

Katy ISD's Partners Make a Difference

Katy ISD's Partners in Education programs bring the Katy community into the classroom, giving volunteers a variety of ways to connect with students in life-changing ways

Written by Kennan Buckner | Photography courtesy of Partners in Education

Volunteer opportunities abound in Katy ISD. Many Katyites help simply by donating their time and money, while others volunteer their skills in hands-on, meaningful ways. Whether you are a parent, business, or community member, Partners in Education connects everyone to a singular common goal: making a difference for kids.

Food for Families

Last year, the Katy community raised over \$25,000, which helped feed over 500 local students and their families

through the Food for Families initiative. Katy ISD principals help identify students who would benefit from the program. "Some families have come upon hard times financially," shares Tammy Stringer, Partners in Education specialist. "This program gives families a brighter holiday season by providing a H-E-B gift card to purchase groceries."

Anyone in the community can donate. "As a school counselor in Katy ISD, I witness the power of our generous community on a daily basis," says Melissa LeBlanc, counselor

Sister Schools Hayes Elementary and Bear Creek Elementary

at Rylander Elementary School. "Making donations to Food for Families is a wonderful way for Katy families and businesses to support one another and carry out our district's 'Because Everyone's Attitude Matters' initiative." Contributions of all sizes are accepted via mail or delivery to the Katy ISD Partners in Education office.

Junior Achievement

The Junior Achievement (JA) program teaches topics such as family, community, economics, career success, and more - all to help prepare students for future work-readiness. Katy ISD has the largest JA program in the world. Volunteers for JA for the junior high or elementary school level teach up to five one-hour courses, which can be completed in a single day or a week-long method. The program also features special events throughout the year to help raise awareness of the programs, such as the Junior Achievement Bowl-A-Thon, the Houston Rockets job shadow day, and the Junior Achievement golf scramble.

KEYS Mentoring

KEYS Mentoring gives Katy ISD students a mentoring relationship in an environment that can truly change their lives, whether it's traditional mentoring one-on-one each week, Mentor Buddies, or Dads with Dads. "When I came to work for Katy ISD 19 years ago, the program had just been piloted the year before," says Martha Brown, Partners in Education senior specialist. "I've been blessed to manage it since then - going from four mentors at one school to over 1,000 mentors in schools across the district."

Leaders of the program say that it's an easy commitment, not a tutoring program. "Mentors have changed the trajectory of thousands of children's lives by just spending time talking to them each week," says Brown. Students are handpicked for participating in the program. "They are referred by a counselor or teacher based on grades, absences, discipline referrals, or family circumstances," says Brown. The success of the program is evident. "Our numbers tell the story," says Brown. "Last year, 91% of KEYS kids decreased discipline referrals, 92% decreased absences, and 91% of KEYS kids increased grades even though KEYS is not a tutoring program."

Promise to Read

The Promise to Read program brings Katy business leaders into elementary schools. "Promise to Read is a yearly initiative that invites the community to share their love of reading with elementary students," says Cassandra Hedgpeth, Partners in Education coordinator.

The program began in 1997 and has continued to grow. Last year, over 200 volunteers read to nearly 500 different classes in the district. Adults are able to share their



Student council members at Beckendorff Junior High host fundraiser for Food for Families



Men Who Mentor is a branch of the KEYS mentoring program



Last year volunteers donated over 986,000 hours to Katy ISD





- Vintage Section
- Author Signings
- · Book Clubs
- Teacher Discounts

2450 Fry Rd. 281-578-7770 www.katybooks.com and so much more!

any purchase over \$25

Excludes electronic devices Cannot be combined with any other offer



favorite children's books as they read to students, often bringing a book from home or picking one out from the campus library.

School-Business Partnerships

School-Business Partnerships engage students by providing their working knowledge, skills, and time. "There are many ways our school-business partners work with our campuses, but the single most important criteria is human resource involvement," shares Hedgpeth.

Businesses do so by encouraging their staff to participate in the various programs offered by the Katy Partners in Education. "In addition, businesses may donate incentives for our students and staff. These give our administrators an opportunity to reward students for exhibiting stellar character traits, achieving a spot on the honor roll, or even having perfect attendance," says Hedgpeth. Many businesses make donations. "Some businesses contribute their talents by providing career advice to junior high students at career days, participating in health and safety fairs, and others teach games and activities at recess to promote fitness and teamwork to elementary students," Hedgpeth adds.

Sister Schools

Sister Schools is a partnership between two Katy ISD campuses that encourages like-minded schools to share resources and build friendships. "Sister Schools is a way to keep our growing district connected by sharing our strengths," says Stringer. "Sister campuses combine staff trainings and bring treats to sister school campus staff."

The sister campuses volunteers host joint PTA meetings, help provide lunch to sister campus teachers, and volunteer at each other's schools. "Campus principals initiate their school's participating in the Sister Schools program," says Stringer. "Pairings are based upon campus principal connections, shared interests, and a common desire to reach across Katy ISD to connect with another campus."

Volunteers in Public Schools

Last year, more than 22,000 volunteers donated over 986,000 hours to Katy ISD, which is the equivalent of an additional 10 staff members at every campus. "VIPS is by far our largest program," shares Brown. Commitments for volunteers range from 30 minutes per year to 20 hours per week. Leaders encourage those interested to visit their campus volunteer coordinator to sign up. Brown says, "This year we will reach a historical milestone as Katy ISD 'Marches to a Million Hours' happily donated to our children." KM



KENNAN BUCKNER is wife to a technology guru and mom to a 6-month-old cute human and a 4-year-old rat terrier.

144 • KATY MAGAZINE DEC/JAN 2016 Visit KatyMagazine.com for Katy jobs, events, news and more.





Limitless Potential. Unlimited Possibilities.

Сніла 2014

Dedicated to fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment, Houston Christian offers students opportunities to stretch their intellectual abilities, develop leadership skills and explore a wide range of interests from athletics to fine arts.

A highly accredited, independent, college preparatory school, Houston Christian is located on a beautifully appointed 45-acre campus located near the intersection of I-10 and Beltway 8.

For more information about all that Houston Christian has to offer, visit us online at www.houstonchristian.org or call Admissions at 713.580.6020 to schedule a private tour.

HOUSTON CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL www.HOUSTONCHRISTIAN.org



MASSAGE Relaxation, Deep, Sports, Energy, Couples, Hot Stone, Foot & Chair motion HAIR REMOVAL Laser or Wax FACIALS LASH EXTENSIONS WELLNESS STUDIO YOGA & MORE Ki offers a calm, relaxing atmosphere to renew your mind, body and soul. 5%

Your First Visit

Appl: required

m purc

Mention Katy Magazine

One pe

May not be

2004 S. Mason Rd. Katy, TX 77450 832-437-1837 KiMotionWS.com



- Academic Curriculum (ABEKA)
- Foreign Languages
- Accredited Teachers
- Parental Web Monitoring
- Tumbling, Dance, Karate, Legos

DISCOVERY SCHOOLHOUSE

4900 Falcon Landing Blvd.

Katy, TX 77494

Hours: 6:00am - 6:30pm



281-698-7234

Corner of Spring Green & Falcon Landing) www.discovery-schoolhouse.com



Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Care 24001 Cinco Village Center Boulevard, Katy, Texas 77494 • www.arborcincoranch.com

License #136385

Look good. Feel better.

Isn't it time you were free of those extra pounds, aches and pains, or persistent allergies? CHIRO DYNAMICS HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER offers a variety of services and therapies that can help you improve your health, restore your energy, and recover your sense of well-being.

Dr. Craig Nemow, D.C.

Our Services

- Chiropractic
- Massage Therapy
- Spinal Decompression
- Cold Laser Therapy
- Far-Infrared Therapy
- Food Testing
- Injury Therapy
- Ionic Body Detox

- Lipo-Laser
- Miracle II Products
- Neurotransmitter Testing
- Supplements
- Vibration Plates
- Weight Loss Center
 and Prescription HCG
- Dynamic Trim Diet

KATY'S CHIROPRACTIC, WEIGHT LOSS AND WELLNESS CENTER



HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER



OPEN WEEKDAYS 9:00 AM TO 6:00 PM KIDS DAY ON TUESDAYS

281-578-0606 www.chirodynamics.net