderful opportunity for the students to socialize and compete with other deaf students from other parts of the country while enjoying some California sun. After a tough 2 days of competition, both teams earned a spot in the championship games.

The girls finished second after a hard fought game against the Eagles from California School for the Deaf, Fremont. In the boys championship game that followed, TSD also faced the Fremont Eagles. The teams exchanged leads early before the boys team was able to pull away in the second half, earning their first ever Iron 5 title. The teams wish to thank the parents for their tremendous support all season.



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