

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Educational Development Center

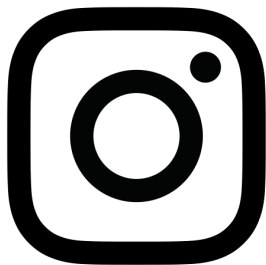
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Jackson Bartlett

With contributions from Karyn Shelnett

Jackson Bartlett, like many of his friends at Cambridge Elementary, loves to have fun. He has a smile that lights up a room and has never met a stranger. He loves to sing and dance, and he's a whiz at puzzles, spending many hours putting together 300 piece puzzles. He enjoys drawing and loves his cat, Sassy. Jackson also happens to have Down syndrome.



Jackson and his sibling Kade, and mom Leata moved to Alamo Heights in February of 2020, just 6 weeks before Covid shuttered schools and businesses. Leata had been working for H-E-B for 12 years when she took a different position within the company. She'd been commuting from Kyle, just south of Austin, to H-E-B headquarters in downtown San Antonio for several months until she found the district that she says, "would offer the GT/Advanced classes Kade needed and the quality special education program that Jackson needed." After talking with the new AH School Foundation Executive Director (and former Down Syndrome Association of South Texas Executive Director), Heather McFarland, Leata knew she wanted to move to Alamo Heights. It's a decision she's never regretted.

Jackson started the spring semester of 1st grade at Cambridge in February of 2020 and his team of teachers began to become acquainted with him. Jackson struggles with elocution and has worked with speech therapist, Karyn Shelnutz since he moved to Cambridge. Karyn recalls, "I will never forget the little boy in his rain boots that smiles and spreads joy [to] every person he meets!" Jackson had an antiquated communication device that was a carryover from the previous school district he'd attended. Jackson used a lot of sign language but Ms. Shelnutz realized that he'd never been evaluated in the area of Augmentative and Alternative communication. Jackson had so much to say, often regaling others with elaborate stories. He's not only very social, but also expressive. He uses his whole body to communicate! The biggest barrier to successful interactions with peers and teachers was the intelligibility of his speech. Karyn notes, "how frustrating it was for him to have so much to say and to have to repeat himself to clarify all of the time!" This proved especially difficult during Covid when class and speech was conducted over Google Meet. Leata continued to advocate for Jackson and often told his ARD team that even though Jackson was verbal, an AAC system would be useful to help him *augment* his oral language. When school returned to in-person class in the

fall of 2020, Karyn and Leata worked together to find a device that would help Jackson be understood by others. Karyn and Jackson's team conducted a full evaluation and Jackson began using a new device at school that fall. Karyn went a step further by applying for a STAP grant (Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program) through Texas



Health and Human services to pay for a personal communication device for Jackson. Once he had his new communication devices, Karyn said that Jackson soaked up the new information like a sponge. “He [could] be shown a pattern to navigate to novel vocabulary on his device once and he [would] learn it instantly.” Karyn adds that Jackson has used his device for reading/writing support and pre-literacy activities, and with the help and support of his family, has programmed individualized core vocabulary such as the names of family members, friends in class, teachers, his schedule and other personalized favorites and information. Jackson and his mom have added an “H-E-B.” topic so that everyone at the store knows what he needs on his list, what his thoughts are for the store and what he does and *doesn’t* like when grocery shopping. Karyn shares her favorite Jackson memory from that time: “Shortly after learning how to use his device, Leata texted me one weekend saying, ‘I realize the device can use Siri, Alexa and Google. Thanks for showing him how to do that. He loves telling jokes, talking about music, but can you PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE turn off the option for him to have Google control my thermostat and the volume to the TV?!’”

Ms. Shelnuttt isn’t the only one on whom Jackson has made a big impact. Cinthia de los Santos has been his teacher and case manager since Jackson was in the third grade. She also comments on how kind and gentle Jackson is with friends as well as on his sunny and social disposition. She recalls that one day when she was on maternity leave and came to school to visit with her baby, Jackson was excited to hold him, “He was super gentle and loving.” Now that she’s pregnant with her second child, Jackson often sings to the baby. Ms. de los Santos has seen lots of growth in several academic areas but most especially in his reading abilities and remarks that he is now reading short stories and passages. She also has enjoyed working with Leata “because she is always very responsive to his needs. Jackson has a really strong group of people who care for him and want to help make the best decisions for him.” She goes on to say, “I am so proud of how much Jackson has grown in every aspect of his life. He is such a sweet boy and I am so proud to be his teacher. I will miss him so much next year.”

Leata is excited and nervous about having Jackson move to the Junior School next year after having been in such a warm, encouraging environment at Cambridge but is optimistic that he’ll have more great teachers that are invested in his success.

Greetings from Howard

Unified Champions Club contributed by Leica Flores

Howard Special Olympics Unified Champions kicked off their third year with an amazing art activity. Ms. Flores and Ms. Lopez have over 40 participants enrolled this year. The athletes (Special Olympics participants) and partners (typically developing peers) worked together to create a beautiful, portable mural. It is hanging up outside room 20 at Howard ECC. The group will start fundraising at the start of the new year by selling Howard Unified merchandise. Funds will go towards purchasing items for student use. In past years, the group has purchased plasma cars that are currently being used in the PreK classrooms and a stand alone disc-swing which can be moved around. You can get more information about the Unified and the upcoming fundraiser by emailing Ms. Flores at lflores@ahisd.net.



Heather Craig

Howard Campus Coordinator

If you think Heather Craig looks familiar, you're not wrong. Heather has worked in Special Education in Alamo Heights since January of 2005 at all of three of the elementary campuses. Heather is the campus coordinator for Special Education at Howard Early Childhood Center and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role. Heather holds a degree in psychology and had experience working in a residential facility for abused and neglected children. Her job was fulfilling but also emotionally taxing so she made the move into education. Since she first took a role as a



paraprofessional at Woodridge Elementary in January of 2005, Heather has held many roles within Special Education including; SST teacher at Cambridge (2005-2015), preK teacher at Howard (2015-2018), SST teacher at Cambridge (2019-2020), ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education) teacher (2020-21) and contract employee focusing on documentation associated with the ARD process. In her role as campus coordinator, Heather continues to work in the best interest of her students and has the added responsibility of ensuring that all of the pieces involved in tailoring an educational plan fit together. She encourages parents to keep informed of their child's rights and to always feel comfortable advocating for them. A family's first line of contact should be their child's teacher but she welcomes questions via email at hcraig@ahisd.net.

"Begin with the end in mind means to begin each day task or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination and then continue by flexing your proactive muscles to make things happen." Franklin Covey

It's never too early to start planning for your child's future. Wonder whether your child may need support after secondary school? Contact Michelle Harrison for information on Long Term Service and Supports.

Erica Kovach

Woodridge SST Teacher

Erica Kovach, Woodridge's newest Student Support Team (SST) lead teacher, is no stranger to working with a neuro-diverse population, but her path didn't start off in that direction 15 years ago. Erica, a native of Georgetown, Texas, visited Boston University at the suggestion of her high school US History teacher. She fell in love with the city and the teammates who would become some of her closest friends over the next four years. After playing basketball for the Terriers all four years and receiving an undergraduate degree in Sociology, Erica decided to incorporate her love of basketball and her affinity for working with people as a coach at Wheaton College, a Division III school. While working at Wheaton, she applied for a teaching position at Pathways Academy. Working at Pathways gave her the flexibility to teach and coach. Even though Erica has always been interested in coaching, she decided to dedicate her time to the classroom. Working at Pathways, a year-round school specializing in the academic, social, and psychological needs of students, aged 6 to 21, with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This would ultimately spur Erica to continue to devote herself to working with people with disabilities. She went on to complete a Masters in Moderate Disabilities, K-12 from American International College to advance her understanding of special populations. After 15 years of braving the cold winters of Massachusetts, Erica decided to move back to Georgetown, where she taught Early Childhood Special Education for a year until she took her current job at Woodridge. Ms. Kovach says, "This is my first year in SST and I absolutely love my role, students, and amazing Teaching Assistants!"



As an SST teacher, Erica has many roles. First and foremost, she serves as academic instructor in all subjects except science to seven 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th graders. Additionally, she helps the youngest of her students learn school and classroom expectations, transition between classes and also assists her older students in serving as role models to their younger peers. When asked what she enjoys most about working with her students, Ms.

Kovach expressed difficulty in deciding but ultimately said, “the kind way my students interact with each other. Every single student shows empathy towards the other and truly cares for each other’s well being”.

Erica encourages parents to remember that their child is unique. She points out that while it is easy to get caught up in academics, benchmarks and comparisons, parents might be better served “think[ing] about the current goals/objectives... how will this help them 3, 5 or 10 years down the line?” She also wants to remind parents that their “child’s success will look different from other children’s success” and encourages them to “celebrate your child’s milestones regardless [of] how ‘little’ or ‘big’ they are, because chances are, they were seen from your child’s eyes as once unattainable”.

Ms. Kovach is happy to meet with parents daily during her conference period, from 8-8:45 and by appointment with advanced notice.

She is a relatively new transplant to San Antonio but has quickly learned her way around Alamo Heights. She hopes to adopt a pet as soon as she has the right space for a four-legged friend. Unlike previous years, this summer was the first Erica did not teach Extended School Year and she spent it traveling (Dominican Republic, cities across the U.S.), attending concerts and shows before settling in to kick off the school year. Erica enjoys running, both in various parts of the city and on some of the trails in the Alamo city and occasionally participates in road races. On a typical weekend, she enjoys watching movies, reading and soaking up the sun poolside. She wants the families she works with to know how excited she is to be at Woodridge and that she has an open door policy and welcomes all questions and ideas. Welcome, Erica!

Cambridge News

Cambridge SST students have been equally busy. Like their friends at Woodridge, Cambridge students participate in weekly Special Olympics practices, usually teaming up with the athletes at the Junior School and High School in addition to their friends at Woodridge. One of the fun Community Based Instruction (CBI) outings that the class went on was a trip to a corn maze in October. The students fund some of their outings with proceeds from their snack cart. Students set up shop twice a week to sell

chips and snacks to students and staff during the first 10 minutes of recess. Even acquiring the products the students sell is part of their learning; they create a shopping list, then shop and pay for their items while practicing appropriate community interactions. Some of the outings the class has gone on include shopping at Five Below, Sams, HEB and Walmart (more opportunity to create a list, shop and pay for items), and trips to local restaurants where they practice ordering and paying for their meal.



What's Up at Woodridge?

The fall semester has been a busy one at Woodridge elementary. The SST class has grown in number and necessitated the addition of a second class led by Ms. Erica Kovach (see previous article in this newsletter). Students and staff have been having fun while learning all semester. Besides the classroom lessons, students participate in weekly Special Olympics team practices in basketball, bowling, and, new this year, pickleball. Their team practices are often paired with CBI (community based instruction) outings where they put into practice the skills they work on while on campus. Another opportunity for students to practice money skills is through their snack cart business wherein the Snack Squad (2-3 students assigned to the role that day) go around campus offering snacks for purchase to teachers and staff. The proceeds from the snack cart go to offset the cost of

the weekly CBI outings while teaching children math and money skills, giving them the opportunity to overcome their trepidation in social scenarios and practicing eye contact, good manners and communication, all pre-employment skills that are essential to life regardless of vocation or avocation.

In addition to all the learning and fun in the classroom, Woodridge Unified Champions club is in it's 3rd year of existence. Club membership this year stands at 46 members (both athletes and partners) ranging from 1st-5th. The group has strong leadership with 9 5th graders, 5 4th graders, 4 3rd graders, 4 2nd graders, and 3 1st graders. This Friday will mark the inaugural Breakfast Buddies club where club members will meet before school to enjoy donuts and chocolate milk and have a time to socialize and connect. Breakfast Buddies will occur once a month.

The class, combined with Cambridge students and many Unified partners, participated in the Howdy parade for the first time this year and had a wonderful time showing school spirit. The combined Unified Clubs at both elementary schools hope to continue this for years to come.



Whitney Fausnaugh

Junior School Resource Reading Co-Teacher



Whitney Fausnaugh recently moved from Ohio to San Antonio this summer when her husband was transferred to Fort Sam Houston as a physician in the Army. She joined the staff at the Junior School for what will be her 4th year as a Special Education teacher.

When asked why she chose special education, Whitney points to her passion for helping individuals with varied learning needs as well as her “belief in the transformative power of education”. She believes that as a teacher in special education, she can make the biggest impact on the lives of students who need it most.

She espouses the philosophy that every child can learn. At the Junior School, Mrs. Fausnaugh serves her students as a resource reading teacher and as a social studies co-teacher. This involves providing individualized support to each student so as to address their unique learning needs. Within the context of reading class, Whitney works on fostering the reading skills of her students while promoting inclusivity in the classroom. She says, “I strive to create an environment where each student can thrive academically and develop the confidence to overcome reading challenges.” Her role as a social studies co-teacher involves working closely with the general education teacher to adapt the curriculum into the format that is most beneficial for each student’s ability. When asked about what she enjoys most about her role, Whitney responds, “The opportunity to witness the remarkable progress and growth of my students as they overcome their unique challenges”. She adds that she receives a great sense of fulfillment from helping her students reach their full potential. Whitney shares that parents have invaluable insight about their child and should collaborate with teachers to help create the most tailored, supportive educational plan. She is happy to discuss student progress, by appointment, during her conference period every day between 12:55 and 1:40. The best way to contact her is via email at wfausnaugh@ahisd.net.

Whitney hails from Circleville, Ohio and attended the Ohio State University where she majored in Special Education. She and her husband have a Frenchton, Lola, to share their home with. During school breaks, Whitney likes traveling to tropical destinations and back to Ohio to visit family. On weekends and evenings, she enjoys reading and planning her next trip. She also loves cooking, especially for others. She hopes to share that same love of cooking in the new AHJS Cooking Club she and co-advisor Ms. Gonzalez launched this year. The group meets after school on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. The club is made up of a diverse mix of students and teachers who enjoy preparing a recipe together. The club offers hands-on experience, teaching students essential skills in the kitchen. Members are able to experiment with recipes while learning the value of teamwork. Whitney says of the club's mission, "[It]"is not only to provide opportunities for students who are often overlooked but also to build community of belonging at school, teaching valuable life skills and fostering lasting friendships among our members." The club has received funding by parents and the school community and is free to join; everyone is welcome.

Though she's only been in Alamo Heights a short time, she notes, "the family support I have experienced here is unlike anything I have had in the past. Thank you [parents] for all that you do to support AHISD teachers. This district would not be as special as it is without the outpouring of parent and community support."

Meet Katy Gray

JS Science Co-Teacher

Katy Gray left Alamo Heights in 1997 to attend college in Tennessee. She received her BA in Economics from Rhodes College and then earned a Master of Education degree from the University of Houston. She always thought that she'd be a teacher, but as often happens, life threw her some of the best curveballs for a few years, she met and married her husband, Michael, and started a family. Katy and her



family moved back to San Antonio in 2019 when her husband's job brought them back home. Katy answered the call for substitutes when the pandemic hit and soon became a permanent sub at the Junior School. A colleague suggested she add a special education certification to her credentials and she's thrilled that she followed that advice. "I'll never go back! I love it", she says of her role as a science co-teacher.

Being a co-teacher involves providing in-class support to students; that could look like helping students stay on task, or learning time-management skills to leading lessons or re-teaching a lesson in a small group setting. Katy says she enjoys supporting students who have higher needs or just need a different way to access the information introduced in class. Katy also serves as case manager for 8 students. This involves ensuring that the supports and services outlined in a student's IEP are being administered with fidelity. Katy checks in with students on her caseload to help them be as successful as they can be, often serving as a bridge between general education teachers and parents.

When not at school, Katy enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons and the family's 2 cats, Whiskey and Petie, and dog, Duchess. The Grays spend evenings and weekends attending the many sports activities the boys have... football, baseball, basketball and soccer. Free weekends give them an opportunity to spend time at their family ranch. Katy loves working out at Smart Barre - usually attending class 5-6 times a week. For quieter moments, Katy works on puzzles.

Katy invites parents to reach out if they have questions about their student via email at mgray@ahisd.net. She is available, by appointment, during her conference period from 3:15-4:00 most days.

Have a suggestion for a future spotlight? Email mbarrison@ahisd.net with your idea.

JS Unified Update

Contributed by Ms. Isabel Arranaga

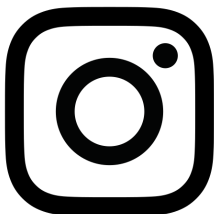
This has been a busy first semester for the Junior School Unified Champions Club! We got the ball rolling with our first meeting of the year. It was a packed house and the energy was AH-mazing! Our members had some incredible ideas for our club this year that we can't wait to implement! We entered September with our first-ever Howdy Night Parade! Our students had a blast and we can't wait to participate next year! This month, we had two of our AH-some members, Jeannette Rickard and Frederick Moore, represent UCC at our JS student club panel. They spoke with members of the Board and AH community to share the exciting things our club has done and to spread our message of inclusion! Frederick also won 3rd place in the Junior School Spelling Bee and the UCC club is so very proud of him! We are ending this month with two fun events: our Holiday meeting where our members helped decorate Christmas cards that will be delivered to all of our hardworking administrators, counselors, custodial staff, and cafeteria staff to thank them for all they have done for our school! Lastly, we will gather at the SAFD Fire Academy to volunteer to wrap presents collected during the SAFD Toy Drive. Our incredible members volunteered last year and had so much fun helping out their community, that we just HAD to come back! Keep a look out for 2024 and all of the wonderful things the members of the JS Unified Champions Club have in store!



JS Student Club panel



Howdy Parade



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Melanie Villanueva

SST Teacher



Growing up, if you'd asked Melanie what she thought she'd one day like to do for a living she would have definitively answered, "Not teach." Funny how the universe had a different plan. While a sophomore at Heights, Melanie met former Special Education teacher, Kari Butts through the peer tutor program and her mind was changed. "I fell in love with what she did and instantly knew I was made to be a special education teacher." Immediately upon graduation in the summer of 2013, Melanie began working with some of the families of some of her peers in various roles including caregiving, job coaching and community outings.

Melanie attended school at UTSA to study special education and continued to work with her AHHS families until 2019 when she accepted her first teaching job in Special Education at Madison High School. She began as a co-teacher in a freshman English class and quickly became a floater to ALE (Alternative Learning Environment) because of her experience. In 2022, she was transferred permanently to ALE as a lead teacher. In early August, Melanie came full circle when she accepted the job as the third SST (Student Support Team) teacher at AHHS. She is back in the same classrooms where she first realized her calling. This school year, Melanie is teaching social studies in the form of Economics/Government and Math Models where she helps students get a better understanding of money and financial responsibility. The frequent Community Based Instruction (CBI) outings the class goes on give students real-life opportunities to put those lessons into practice as they also increase their independence. Melanie also serves as a case manager for 8 students. In this role, Melanie says her primary focus is on two-way communication with parents, "As a mom myself, I know how important communication with parents is!"

Melanie appreciates the level of parent involvement in the ARD process. She likes knowing what parents' goals for their children are and what things they are working on at home so as to collaborate and address those areas in the school setting. While many of us take that for granted here in Alamo Heights, many parents elsewhere may not have the capacity or interest in being as involved in their child's education plan or in helping create goals. Melanie is happy to discuss goal-setting and student progress during her conference periods during 2nd (10:20-11:55 on Blue days) and 5th (8:45-10:15 on Gold days) periods. The most effective way to reach her is via email, texts, or scheduled phone calls during conference times.

Melanie grew up on a farm in Meyersville, just outside of Cuero until her family moved to San Antonio right before she started elementary school. A fun fact about Melanie is that not only is she an AH alum, but she's married to her AH *Junior School* sweetheart, Juan. The two met while in band and have been married 13 years. Together, they have a five year old son, Ben, who Melanie describes as spunky. Ben is a Pre-K student at Howard. Juan has served our country in the Army and now as a reservist in the Army National Guard for 10 years and is now in law enforcement. We thank both Juan and Melanie for their service and sacrifice. The family loves to travel; they especially enjoy going to the coast for fishing and like to explore Air BnBs across our beautiful state. Melanie likes to craft; she is learning to use her Cricut and figuring out all the different ways she can put it to use. About her return to the Alamo Heights area, Melanie says, "I'm so excited to be part of this community; thank you for welcoming me with open arms!" We're thrilled Melanie and her family are back!

Monica Lopez

Career Prep Teacher

Monica Lopez is the new Career Prep teacher at the high school. Monica comes to us from NEISD where she taught in her neighborhood public school, Northwood Elementary. Monica started as a 5th grade teacher and then transitioned into Special Education where she taught for three years in a redirection/behavioral setting similar to ACE (Alternative Classroom Environment) in Alamo Heights. Prior to that, Monica was living in the



Portland, WA area. Her first two years of teaching were through the University of Portland in a program called the Pacific Alliance of Catholic Education. She taught 5th grade for two years at St. Patrick Catholic School in Pasco, WA. Through the program, she taught during the day and earned a Masters of Education in Reading at night alongside other teachers placed in the same city. After two years, she moved back home to San Antonio. The 23-24 school year marks Monica's 7th year as an educator. While the role at the high school is different from others she's had before, she is very excited about the possibilities.

Monica remembers wanting to be a teacher since she was very young. In high school, she became more involved in activities related to teaching and leadership; she was a mentor to new students, served as an ambassador for the school and served as a student council officer. After she volunteered at Camp CAMP the summer after her sophomore year, she found her true calling and decided to pursue a career as a Special Education teacher.

This year has brought a lot of changes for Monica as an educator, she's working with a different age group and teaching a more skills-based curriculum. Over the first two 9 week periods, an average day in Career Prep class might include lessons in job etiquette, professional attire/ comportment, workplace safety and getting paid. In early October, Monica received the news that the Career Prep program at AH was awarded \$10,000 from Texas A&M's Center for Disabilities and Texas Workforce Commission. With these funds, we plan to start Alamo Heights Printing Co. This project will allow her students real-life work experience from within the classroom! Lopez said: "I am so excited to receive the materials and start offering our community personalized stationery designed, created, and delivered by the students in my class. While we wait for the materials to arrive, my students will start the "application" process to work in specific job roles within this project! I strive to provide authentic work-like experiences for my students on a regular basis".

In addition to the Career Prep/General Employability class where she supports students with a wide variety of needs, Monica is also co-teaching Unified Theatre with Ms. Fleming. Unified Theatre is a class that provides students in the life skills class, the opportunity to participate in a theater class alongside their typically developing peers. This gives students with disabilities the chance to take center stage and spotlight their *capabilities*. This class creates an inclusive learning environment that improves the quality of life for all students. Monica says, “Our students performed Stuart Little this Fall and did an amazing job showcasing the skills they have been working on so far! I cannot wait until the Spring production!”

Monica’s exuberance continues when she talks about the most rewarding part of her role, being an advocate for students. One of her Career Prep sections has as a course requirement that students find and keep a job in the community and work a minimum of 10 hours a week. Her role is to support them as well as meet with their managers to check on how they’re doing- in essence, she is their job coach. She comments, “This is a cool lens to see my students through. I love seeing them out in the real world, putting the things we discuss in class into practice.”

Monica was born and raised here in the Alamo Heights area, leaving only to attend college and grad school. She graduated from Incarnate Word High School and then attended Texas A&M University, majoring in Education with an emphasis in Special Education. On top of the Masters in Reading she earned while working in Washington, she also recently earned a Masters in Education Leadership from Trinity University and hopes to one day continue her career in education as an administrator. Monica is very close to her family and they enjoy Sunday dinners together.

In her spare time, Monica enjoys spending time with friends and family, running and reading. She recently started to play pickleball and has been joining our Special Olympics practices to support students in learning this new sport! During longer breaks, Monica loves to travel. Her favorite trip to date has been to Ireland,



where she hopes to visit again soon. She is thrilled to be back home and excited to be supporting the community she grew up in.

Monica wants to encourage parents to ask questions when they don't understand the jargon or acronyms used in educational settings. When in doubt, ask for clarification during goal setting or ARD meetings. She also welcomes discussions about the progress of your student during her conference periods - 3rd period on Blue days and 6th period on Gold days. Emailing her at mlopez2@ahisd.net, is a great way to get a quick answer to a question.

Fall Unified Events

The high school Unified club is always a bevy of activity and this fall has been no different. Officers were selected early in the school year. Brianna Hicks and Holly Nash, Co-Presidents; Evan Williams and Harrison Peacock, Co-Vice Presidents; Mya Gonzales and Nyssa Salcedo, Co-Secretaries; Sloane Fagan and Ava Lopez, Co-Treasurers; Daisy Flores and Logan Snell, Co-Webmasters and Wyatt Harrison and Lily Russell, Co-Bulletin Editors. The board hit the ground running by brainstorming activities that the rest of the membership voted on. Some of the events the club voted on and participated in



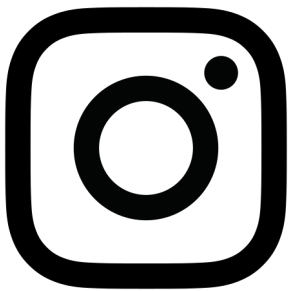
were: Howdy Parade, a group Homecoming outing to the HoCo dance, cheering at a home football game, an on-campus Halloween lunch, Friendsgiving and a Holiday party. We celebrated our very own Grace Crocker when she was crowned Homecoming Queen at halftime.





While everyone agrees that Unified is always a ton of fun, the club also wanted to show their concern for peers and their families in the community who are experiencing financial difficulties. The group came together to donate items for a Thanksgiving basket complete with items for a full meal as well as a \$225 HEB gift card for perishable items. This was a wonderful example of service learning/leadership and a reminder that

everyone can positively impact their community. The spring semester promises to bring more events at which Club members to further forge their relationships while finding more opportunities for inclusive leadership.



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Michelle Harrison

Parent Liaison

The 23-24 school year marks my 5th year as Parent Liaison. Now, as ever, my goal is to connect parents to resources in our community and to one another. My own experience as a mother to an individual with autism has reaffirmed my belief that we all need community. There are few things I treasure more than the friendships I've made with other moms who are on this same road with me; I encourage you to find your community. This group of women (shout out to BAM) is one of the many things I'm grateful for here in Alamo Heights. Another thing I'm grateful for is the teachers and staff who work with our students. I'm humbled by the amount of time and dedication teachers pour into the lives of their students. If you're not convinced, talk to families who have been in other districts and ask them about the difference. Alamo Heights' unique combination of small-town feel, supportive trustees and administration, dedicated teachers *and engaged parents* make a tremendous difference in the outcomes of our students. Looking forward to the spring, if you haven't been to a Parents as Partners meeting, I encourage you to check one out soon. I try to find speakers who present on a variety of topics that may be useful or interesting. If there's something you'd like to know more about, or have a speaker you'd like to recommend, please let me know. I welcome your suggestions. The January Parents as Partners meeting will be a panel of parents with students who have completed high school; they'll share how they have navigated life for their young adult since high school. I hope you'll consider attending. I hope the winter break gives you the opportunity to slow down and spend quality time with family and friends.

Wishing you a Healthy Holiday and Joyous New Year,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.