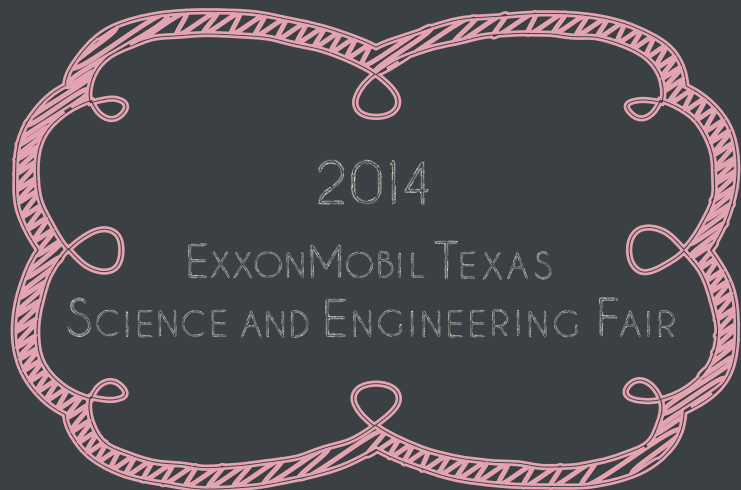


Solutions

Spring 2014

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2014

EXXONMOBIL TEXAS
SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR



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On the Cover: *Top*: Lilia Li, eighth-grader at McCullough Junior High School in The Woodlands; *Middle*: Riddhi Kumar, junior at Johnson High School in San Antonio and Lindsay Northcut, senior at Christ the King Cathedral School in Lubbock; Jose Ramirez, ninth-grader at Welasco East High School in Welasco, and volunteer Bonnie Schmidt; *Bottom*: Benjamin Buras, seventh-grader at Live Oak Classical School in Waco, Hanf Amanullah, sixth-grader at Austin Peace Academy in Austin and Ashara Somawardan, seventh-grader at the BASIS School of San Antonio. *Photos by TWC Staff*

Texas Workforce Commission

Andres Alcantar
Chairman, Commissioner Representing the Public

Ronny Congleton
Commissioner Representing Labor

Hope Andrade
Commissioner Representing Employers

Writer/Designer	Amy Kincheloe
Writer/Photographer	Debbie Pitts
Writer	Laura Ybarra
Writer	Macy D. Hurwitz
Editor/Writer	Mark Lavergne
Photographer	Lisa Givens

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Submissions, suggestions and address changes should be sent to:

Solutions Editor
Texas Workforce Commission
Communications Dept.
101 E. 15th St., Room 665
Austin, TX 78778-0001
512-463-8942, phone
512-463-2710, fax

Today's Youth, Tomorrow's Workforce

By Commissioner Hope Andrade



The Texas of today is younger than ever before. In fact, Texas has the second youngest population of any state. This is exciting news! It means we are young and versatile enough to adapt to the rapidly changing needs of our employers in today's economy.

While proactively meeting our current workforce needs, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is simultaneously implementing initiatives to build the future workforce that will meet tomorrow's needs. Your state is proud to work on many key initiatives to cultivate our future workers – our students – for the high-skill, high-demand jobs employers will require in years to come.

For the past 13 years, the Texas Workforce Commission has partnered with ExxonMobil and The University of Texas at San Antonio to sponsor the ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair (EMTSEF) for students across the state. This year's fair was another great opportunity to showcase some of Texas' young talent.

I applaud the more than 1,100 middle and high school students who qualified at their regional competitions and went on to compete at the state level. It was a lot of fun to see the truly groundbreaking projects that these young, innovative minds developed.

This year's winners and some great success stories from past winners are highlighted in the pages to follow.

The skills that students utilize at these competitions are part of the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum, but they go beyond what we might think of in terms of traditional math and sciences. From synthesizing particles in order to improve cancer treatments to discovery of a simple method to step up DC voltage, these students are building a technical foundation that will allow them to explore new arenas in which

they can learn and grow.

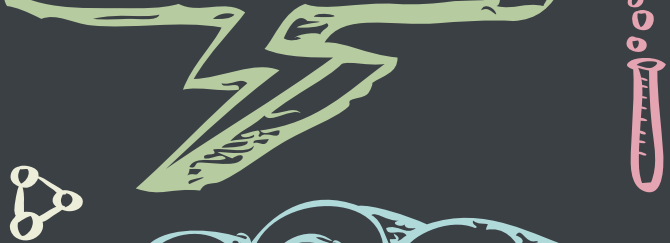
As our world and our economy become more and more technologically advanced, we must ensure that we are creating educational opportunities for our students to enter high-wage and high-demand fields. The EMTSEF is one of many examples of Texas employers becoming champions for youth workforce development. Regional fairs are held throughout the state leading up to the statewide fair, allowing many opportunities for businesses to participate. Please check out the EMTSEF website, www.emtsef.org, to see how you can get involved.

Together with our private-sector partners, we will continue to make sure our young Texans develop the key skills of the 21st century workforce. ■

Hope Andrade | Commissioner Representing Employers



Senior Division
Best of
Show



Senior Division
Life Sciences
Grand Prize
Winner



Lindsay Northcut
Senior at Christ the King Cathedral School
in Lubbock



Senior Division
Physical
Sciences
Grand Prize
Winner



Riddhi Kumar
Junior at Johnson High School in San Antonio



Junior Division
Best of Show

Junior Division
Physical Sciences
Grand Prize Winner

Junior Division
Life Sciences
Grand Prize Winner

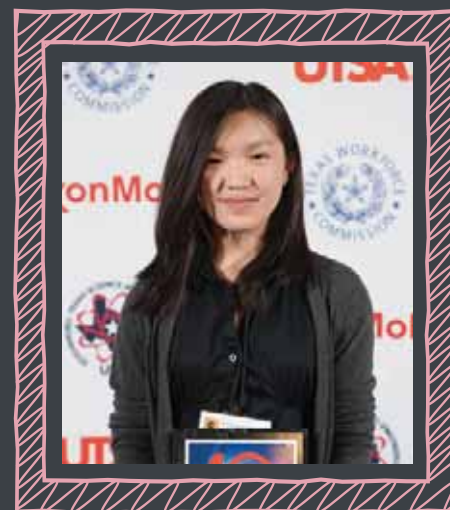
Evelyn McCune

Eighth Grader at
Laura Bush Middle
School in Lubbock



Sydney Tay

Eighth Grader at
Rice Middle School
in Plano



TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE COMPETES AT EXXONMOBIL TEXAS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR IN SAN ANTONIO

By Debbie Pitts

“The young men and women participating in the Texas Science and Engineering Fair are among the very best students our state has to offer. Each one of them is gifted, and each one of them has demonstrated a willingness to strive for success,” said Texas Gov. Rick Perry in his video address to the students gathered at the ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair (EMTSEF) in San Antonio. “That’s important because Texas needs that kind of dedication and spirit to keep our competitive edge in a world that seems to be growing smaller by the day.”

Perry addressed the fair’s high school students who, along with middle school participants, totaled nearly 1,100 competitors at this year’s EMTSEF, March 20-23. The competition is co-sponsored by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

and ExxonMobil, and hosted by The University of Texas at San Antonio.

The students competed in nine life science and eight physical science project categories. Awards were given to the top five projects in each category for both the junior (middle school) and senior (high school) divisions.

The top two projects in the life science and physical science disciplines earned grand prize and runner-up recognitions, and the top finishers in each discipline won best of show designations. This year’s junior division winner, Evelyn McCune of Laura Bush Middle School in Lubbock, earned the honor for her project on “Aero-Morphing.” The senior division best of show was awarded to Lindsay Northcut who presented a project on “The Effect of Nitrogen-Rich Fertilizers on the Growth and Yield of Cotton Plants.”

“I started my experiment four years ago and this year I continued it. I tested four different types of fertilizer to see the different effects they would have on growth and reproduction of cotton,” said Northcut. “I ended up proving that farmers could use half the amount of fertilizer and still have the same production. I am very excited that my project won and I will be going to L.A. in a few months.”

Northcut, along with each of the category winners from the fair’s senior division, qualify for the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair that will take place in Los Angeles in May.

“Each year, I am more and more impressed by the ingenuity of these young competitors,” said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar, who addressed the senior division students at their awards ceremony.

Continued on page 6

spotlight



Justin DuPont, a junior at Clear Falls High School in League City, sets up his "Non Tethered Communication for Heart Pumps" project. Photo by TWC Staff



Claire Johnson, a sixth grader at Drane Intermediate School in Corsicana is interviewed about her project "Siblings vs. Twins: Who Knows More About Each Other?"; Photo by TWC Staff



Left: All of the winners from the 2014 ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair are joined by TWC Chairman Alcantar; Right: Allison Busker and Lilly Deardorff, both eighth graders at Pioneer Heritage Middle School in Frisco, interact with Judge Johannes Strobel, Director of Educational Outreach Programs, TEES and Associate Professor of ET&ID Engineering and TLAC Education at Texas A&M University Dwight Look College of Engineering. Dr. Strobel is remotely interacting with a fair student from his office at Texas A&M University via the VGo robot, Aggiebot. Strobel and other colleagues used the technology to judge some engineering categories at the fair. Photos by TWC Staff



Continued from page 5

“This is the 13th year that TWC has co-sponsored this event and the sixth one I have attended. It is truly an asset to our state to have this opportunity for students to foster their interest in science, to demonstrate their innovative ideas and to represent our state at the international competition.”

The top two senior division winners from each project category, along with the grand prize winners and runners up, are awarded scholarships to attend the Governor’s Science and Technology Champions Academy (GSTCA).

At this weeklong residential summer camp, students participate in hands-on projects and learn about educational and career opportunities

in science and engineering from university and industry experts. The University of Houston will host this year’s camp, also sponsored by TWC.

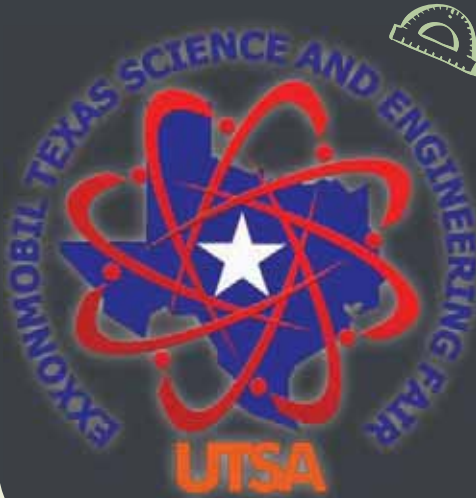
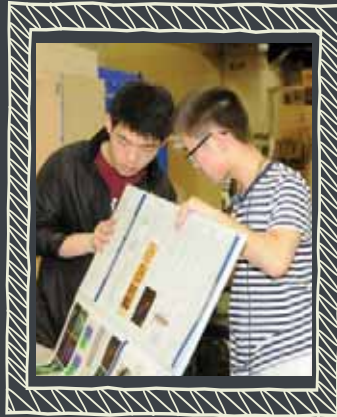
“I hope that students around the state will take notice of these accomplishments and opportunities and will choose to get involved in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) educational and career pathways so that we can strengthen our talent pipeline for the STEM jobs of the future,” Alcantar said.

The Champions Academy and EMTSEF are two of TWC’s many programs designed to encourage students to participate in STEM activities to acquire the knowledge and skills to equip them for in demand occupations.

TWC also sponsors high school robotics programs and the Summer Merit Program, which provides scholarships to enroll more disadvantaged middle and high school students in STEM skills-related summer camp programs.

“Employers in Texas are eager to employ individuals with technical skills and innovative ideas,” said TWC Commissioner Representing Employers Hope Andrade, who addressed the student participants at the fair’s opening ceremonies. “TWC is proud to join ExxonMobil and UTSA in recognizing these students’ innovations and encouraging them to continue their path toward greatness in the STEM disciplines.” ■





Congratulations to the Top Winners of the 2014 ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair

Senior Division

Grand Awards – Life Sciences

First Grand and Best of Show

Lindsay Northcut, Christ the King Cathedral High School in Lubbock

Second Grand

Christopher Botello, John Jay Science and Engineering Academy in San Antonio

Grand Awards – Physical Sciences

First Grand

Riddhi Kumar, Johnson High School in San Antonio

Second Grand

Roma Pradhan, Friendswood High School in Friendswood

Animal Sciences

Monisha Veerapaneni, Plano Sr. High School in Plano

Behavioral and Social Sciences

Shweta Julka, Plano West Sr. High School in Plano

Biochemistry

Anagha Krishnan, Jasper High School in Plano

Jierui Fang, Jasper High School in Plano

Cellular and Molecular Biology

Alex White, Uplift North Hills Preparatory in Irving

Chemistry

ZijunYu, Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science in Denton

Computer Science

London Bolsius, Round Rock High School in Round Rock

Earth Science

William Wu, Clear Lake High School in Houston

Energy and Transportation

Matthew Caffet, The Academy of Science and Technology in The Woodlands

Engineering: Electrical/Mechanical

Sarah Palmer, Friendswood High School in Friendswood

Engineering: Materials/Bioengineering

Isuru Somawardana, Keystone School in San Antonio

Environmental Management

Karan Jerath, Friendswood High School in Friendswood

Environmental Sciences/Analysis

Perry Alagappan, Clear Lake High School in Houston

Mathematical Sciences

Niranjan Balachandar, Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science in Denton

Medicine and Health Sciences

Tanya Kumar, Clear Brook High School in Friendswood

Microbiology

Swapnav Deka, Plano East Sr. High School in Plano

Physics and Astronomy

Piper Reid, Dripping Springs High School in Dripping Springs

Plant Sciences

Angela Kang, James Bowie High School in Austin

Junior Division

Grand Awards – Life Sciences

First Grand

Sydney Tay, Rice Middle School in Plano

Second Grand

Eshan Chhabra, Renner Middle School in Plano

Grand Awards – Physical Sciences

First Grand and Best of Show

Evelyn McCune, Laura Bush Middle School in Lubbock

Second Grand

Kshitij Sachan, Rice Middle School in Plano

Yesh Doctor, Rice Middle School in Plano

Animal Sciences

Shannon Anderson, Anderson Christian Academy in Seguin

Behavioral and Social Sciences

Cole Urrea, Saint Joseph School in El Paso

Biochemistry

Hanif Amanullah, Austin Peace Academy in Austin

Cellular and Molecular Biology

Doru Gucer, Pflugerville Middle School in Pflugerville

Chemistry

Maya Krishnan, McCullough Jr. High in The Woodlands

Varsha Iyer, McCullough Jr. High in The Woodlands

Computer Science

Katherine Nissen, Canyon Ridge Middle School in Austin

Earth Science

John Wilkins, Keystone School in San Antonio

Energy and Transportation

Caleb Johnson, Homer J. Morris Middle School in McAllen

Engineering: Electrical/Mechanical

Wenyao Li, Rice Middle School in Plano

Engineering: Materials/Bioengineering

Aaron Cantu, B. Garza Middle School in Weslaco

Environmental Management

Alana Armstrong, Waco Baptist Academy in Waco

Environmental Sciences/Analysis

Darcy Bonds, Laura Bush Middle School in Lubbock

Mathematical Sciences

Sueda Cetinkaya, Harmony School of Excellence in Houston

Medicine and Health Sciences

Nikhil Ramaswamy, Rice Middle School in Plano

Microbiology

Tatiana Ortiz, Seashore Middle Academy in Corpus Christi

Physics and Astronomy

Syamantak Payra, Westbrook Intermediate School in Friendswood

Plant Sciences

Patricia Tomacruz, Christ the King Cathedral School in Lubbock

2009 ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair winner forges path of excellence at Yale and beyond

By Laura Ybarra

In 2008, Houston Bellaire High School junior Li Boynton did not realize registering for a local science fair would change her life forever. But within a year, Boynton's research utilizing bioluminescent bacteria to detect water contaminants received the Best of Show award at the ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair (EMTSEF), and the Young Scientist award at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), where she received \$50,000 in scholarships.

Now a senior at Yale University studying molecular, cellular and developmental biology (MCDB), Boynton credits her experiences at the science fairs for many of her achievements.

"Without those fairs, I wouldn't be at Yale majoring in science today," said Boynton. "Being around so many students with a passion for science at the fairs strengthened my resolve to enter into a science field, and winning the Young Scientist award and scholarships gave me

an edge on my application to Yale and eventually enabled me to attend financially."

As one of the winners at the EMTSEF, Boynton was able to attend the 2009 TWC-sponsored Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy, held at the University of Texas at San Antonio, for free.

"The Champions Academy was my first taste of research and science instruction on a university level," said Boynton. "Getting to meet world-renowned faculty and doing fun experiments in a real research lab was an awesome opportunity and helped prepare me for the work I have done at Yale."

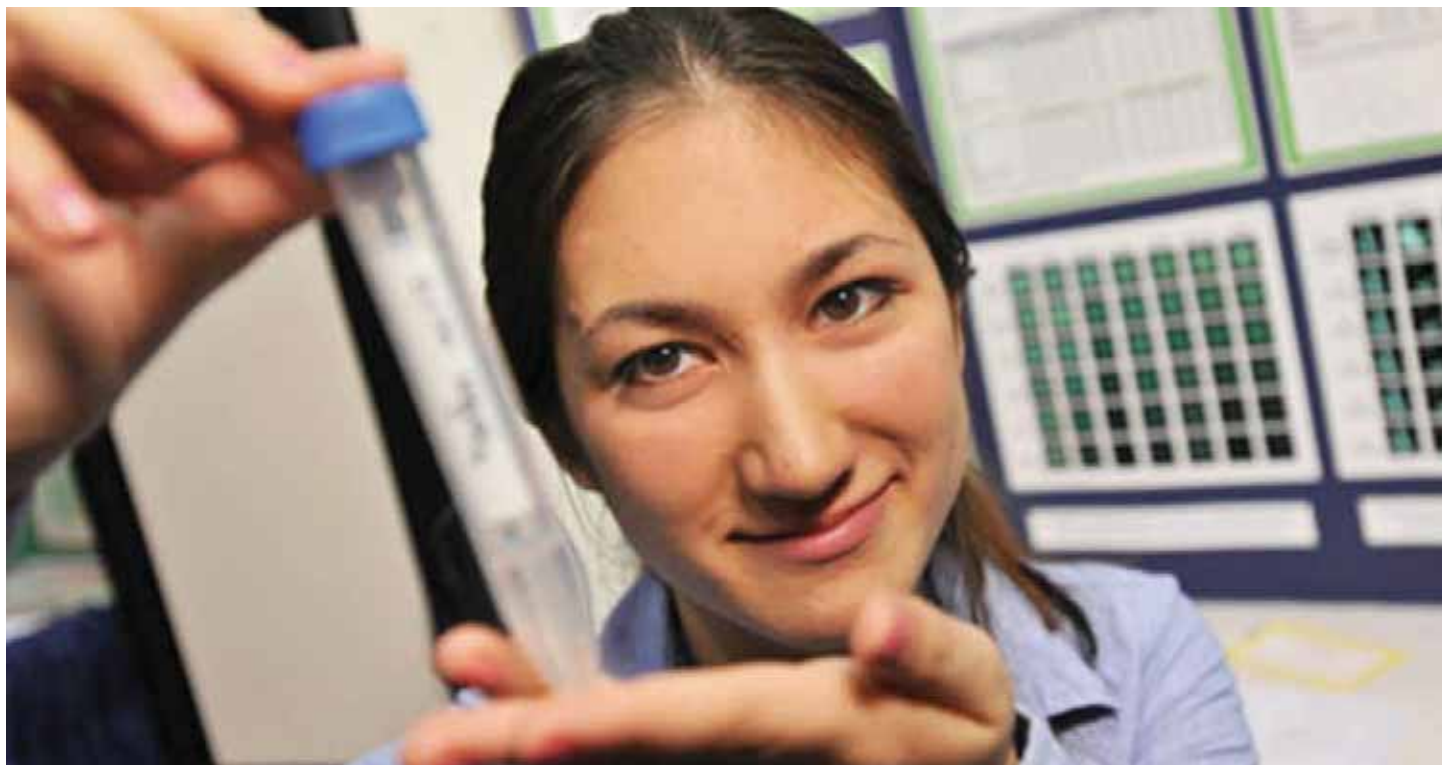
Boynton plans to attend medical school after Yale and has already gained medical experience. She has worked in a variety of labs at Yale, and has conducted MCDB research studying RNA as well as biomedical engineering research for her senior thesis, funded by the Michael Manzella Foundation which funds cancer research. Boynton has also led weeklong

trips providing free healthcare from a mobile clinic in Ecuador. Most recently, Boynton interned as an operations analyst for Shanghai United Family Hospital in China.

"My internship consisted of working from a business perspective with the hospital operations and finance team, and working directly with patients and physicians in the hospital itself," said Boynton. "I was able to shadow physicians in every department, and observed some intense surgeries in the operating room, which was a unique opportunity."

Along with continuing to travel the world, Boynton sees herself possibly returning to Texas one day.

"Particularly in healthcare – there are many great medical schools in Texas, and Houston's Texas Medical Center is the largest in the world," said Boynton. "M.D. Anderson is also one of the most prestigious cancer centers. I can definitely see myself settling down there as a medical student or practicing physician." ■



Li Boynton, Best of Show winner at the 2009 ExxonMobil Texas Science and Engineering Fair, has gone on to study molecular, cellular and developmental biology at Yale University, and credits her experience at EMTSEF for many of her achievements. Photo courtesy of Li Boynton

Brownsville childcare program lays early foundation for academic, professional success

By Macy D. Hurwitz

When children enter the Texas School Ready! (TSR) program, many of them have never been in a classroom environment. The goal of the early childhood program is for those kids to be comfortable in a classroom and to have the foundation of learning that will help them excel once they enter kindergarten.

TSR started in 2003 as a partnership between The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron), Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) and Neighbors in Need of Services Inc., with 20 classrooms from Head Start, school district and private day care centers.

Cameron's partnership has helped strengthen regional child care services,

which are crucial to helping parents address barriers to employment, while at the same time laying a foundation for their children's future success.

"Workforce Solutions Cameron understood the connection between early school readiness and later success in the workforce," said Patricia Flores-Cantu, TSR technical assistance specialist. "This innovative thinking allowed private child care centers to benefit and obtain school readiness resources that would be otherwise unattainable for private day cares."

Elisa Lopez of Little Folks Day Care Center in Brownsville decided to enter Little Folks into the program after Flores-Cantu told her what an advantage it would give the children and teachers at her center. Lopez said she has seen a remarkable difference

in the way the children are learning, and parents of former students that participated in the program have told her their children's teachers have commented on how prepared their children are for school as well.

TSR teacher Elizabeth Sanchez said a key to the program's success is the consistency of the curriculum's application and the way the program urges teachers to go beyond basic comprehension and skills and challenge the children to learn more. Children participate in the program every school day, with activities in subject areas including math and reading that they engage in from the moment they arrive until they leave the center.

"One of the activities that the children love is rhyming with their name," Sanchez said. "For example, my name is Ms.

Sanchez, and the children love to call me my rhyming name, which is Ms. Lanchez."

Erica Ramos, mother of a five-year-old TSR alumnus said it was apparent the program gave him an advantage once he entered kindergarten.

"Once he began public school, the compliments flew in on a week-to-week basis," Ramos said. "The teacher said he was the strongest leader she had in her class and she always had him doing examples for everyone else so they could pick it up."

Quantified assessments back up these anecdotes of success. The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Children's Learning Institute conducted a self-evaluation that showed students achieved 55 percent higher in phonological awareness, 150 percent higher in letter knowledge and 33 percent higher in vocabulary from the beginning to the end of the year in 2007-08. ■



Christian Alvear and Claris Flores participate in the Texas School Ready! program in Brownsville. Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions Cameron

Weatherford College sparks new opportunities with welding equipment



Weatherford College welding student Clay Youngblood works on obtaining his Basic Welding Technology Certification. Photo courtesy of Weatherford College

By Amy Kincheloe

Weatherford College's Workforce and Continuing Education Coordinator Terry Pilgrim might be more excited than his students about the additional \$174,900 awarded by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in January to purchase welding equipment.

"I think it's wonderful that we have received the extra money for equipment because we were in dire need," Pilgrim said. "We were teaching, but not to the level we needed to. With this new equipment, now we can."

Pilgrim, the welding instructor assigned to train employees at PECOFacet, a coalescing, filtration and separation products manufacturer in Mineral Wells, said one of the new pieces of equipment delivered in March is the VRTEX 360, a virtual reality arc welding training simulator.

"It's going to be a wonderful machine to test welders on at the very beginning to see where they are and at the end to see

how far they've come," Pilgrim said. "It's like a computer game that allows you to practice five different ways of welding while giving you the sights and sounds of welding in the welder's helmet."

Pilgrim also said that the simulator has software that analyzes how students are welding and how to do it correctly. Instructors can also plug in a flash drive to record daily activity to show the employer or review with the student.

Last year, Weatherford College (WC) received an initial Skills Development Fund grant from TWC for \$476,076. WC partnered with PECOFacet to train its employees in welding, Lean 5, computer-aided design (CAD) courses, safety classes, facilities maintenance and basic computer courses.

Once the grant runs out at the end of April, all of the equipment purchased will become part of WC's welding program and housed at both the Weatherford and Mineral Wells campuses. WC's Workforce Training and Development

Coordinator Julie Lundy hopes this equipment will enable WC to add a daytime welding school in the fall, so students will be able to come all week long.

Joe Fiore, vice president of operations at PECOFacet, said the partnership with WC has been very positive and provided training tailored to his employees. PECOFacet currently has 360 employees, 290 participated in training including 75 who took welding classes.

"Welding is the most critical skill we need here," Fiore said. "As a result we now have a better-defined welding training than we had in place before. We've identified some mentors and leaders in our welding program to help the new and less experienced welders become more proficient. This program also helped us identify employees who weren't already working as welders, but showed they had a skill for it."

One such employee was Jonathan Browning, a leader in the Peco Engineered Applied Conical Helix (PEACH) department. After seven and

a half years with PECOFacet, Browning started taking welding courses in the fall because he wanted to further his career options.

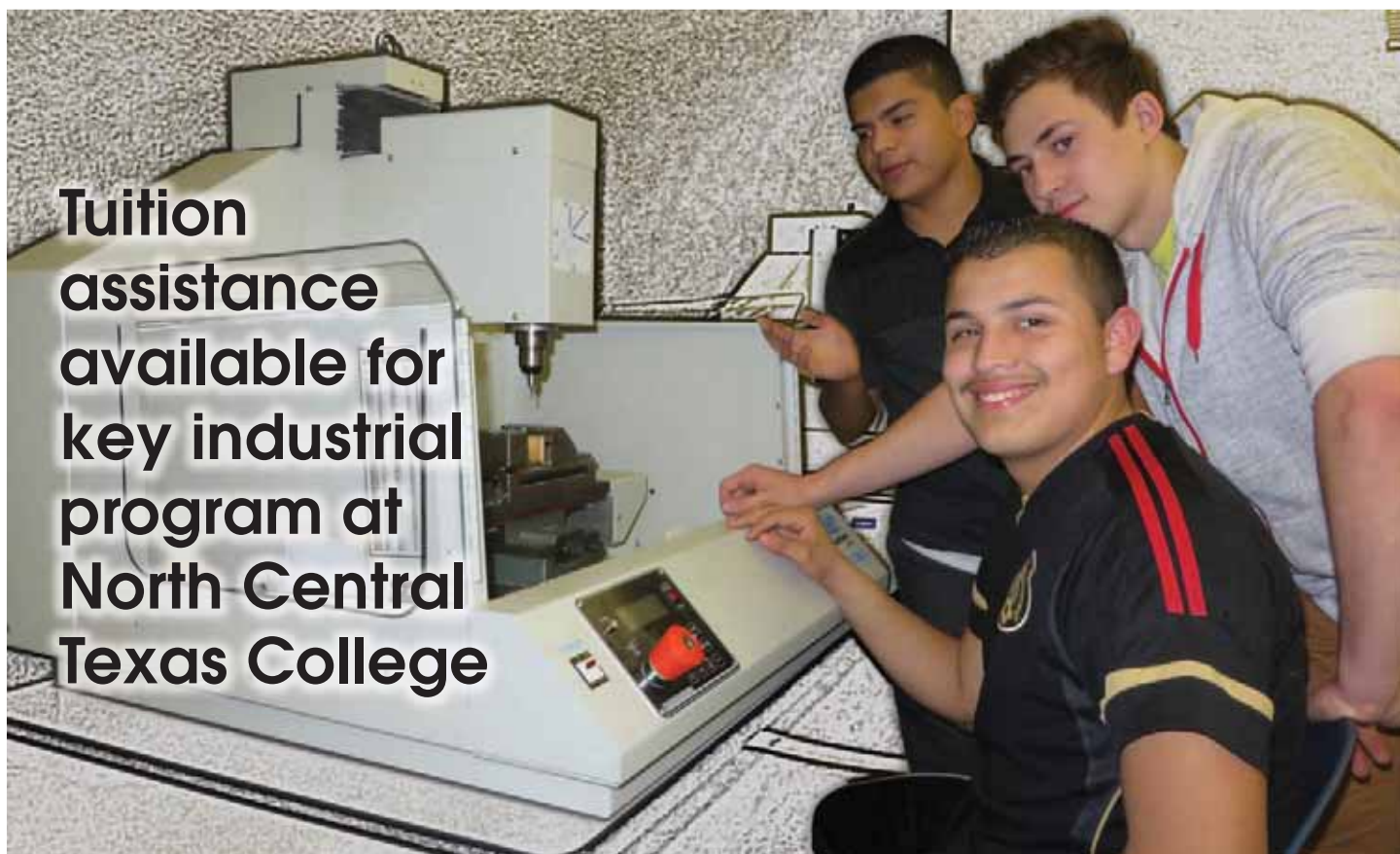
"I passed my certification three weeks ago and I've been offered a Welder I position within the welding department," Browning said. "I'm ready to get over there and get started."

David K. Setzer, executive director of Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, said welding is a great skill to offer for training.

"There continues to be a high demand for welders," Setzer said. "It's a great profession to go into and have a productive career."

Setzer also said the partnership with PECOFacet and WC has been productive for everyone involved.

"This thing's a homerun no matter how you look at it," Setzer said. "It's a great demonstration of what Texas Workforce Solutions, a business partner and an educational institution can do when they partner together." ■



Tuition assistance available for key industrial program at North Central Texas College

Level I students in the Computer Numeric Controlled Machining Program at North Central Texas College start by using manual vertical mills like this one. Pictured above (clockwise from left) Martin Cruz, Toney Clark and Edgar Ramirez. Photo courtesy of North Central Texas College

By Mark Lavergne

Students looking for a career in a high-demand vocational trade such as industrial manufacturing may have a new low-cost opportunity.

In February Workforce Solutions Texoma (Texoma) began offering tuition assistance for six new vocational tracks at the Lifelong Learning Center at North Central Texas College (NCTC), including Industrial Mechanics and Computer Numeric Controlled (CNC) Machining Technology. These programs look to fill a crucial skills need for employers both regionally and throughout Texas.

“Students in these programs receive training in several disciplines—blueprint reading, welding, electrical, hydraulics, motor controls, maintenance and troubleshooting,” said Texoma Executive Director Janie Bates. “These skills allow you to advance in the manufacturing industry, and make you a great candidate for managerial and other high level positions. By making this tuition assistance available, we hope to help unlock these opportunities for students and job seekers.”

The assistance will help eligible students pay for tuition, books, required fees, tools,

transportation and more.

The CNC Machining program trains students in how to use lathes and vertical mills – bedrock tools for manufacturing industrial components. For example, the oil industry uses a lathe to develop the drill bit that is used to drill an oil well.

The CNC program was first made available in November through a 2013 Skills Development Fund grant from the Texas Workforce Commission and Texoma’s tuition assistance program. Additional funding was provided by the Gainesville Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

“Without that financial support from Gainesville EDC, neither the CNC lab nor the Industrial Mechanics lab would have the equipment we need to teach our students,” said Djuna Forrester, dean of NCTC’s Lifelong Learning Center.

CNC Machining technical program director Kenny Smith said employer demand is hot for the skills students are learning at NCTC.

“We have three companies in our area that need machinists,” Smith said. “The local workforce board has been referring

students to us to help fill these positions and that benefits our communities, the companies and our school. It’s a win-win all around.”

The CNC program begins by showing students how to use manual vertical mills and manual lathes, then assists students in learning to use CNC vertical mills and lathes. These machines require more advanced skills including operating a complex keypad rather than manual controls.

The program is expected to expand to include two CNC mills and two CNC lathes in the coming years.

Martin Cruz, a Gainesville High School student in his first year of the CNC program, said he wants to get certified and attend college in Texas, ultimately to become an engineer.

“I really enjoy the program because it’s teaching me a lot of new things,” Cruz said. “The skills I’ve started learning in this program definitely give me more confidence about where I want to go from here.”

Anyone interested in tuition or other assistance through Texoma should contact their local Workforce Solutions office: www.workforcesolutionstexoma.com ■

Lone Star College prepares students to meet energy industry needs

By Laura Ybarra

According to a 2013 University of Texas at San Antonio study, oil and gas activity in Texas' Eagle Ford Shale added more than \$61 billion in total economic impact and supported 116,000 jobs in 2012. Despite the influx of job opportunities, employers have faced difficulty filling open positions with highly skilled workers.

To meet the industry demand for an educated and prepared workforce, Lone Star Corporate College (LSCC) in Houston created a 10-week Oil and Gas Drilling Floor – Hand/Roustabout certificate program last year as a result of input from Gulf Coast-area industry employers and a \$199,356 Wagner-Peyser grant from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Wagner-Peyser grants help fund job training to fill workforce needs in high-

demand industries. LSCC created an eight-week version of the program with both night and daytime options to accommodate more students.

“Since this program’s first cohort of students began in April 2013, 113 students have graduated and many others have expressed interest in enrolling,” said Michael Burns, LSCC director. “With a job-placement rate of 87 percent, this program has been highly successful at preparing students for employment in the oil and gas industry.”

According to Burns, students who complete the Oil and Gas Drilling Floor – Hand/Roustabout Certificate program receive 264 hours of hands-on core skills experience in mechanical, electrical and fluid power systems and drilling-specific training. Students also earn the International Association of Drilling Contractors

(IADC) RigPass® and WellCAP® certifications, internationally respected credentials for entry-level oil and gas personnel wanting to work on an oil rig. The program also prepares graduates to sit for three Manufacturing Skill Standards Council certification tests in safety, quality and maintenance awareness.

“The tuition for the Oil and Gas Drilling Floor – Hand/Roustabout certificate program is \$2,844 for an eight-week course and students leave making an average of \$60,000 a year,” said Burns. “When you evaluate that the average four-year college student owes approximately \$24,301 after they graduate and make about \$63,388 on average, this program is of real economic value.”

In addition to helping create the program, the TWC grant also funded scholarships for 135

students to attend the program at no cost to them. One scholarship recipient, Keisha Malik, recently graduated in February and now works as a pad crew member in rig constructions with Patterson-UTI Drilling Co. in Crosby.

“Before I attended this program, I had tried to get into the oil and gas industry several times without any luck, and was actually unemployed when I learned about the program,” said Malik. “This program has given me an opportunity to have an actual career that interests me. Everyone has been very encouraging that I can go as far as I want to in this field, and this program has given me the skillset to do just that.”

James Ward spent 28 years in the oil and gas industry, working his way up from an entry-level field operator to the vice president of Casing Services Inc. before becoming a lead instructor in LSCC’s oil and gas department.

“What sets this program above others is these students have great exposure to the industry before they even set foot on the job,” Ward said. “What these students are learning is superb and I wish I had been able to pull new hires from a program like this one when I was working in the industry. I am just so proud of them.”

For more information about the Oil and Gas Drilling Floor – Hand/Roustabout certificate program, visit www.lonestar.edu/corporatecollege/professional-seminars or email michael.burns@lonestar.edu. ■



Students from Lone Star Corporate College's Oil and Gas Drilling Floor Hand/Roustabout certificate program demonstrate the 10-in-10-out hand safety practice at their graduation ceremony. Photo courtesy of Lone Star Corporate College



TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Ronny Congleton (third from right) presented an \$879,402 Skills Development Fund grant check to McLennan Community College and a manufacturing consortium in Waco to provide job training to 406 new and incumbent workers. Photo courtesy of McLennan Community College

Skills grant to create or upgrade 406 manufacturing jobs

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Commissioner Representing Labor Ronny Congleton presented an \$879,402 Skills Development Fund grant check to McLennan Community College (MCC) and a manufacturing consortium on Feb. 20 in Waco to provide job training to 406 new and incumbent workers. The consortium, a partnership between MarathonNorco Aerospace Inc., Trane US Inc., Texas Machine-Tool International LLC, and Packless Industries will pay the workers an average hourly wage of \$17.79.

The workers will be trained in skills including advanced heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC), basic electrical, forklift operation and Environmental Protection Agency Section 608 Technical Certification. Machinists, mechanics, packagers,

maintenance workers, electrical technicians and other workers will learn these skills through the specialized curriculum developed by MCC with support from the grant.

The consortium formed because each company, all medium-to-large sized manufacturers, faced similar needs: increased operational efficiencies, high-quality technical skills, improved leadership and organizational safety. The training will help the businesses maintain profitability and reduce maintenance issues, while enhancing the marketable skills of employees.

TWC grants Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board \$1M to expand Accelerate Texas program

In October 2013, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) granted the Texas Higher Education

Coordinating Board (THECB) \$1 million to expand its Accelerate Texas program to train 200 more students in areas of the state with high unemployment.

Accelerate Texas is designed to give unemployed adults the education and skills training required for career-path employment in high-demand fields. In 2013, TWC was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) National Emergency Grant program to support the expansion of Accelerate Texas.

THECB has designated Hill College in Hillsboro and Cleburne, Tarrant County Community College in Fort Worth, Amarillo College in Amarillo and South Texas College in McAllen as the recipients of the funding, which will pay for a variety of workforce training from medical technology to welding.

Six workforce boards are participating in the program: Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, Workforce Solutions for

North Central Texas, Workforce Solutions Panhandle, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley and Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas.

TWC will manage the grant and monitor the program to report to DOL on the progress of Accelerate Texas.

“We are pleased to partner with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and local community colleges on this important job-training program,” said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. “Equipping individuals with the skills in demand by employers in their region gives students the opportunity to find employment.”

Northeast Texas receives grant for Red River Depot workforce reduction mitigation

The Department of Defense announced recently community economic adjustment grants from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), with Northeast Texas selected as one of the grantees.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas was awarded a \$456,722 grant to respond to the reduction of 1,225 civilian employees at the Red River Army Depot

near Texarkana. These federal funds are part of a larger \$517,469 project to study reemployment opportunities for the displaced workforce, identify the region's comparative advantages, and develop opportunities to diversify local economic activity.

These grants are awarded under OEA's Defense Industry Adjustment Program to assist states and communities that have been significantly impacted by reductions or cancellations in Defense Department spending.

Sylvia Torres Chosen as Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas Employee of the Year



Sylvia Torres was named the Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas Employee of the Year at a ceremony in January. The award recognizes front-line employees who consistently perform over and above the responsibilities of their job and provide outstanding customer service.

As a personal services representative at the Stephenville Workforce Center, Torres has worked with individuals who are seeking better careers through training opportunities for 22 years.

Stephenville Workforce Solutions Office Manager Mendy Woodward nominated Torres. She said that in a recent example of Torres' service, she helped a single parent, who was receiving nutritional and housing assistance,

acquire licensed vocational nurse training through available Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. The customer has since moved on to earn her bachelor's degree, is completely off public assistance and has recently bought her first home.

“Sylvia's knowledge of training programs and outside resources, as well as her love of the job, sets her apart from others,” said Woodward. “She also contributes to the success of the Workforce Solutions Office by being a team player, often taking on additional duties in the absence of others without being asked.”

Torres serves as the only bilingual staff member at the office and often helps translate for Spanish-speaking customers in addition to her normal duties. She is also in charge of payroll, ordering supplies, serving as back-up custodian, and making herself available for various other offices and events.

“I am very grateful for the recognition I have received for my work,” said Torres. “I can proudly hold up this award as a mark of my achievements.”

Photo courtesy of the Stephenville Workforce Center



Texas Workforce Commission
512-463-2222
www.texasworkforce.org

Concho Valley
325-653-2321
www.cvworkforce.org

Lower Rio Grande Valley
956-928-5000
www.wfsolutions.com

Southeast Texas
409-719-4750
www.setworks.org

Alamo
210-272-3260
www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org

Greater Dallas
214-290-1000
www.wfsdallas.com

Middle Rio Grande
830-591-0141
www.mrgwb.org

South Plains
806-744-1987
www.spworkforce.org

Brazos Valley
979-595-2800
www.bvjjobs.org

Deep East Texas
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www.detwork.org

North Central
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www.dfwjobs.com

South Texas
956-722-3973
www.southtexasworkforce.org

Cameron County
956-548-6700
www.wfscameron.org

East Texas
903-984-8641
www.easttexasworkforce.org

North East Texas
903-794-9490
www.netxworkforce.org

Tarrant County
817-413-4400
www.workforcesolutions.net

Capital Area
512-597-7100
www.wfscapitalarea.com

Golden Crescent
361-576-5872
www.gcworkforce.org

North Texas
940-767-1432
www.ntxworksolutions.org

Texoma
903-957-7408
www.workforcesolutionstexoma.com

Central Texas
254-939-3771
www.workforcelink.com

Gulf Coast
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888-469-5627
www.wrksolutions.com

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www.wspanhandle.com

Upper Rio Grande
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www.urgjobs.com

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www.workforcesolutionscb.org

Heart of Texas
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www.hotworkforce.com

Permian Basin
432-563-5239
www.workforcepb.org

West Central
325-795-4200
800-457-5633
www.workforcesystem.org

Rural Capital Area
512-244-7966
www.workforcesolutionsrca.com

The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards, forms Texas Workforce Solutions.



Texas Workforce Commission
101 E. 15th St., Room 665
Austin, TX 78778-0001

