

THE CONNECTOR

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education for the HCDE Board of Trustees

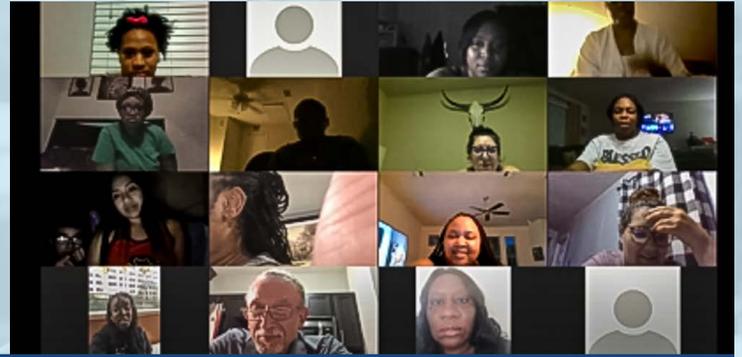
WEEK OF OCTOBER 12, 2020

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 6

COMMUNITY TIES

TOP STORIES

**Adult Education Prepares
Medical Assistants for
Certification p.2**



**Employee Spotlight:
Theresa Perez p.3**



**Channelview Head Start
Students, Parents
Get Preview p.4**



Of Note...



One of HCDE's main purposes is to find the blind spots in public education and create a means to fill that gap. This week, we see how our divisions are fulfilling this objective by partnering with local organizations to meet the needs of the local workforce and provide literacy opportunities for families in need.

Our Adult Education division is partnering with a local staffing agency to provide medical assistant certification for residents seeking a new career. Through this partnership, our students benefit from co-teaching between an Adult Education professor and a licensed vocational nurse. The Adult Ed teacher provides instruction on test taking strategies and reading comprehension while the nurse focuses on the medical portion of the course. Our students then study and prepare for the national test. The outcome of this partnership is an average 86% passing rate for HCDE students on the exam, well above the 76% national average.

On the other end of the spectrum, our Head Start staff is partnering with a local non-profit to provide books and volunteers at our Pugh Head Start campus. This type of partnership exposes our students to reading outside influences and opportunities which we can then leverage for additional education for parents and students.

I am proud of the work HCDE is doing in our community with all learners from preschool through adult, providing opportunities for continued success. We will be making a presentation to the board in the near future about a partnership with the Texas Medical Center for outreach and education about COVID-19 through these two divisions. We truly are filling the gaps in Harris County and impacting so many people with our services!

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team on Monday along with several standing meetings. On Tuesday I fulfilled my duties as a member of the UIL State Executive Committee through a Zoom call and met with several staff for standing meetings. On Wednesday I attended the Educational Foundation of Harris County Board meeting and held several internal meetings before speaking with Dr. Amezcua about our pending bond sale and other financial matters. This conversation led us to reschedule both the PFC and Special Called Board Meeting to handle some real estate matters and ensure we have the most favorable bond market. Thank you for your flexibility in meeting next Thursday to handle this matter.

The rest of the week was consumed with standing internal meetings and discussions about several projects and initiatives currently underway in HCDE. On Friday I extended the welcome at our virtual School Safety Forum 2020 and tomorrow I will present to Educational Certification and Advancement's Superintendent cohort. The weather looks to hold and be fabulous this weekend. I hope you get the chance to enjoy it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Collier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Demand for Medical Assistants Drives Success of HCDE Adult Education Collaboration with Dean's Staffing

At 47, Charissa Nealey found the long hours she worked to make ends meet at minimum wage jobs were taking time away from her children. As she applied for medical assistant positions, most employers wanted to see a certification.



Charissa Nealey
Adult Education student

She enrolled in a free, virtual, six-week medical assistant certification course which is a collaborative between Harris County Department of Education Adult Education and Dean's Professional Services. She had taken the exam and failed four times in the past. Within six weeks, Nealey gained her certification after studying for the rigorous exam.

Salary ranges for her new profession will be \$12-\$28 an hour with the certification. She can work in hospitals, doctors' offices or specialty clinics.

"As a woman who has learned a lot within these last couple of years of life, the only way for you to fail is when you don't try," she said. "Your children see what you do, not what you say."

Lakisha Hunter is the HCDE Adult Education teacher who co-teaches the Medical Assistant Certification course with a licensed vocational nurse. As instructor, Hunter works with students on test-taking skills, resume writing, interviewing, and reviewing the 17 modules required to pass the test.



HCDE Adult Education provides classes in GED preparation, English as a second language and other workforce development programs in construction and medical fields throughout Harris County. Programs are supported through the Texas Workforce Commission.

The medical assistant certification class is now virtual and is offered online in the evenings, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday so that students may still work while preparing for their certification.

"You get the flexibility of being home, but because you are in your personal environment, it's important for students to stay focused," Hunter said.

Projected growth in the medical assistant profession is fueled by the aging baby-boomer population. From 2019-2029, it's estimated that there will be a 19 percent demand in growth for the profession.

Deans Staffing Education Director Josh Allen says the three-hour exam is rigorous and has an average national pass rate of 76 percent. A two-year partnership with HCDE and Dean's has resulted in approximately 200 students passing the test, averaging an 86 percent pass rate, well above the national average, according to Allen.

Many candidates in the class already have experience in the medical field, Allen said, who has 11 years of experience in the hospital industry himself. After passing the test, his company helps students gain employment.



The pairing between HCDE Adult Education and Dean's Staffing is a synergy of sorts as the medical instruction teacher and the adult education study skills teacher debrief each day and talk about which students need assistance with material review and learning strategies.

"We look for students who are dedicated with a sense of commitment and motivation," Allen said. "You can have a bad day, but we really need someone with perseverance who will see this to the end."

The medical assistant program can lead to further opportunities as many institutions such as hospitals provide career advancement for their employees.

As the latest student to pass the test, Nealey looks at the opportunity as a medical assistant certification as a steppingstone.

"I'm a single parent, and with a medical assistant certification I can work in many medical jobs," Nealey said. "It's a great accomplishment to be able to learn something within a six-week span and earn a certification.

"This certificate has upped the ante on what I needed to do with my life—it really has."

(To inquire about future classes in the medical assistant certification program, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation .)

EMPLOYEES

Employee Spotlight: HCDE's Longtime Team Player Theresa Perez Shares Love of Sports

Employee Theresa Perez is smitten with all-things sports, especially the Houston Astros.

The executive assistant to Harris County Department of Education's Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support Jonathan Parker began her journey with HCDE in 1992 as the front desk receptionist at Irvington.

During her 28-year career, Perez worked in staff development (now called the Teaching and Learning Center), Therapy Services (School-Based Therapy Services) and at Highpoint School North (now Fortis).

She calls her boss of two years down to earth and very supportive. They tussle over sports teams as Parker likes the Cowboys and she supports the Texans.

Baseball, she says, is the pair's true sports rivalry as former Dallas resident Parker likes the Rangers and she supports her Astros. He is warming up to the orange-and-blue, she admits.

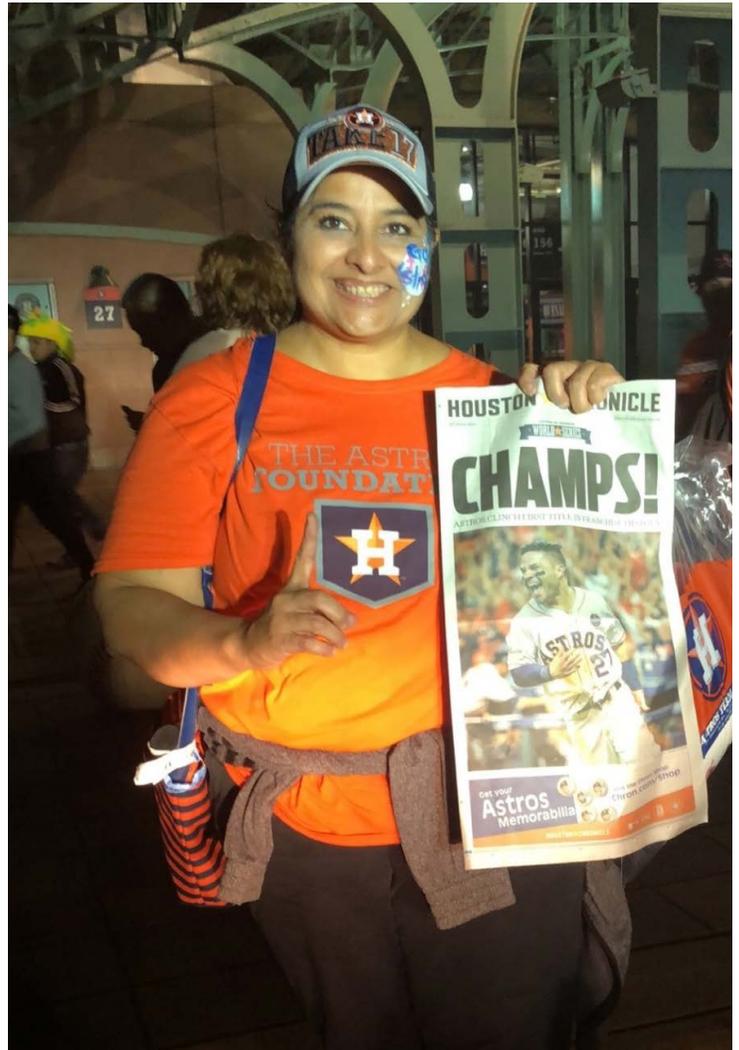
Perez's love for the Astros led her to volunteer at 153 events last year. For that record, she earned the "Volunteer of the Year Award" from the Astros club.

"My most exciting time as volunteer was when we went to the World Series in 2017," she said, remembering Hurricane Harvey and Houstonians who held their team close to their hearts as the city's rebuilding began.

By working the games, she met players like Jose Altuve, Craig Biggio and her favorite crush Jose Cruz. Through the Astros Foundation she volunteered with the Sunshine Kids Foundation. She made innumerable friendships through the 1,400 volunteers who serve the community and helped with community building project with organizations like Habitat for Humanity.

[Read more..](#)

[View photo gallery..](#)



PHOTOS

SCHOOL BUS

Channelview Head Start Tries on New COVID-19 Protocols for Safety of All

Channelview Head Start students and parents got a preview of school this week before the center officially opens next week. Happy to say everyone is glad to be back! Head Start centers reopen Oct. 19.

These students returning to school are practiced, second-year Head Start students who were happy to meet their new teachers and learn new school routines.



BOARD BRIEFS



Books for Pugh Donated Via Assistance League of Houston's Operation School Bell Reader Program

Assistance League of Houston Head Start Readers Chairperson Marilyn Brooks delivered 234 children's books this week to Venetia Peacock, senior Head Start director and Armando Rodriguez, community partnership manager.

Through Operation School Bell, the League provides books and volunteers to read at the Pugh center. This year volunteers plan to read virtually to children due to COVID-19 precautionary measures.

League volunteer Brooks, a former teacher, says the League and Head Start longtime partnership is a good match because both organizations share a mission to help children in need in school.

CASE for Kids Celebrates 2020 Lights On Afterschool Oct. 22 with Spirit Week

CASE for Kids is collaborating with organizations across the city for Lights On Afterschool Oct. 22, a national celebration to promote afterschool programming. Because of COVID-19, this year the event will be celebrated with a Spirit Week with a daily theme for each day of the week which correlates with a letter in the word "light." [View the flyer](#) for details for each day.

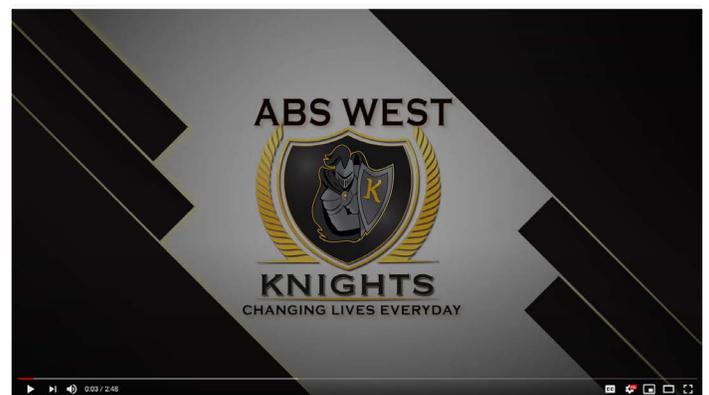


IN THE NEWS

New Video Highlights Caring Environment at ABS West

View the new video produced about Academic and Behavior School West. The video is now available through HCDE's YouTube channel (HCDEtv) and is being promoted through social media and the news blog. The school opened this fall and welcomes both in-person and virtual student populations.

<https://youtu.be/sXBJQ7tR6ds>



SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

**Superintendent Objective B:
Organization Morale**

- Celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges excellence.

**Superintendent Objective C:
Personnel Management**

- Encourages, oversees and participates in staff recognition activities.

**Superintendent Objective D:
Community Relations**

- Works with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.

**Superintendent Objective E:
Instructional Management**

- Ensures that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicates expectations for student achievement.
- Establishes a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement.

Through our Employee Spotlight, we focus on a 28-year employee who is dedicated to her team at work and her sports team and its philanthropic efforts. By recognizing employees and what they do for us, we are valuing our staff and their accomplishments. In the end, we create a healthier workplace.



Our Adult Education division is creating community liaisons based on the needs and pulse of the area workforce. As certification has become the norm for medical assistants, we have been able to step in and help both employees and companies attain this goal.

Our successful partnerships with other governmental agencies and other organizations are possible because of our flexibility to create curriculum that meets the demands of the workforce. With the ebb-and- flow of medical and construction fields, our Adult Education Division is currently refining it's programs to be timely and relevant for our community.

I am proud that HCDE helps our adult students and the communities we serve remain successful.



HCDE BOARD
Board President
Eric Dick
Vice President
Danny Norris
Board Members
Richard Cantu
Andrea Duhon
Amy Hinojosa
Don Sumners
Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

WORKSHOPS
(Online only)

Oct. 20
Teaching for Understanding Integer Operations
4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 20
Teachers, WRITE!
(Grades K-12)
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Oct. 21
Quest for Grants: team Approach to Proposal Writing 1:30 p.m.- 3 p.m.

Oct. 21
Board Meeting
(6300 Irvington)
1 p.m.