

## Alacritous Alumni

Click "Like!" Our eleventh winner of the Jack Kent Cook, Aaliyah Avellaneda, is now enrolled at Southern Methodist University and enjoying a full ride. She is also being featured on the Facebook page of the Walter Prescott Webb Society of Texas as a statewide success story in Texas history. Her article on Mount Pleasant's Bill Ratliff won a 1st-place Caldwell, and her essay was just published in *Touchstone*.



Every day, she faces puzzles, relating to blood. This is Brooke Hale's (2010) summary of what she does as Technical Supervisor of Transfusion Services at the Medical Branch of UT at Galveston. Hale "loves her work," and thanks NTCC honors professor, Dr. Hearron for suggesting the field. Hale won our 3rd Boe Award with a creative envisioning of counterfactual outcomes of the Civil War in relation to Texas.



Gabriela Quezada, our Cypress Bank Scholar of 2014-15, has both secured highly competitive openings and attained an international perspective as an architect. Born in El Salvador, she moved to Pittsburgh, and now works as a project designer in Brisbane, Australia. With us, she published her story on big business, and the Texas Centennial of 1936 in Dallas.



For our 2016 poetry contest, Samantha Hammonds described the orange noctiluence of the sky as a spread of "marmalade clouds." The daughter of NTCC's Copy Center Manager, Samantha pioneered our studies of Bo Pilgrim that in time provided other students with published articles and



a film. Samantha is now an ER nurse in Longview and Dallas and is engaged to Erlando Valdelamar of Pittsburg.



Jessica Velasquez(2016), winner of two Jack Kent Cooke Scholarships, has just won an award in research from the American Association for Cancer Research. Velasquez's study was based on work she performed last summer at the Cancer Prevention and Control Research Training Program, an end-of-life care unit for cancer patients living in Puerto Rico. Velasquez directed our first Caldwell-Award winning film.



Recently the *San Antonio Business Journal* proclaimed Dura Software the fastest growing business in the city. Dura has absorbed high-tech start-ups whose mission relates to their own. Dura provides "hyper-niche" virtual environments to "mission-critical" initiatives. Pictured in the article was none other than Dura Software CFO, Thibaut Guidet (2009). Guidet who won NTCC's first Boe Award in 2008, also acted in a pre-cinematic honors skit.

# ALACRITY



### Honors Northeast Scholars Attain Interservice Triumphs

Unlike our fine NTCC sports teams, honors has the chance to compete directly with universities. And this competition is significant. Community colleges lie at the intersection of America's democratic culture, and its ever more rigid class structure. Are our colleges merely extensions of local school systems, or do they provide viable ways for small-town or lower-class students to advance? We have some advantages. Concerted mentoring. Caring donors. Administrative priorities. In the fall of 2022 these advantages made a difference. The most notable case in point, above, came in the form of the college's first \$100 Portia Gordon Awards from the East Texas Historical Association. The ETHA awards were granted in 2019 to a student panel from A&M College Station, but this year, our Evan Sears, Jordan Chapin, and Skylar Fondren above, were the winners. Another remarkable outcome came in November with the results of the election of the Great Plains Honors Council. Our Honors Student

Council president, Skylar Fondren, became the seventh NTCC scholar since 2013 to represent the students of this association! The GPHC is comprised of 80 honors colleges and programs from Nebraska to Texas. Once again, not only did our student defeat a university student for the top spot, but it has become evident that NTCC is dominating the student elections of its regional council. How? The short answer is that university honors programs which should be tracking and mentoring their best performers to leverage their accomplishments--aren't. University professors fundamentally are so fixated by their own research, that student success is distinctly peripheral.

Finally there are publications in journals, adjudicated by professors. *Touchstone*, published by the Texas State Historical Association, is the longest-term, most prestigious collegiate journal in the state. In the most recent issue, now on our honors landing page, our students have out-published those of any university.

### Local Banks Provide Vital Help



Texas Heritage National Bank has awarded its seventh NTCC Presidential Scholarship. Shown above, VP Brenda Howard, CEO Russell Alexander, and Chairman of the Board, John Bryan honor this year's recipient, Skylar Fondren. This is the most prestigious and most remunerative foundation scholarship *Honors Northeast* has to offer. Fondren, as depicted in this issue of *Alacrity*, has used this foundational help to great effect! We have been inspired greatly as well by Cypress Bank, based in Pittsburg, that has selected one of our students since 2008 to utilize a state-of-the-art laptop. Below, VP Josh Cato presents Sydney Carey this apportioned encouragement.



## Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

### College Leaders

**President:** Dr. Ron Clinton  
**VP Instruction:** Dr. Kevin Rose  
**Associate VP:** Anna Ingram

**Honors Committee:** Skylar Fondren, Erika Garza, Dr. Drew Murphy, Heidi Wooten, & Dr. Andrew Yox.

**Honors Professors:** Dr. Andrew Daniel, Dr. Melissa Fulgham, Dr. Mary Hearron, Dr. Karyn Skaar, Jim Ward, Dr. Paula Wilhite, Dr. A. Yox.

**Honors Secretary:** Delbra Anthony

### Like to Help?

View our Honors Northeast website, and you may find the largest collection of prize-winning essays, films and poems about a single region--in this case, Northeast Texas--in the world. Our benefactors have enabled this "above-and-beyond" culture of scholarship. If you would like to contribute, contact VP Dr. Jonathan McCullough, 903-434-8229, Nita May, 434-8113, nmay@ntcc.edu, or Dr. Yox at ayox@ntcc.edu.



*Want more information?*

903-434-8229 • ayox@ntcc.edu  
www.ntcc.edu/honors

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## Our Beneficent Benefactors



Our benefactors have created a raft of accolades and financial incentives which stoke student ambition and achievement. To the left, above, Jordan Chapin is our 2022-23 Russell-Mowery Scholar. To the right above, Victor Diaz is this year's James and Elizabeth Whatley Scholar.

An anonymous donor has funded 22 \$100 Eckman Awards for students who have the highest academic scores in honors seminars. This past fall, Skylar Fondren won the award for the Humusic Seminar, and Neida Perez came in first in the BioTex Seminar. Both were also NTCC's Boe Nominees, for having the

finest scholarly essays in 2022. Above, Neida Perez also won the \$200 Dr. Charles Florio Award for extraordinary conceptual and intellectual leadership among the first-year cohort. This award commemorates our former NTCC President who helped launch honors here, and continues to support the program.

## Our Film on the Texas Suffragette, Minnie Fisher Cunningham



Our eleventh film premiere, on 24 March at 7 p.m. in the Whatley Center for the Performing Arts, will be the first effort to create a feature-length cinematic production around the story of the Texas Suffragettes. It is a story that deserves legendary acclaim. Texas broke away from the Solid South, opposed to suffrage, and became the tenth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment in 1919. A unique strategy of deference, what our film scholar, Michelle Calderon calls a "periphrastic strategy" led to the surprise upset. Skylar Fondren, our Texas Heritage Scholar (p.1) attained more control over the script, the story, and the filming than any student in our history. Sam Pollan is the producer. Wesson Scholar, Monse Rivero worked closely with Fondren. We are indebted to Kenny and Ann Goodson, and Dr. Maryna Otero for their special help. Skylar Hodson stars as the lead Texas suffragette, Minnie Fisher Cunningham.



The film is our first to create a simulacrum of the past in Fredericksburg, and the first trip to be financed entirely by our donors. We thank Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery especially for their long-term support.

## Regional Vanguard



A singular moment! NTCC has S. Fondren (far left) heading the GPHC, and J. Chapin (L-center) heading TX PTK. (Left) Raul Leija and Chapin won PTK Star Awards. Lower Left: Chapin is also the Dr. Mary Hood Scholar of Texas. Victor Diaz led our 9th panel at the National Collegiate Honors Council on niche cinema. The latest Touchstone, featuring 4 essays by former NTCC scholars. Right above: Our four poster presenters at the NCHC, Chapin, Fondren, Amy Lopez, and Evan Sears. Six 1st-year students presented our Texas Suffragette trailer at the Webb Society in Nacogdoches.



## Fall Happenings



We thank Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, and others for our 30th wonderful day trip, last September to Fort Worth. We took in Starbucks, the Stockyards District, the Reata Restaurant, the Arts District, Philip Johnson's Water Gardens, and the comedy troupe, Four-Day Weekend. To the right we see the winners of our annual Northeast Texas Poetry Contest. Left to Right: Evan Sears (\$400) Victoria Matiz (\$300), Skylar Hodson \$200, and Maddy Smith (\$100). Our 15th!

### Winners of the 15th-Annual Northeast Texas Poetry Contest



We thank a most loyal association of Mount Vernon patrons who have made the annual contest possible!

Below left, Sam Pollan performed an inspiring organ recital at the packed Methodist church in Pittsburg last August. To the right, trio Maddy Smith, Neida Perez, and Alyssa Ochoa were promoted to Presidential Scholar after an illustrious debut last semester. Evan Sears was our first Dr. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Witt scholar, receiving special support for this his work on Carroll Shelby which he exhibited at the National Collegiate Honors Council last November. In the middle below, Hope Kelly, is our 5th Gladys Winkle Scholar for exceptional work in the humanities. Finally Monse Rivero is our 5th Dr. Jerry Wesson Scholar for attainments in pre-education.



## Deo Gratias! "Our Thirtieth Day Trip" By Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director

Experiencing different environments often inspires one to try new ideas. Our routines go by the wayside, we consider the most inspiring of scenes, and we think, "how could we likewise do something spectacular?" And "why not?" In honors we have flourished as keepers of an NTCC tradition that dates back to Dr. Jim Archer's Chemistry trips before the year 2000. We have had the privilege since 2008, of getting our whole group together, and going with the wind to a major city, sometime near the start of each semester.

This is easier said than done. Without the steady, persevering financial support of Drs. Jim and Paula Archer, we could not have embarked on these journeys. The Archers have not only contributed steadily to the cause, they have responded with a great deal of curiosity about what happens on these trips, and who goes. We have also had to rely on other generous sponsors such as Daingerfield's Texas Heritage National Bank which provided the margin for one of our most expensive forays, in 2019 to the Kalita Humphrey Theatre, and Perot Museum. And then there is the NTCC business office which has had to deal with a straight run of seemingly last-minute vouchers, predicated on theories of what students are actually coming. Finally, we are having a challenge with drivers. Students love sixteen-hour days in a big city! Faculty drivers, however, faced with traffic in the Big D, are becoming reluctant to share in this enthusiasm.

On this note, I want to so thank Savannah Calhoun of our funeral services department, shown right below, and Diane Ramsay from our Community in Schools (left) for driving on our most recent, 31st trip, to Dallas. They were so spirited and friendly--getting to know them in fact added a whole new dimension to our trip experience.

As if to underscore the traditional nature of these trips, we recently ran into Michael Dennehy at the Greenville Starbucks, formerly a member of NTCC's administrative team. It was not an accident. Michael and his wife, Sharon, are the grandparents of Luke McCraw, one of our two newest honors students below, to the right of the other, Garrett Phillips. The Dennehys expressed their appreciation that their grandson could have these kinds of opportunities. We are indeed beholden to many for the privilege of these biannual forays.

