

# Alacritous Alumni

Alicia Cantrell, winner of our 8th Jack Kent Cooke, is finishing law school at Northeastern U. in Boston. She has served as a law clerk for Senator Cory Booker (NJ) on the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. Currently, she is a legal intern for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts in the Civil Rights Unit of the Civil Division. She hopes to focus on political and election law. With us, Cantrell is remembered for her marvelous presentation before the TSHA in San Marcos.



Thibaut Guidet won our first Boe Award in 2008, and participated as "Jean Lafitte" in our first pre-film skit. He went on to a highly successful career as a financial officer at Rackspace, and Centage in San Antonio. Today he is Director of Finance at Fieldpulse. He graciously met our group last October in San Antonio guiding us to murals, coffees, and a restaurant.



Courtney Baldwin is the only honors student in our history to have won a poster award at the meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council. She also served as student representative of the GPHC, and helped us pull off our film on Barbara Conrad by acting and persuading others to act. Last summer, Baldwin was a featured speaker at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. She made a spirited appeal for Vice President Kamela Harris on the basis of her record as Attorney General of California.



Perhaps you saw her, again serving the health needs of our area. Last fall, Brenda Godoy, our 9th Jack Kent Cooke, became the first medical student ever to serve a clinical rotation at the Titus Regional Medical Center. She worked with Drs. Burrows and Hollingsworth. She also supported her cousin, now with us, Araceli Landaverde, in a local talk about the latter's research.



Jordan Whelchel graduated in the spring of 2024 with a double major from Rice University in mathematics and philosophy. He currently is hoping to enter medical school.



Whelchel directed our Caldwell-award-winning 2018 film on Barbara Conrad, and was one of our star performers in chemistry with Dr. Murphy, before General Chemistry II became the province of an honors seminar.

Zachary Richardson (2009) was our first scholar to win a Caldwell Award. He also presented first at the National Collegiate Honors Council. He also won a Northeast Texas poetry award. He was recently appointed librarian at UT Southwestern in Dallas. Richardson performs complex medical searches in biomedical research and also serves as a faculty associate.



For 10 years before his current promotion, Richardson served as the librarian for El Centro College, now apart of the Dallas Community College district. He is married to Brianna.

# ALACRITY



## 17th Year at the NCHC: Honors Northeast, 2024, Kansas City

Above: Skylar Hodson, Remington Covey, Monse Rivero, Vanessajane Bayna, Alison Majors, Avery Woods.

At one station, a perfectly groomed, uniformed senior from the Air Force Academy explained his theory of how drones could be used to detect unexploded ordnance by an airfield. At another, a fluent young woman from St. Mary's University in San Antonio pointed to a boldly colored poster that defended the theories of Gloria Anzaldua. Into this mix, of the National Collegiate Honors Council's yearly meeting, six NTCC students presented their scholarly work this past 1 November.

Again, the number of community college presenters in this conference was minimal. But NTCC maintained its tradition upheld since 2008 of having students who qualified to present. Receiving an acceptance is difficult for many community college honors scholars. A student must develop a project in their first semester, send a conceptually promising abstract off in their second, and present in their second

year. For the tenth time, NTCC also claimed one of the conference's fifty general sessions. The development of niche cinema projects in Texas history, and the ability of NTCC to gain state recognition for these projects have helped win places in this second main forum—in addition to the poster presentations. This year, the NTCC group, with Hodson, Rivero, Bayna, and Majors, had a particularly strong foursome of scholars with extensive film experience, able to represent the scholarship, acting, cinematography, and leadership utilized in the film endeavors.

For the third time, the NTCC contingent featured a newly named, Dr. and Mrs. Bradley Witt Scholar who received support from a generous contribution made by the Witt-Wootten family in 2022. This scholarship is a special token of the unique support that the community here has conferred to its NCHC presenters. This year's Witt Scholar was Avery Woods.

## Texas Heritage N. Bank Scholar: Vanessa Bayna



Above: VP Brenda Howard, Bayna, and Board Chairman, John Bryan. Vanessajane Bayna of Mount Pleasant has become the 2024-25 Texas Heritage National Bank (THNB) Scholar of NTCC. The \$3,000 scholarship provided by the bank again goes this year to the top-rated Presidential Scholar of the NTCC Honors Program.

Bayna has had a perfect record in some of the college's most rigorous chemistry and physics courses while winning a 2024 state Caldwell Award in history for her work on oil and politics in Texas last spring in College Station. She is a recent state winner of the \$1,000 Dr. Yolando Romero Award of Phi Theta Kappa in Texas, and she presented her work on oil and Texas politics at the East Texas Historical Association, and the National Collegiate Honors Council. She is the ninth Presidential Scholar to receive this special accolade from THNB which now has seven locations.

## Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

### College Leaders

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

**Honors Committee:** Skylar Hodson, Alison Majors, Heidi Wooten, and **Honors Professors:** Dr. Andrew Daniel, Dr. Melissa Fulgham, Dr. Chris McAllister, Dr. Drew Murphy, Dr. Karyn Skaar, and Dr. Andrew Yox.

**Secretary:** Elizabeth Simas

### 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

*NTCC is an AA, ADA, Equal Opportunity institution.*

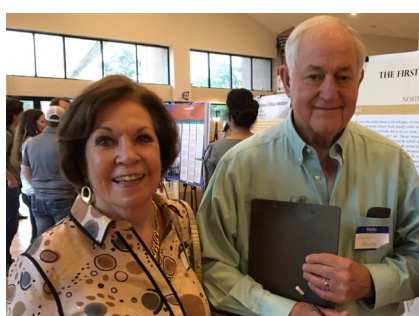
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Donors

Alacritous  
Alumni

## Beneficent Benefactors



Monse Rivero, an International Vice President of Phi Theta Kappa (left), appears with NTCC's former Vice President, Dr. Jerry Wesson, for whom her scholarship is named, Right, Alumna, Jessica Velazquez as noted on page 5, provided us with a gift to inaugurate our Velazquez Awards .

An anonymous donor has funded 30 \$100 Eckman Awards for students with the highest academic honors in H seminars. This past fall, Mary-Faith Wilson scored the best in the BioTex Seminar, and Andrew Higgins took the honors in the HuMusic seminar. Both were also the college's Boe nominees.

Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery have supported us in multifaceted ways and with special ardor. They have provided numerous free tickets for our students at the Kilgore Shakespeare Festivals. We have a Russell-Mowery Scholar. They have supported our films, and special events appealing to others to help.

## Our Coming Film on Big Oil and Texas Politics



On 28 March on campus at NTCC, we are hoping our thirteenth feature-length film premiere will attest to the hard work and creative energy of our students. The project began in the fall of 2023 when Vanessajane Bayna decided to base her Texas history research on the theme of chemical contamination. Her state Caldwell Award in the spring of 2024 led to a research foray to Austin in May. One of the Austin researchers, Isabel Tresidder, then became the youngest student in our history to pioneer the writing of the script. Skylar Hodson, a veteran of two of our previous films, became the director. Yahir Garcia (see insert) became our film editor.

The professionalism of Hodson was noteworthy. Her film crew, led by Emily Hamlin, dutifully wore headphones, debated camera angles and lighting, and took up to fourteen takes per scene. Garcia's impact with us was also noteworthy. He showed how much a film editor

can now add to a production. Having Kenny Goodson as a film-score writer in residence is a remarkable luxury. The premiere will occur at 7 pm in Humanities 129. A free reception will follow in H101.

## Regional Vanguard



Vanessa Bayna (far left), was elected Student Representative of the GPHC, a district stretching from Nebraska to Texas. Monse Rivero, (left) won the highest Walter P. Cooper Award in the state. Skylar Hodson (far left below) won the Dr. Mary Hood. Sarah Dierflinger, left below, won a Texas Star Award and a Leader of Promise. Right and Far Right, two other Leaders of Promise winners, nationally, Alison Majors and Mary Faith Wilson (also won a Star). Below right, Y. Garcia, A. Perez, I. Tresidder, R. Martinez, and S. Hernandez represent NTCC at the fall Walter Webb Society meeting in San Antonio.

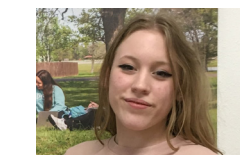


## Fall Happenings



We thank Drs. Jim and Paula Archer for our 34th day trip--to Fort Worth. The fun began with free breakfasts at Starbucks in Greenville, and ended with the comedy improvisation of Four-Day Weekend. The itinerary also included the cattle drive in the stockyard district, & a test with the stockyard maze. Right, the winners of our 2024 Poetry Contest: 1. Emily Hamlin, 2. Isabel Tresidder, 3. Kaden Groda, and 4. Yahir Garcia. We thank Karen Harmon for enabling this!

## Winners of the 17th-Annual Northeast Texas Poetry Contest



## Deo Gratias! "Incentivization Corridor" By Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director

Even the famed Hubble Telescope, launched in 1990, had a serious flaw. And I have made my share of flawed observations about student life at NTCC during my 30 years. But I believe I have at least one maxim: The American Dream falls by the waist-side not because energy is lacking, but because it is misspent. Our students are not lazy. They work too hard. A student working at a local restaurant for forty hours a week becomes a full-time student without especially good preparation in higher education. This is the problem.

In honors, we actively combat, but have hardly eradicated moonlighting. Yet it is here at NTCC in the spring of 2025 that I believe we have idealistically come the closest to a better way, Earning by Learning. Alumna Jessica Velazquez's special gift this last fall (see p. 2 and image below) was especially close to my heart in this regard. Velazquez, an award-winning scholar in medical research, living in Houston, wanted to incentivize research among our students. Thus, part of her gift was used already this past January to award six students from the two honors seminars special \$75 Velazquez Awards for discoveries in research the previous semester. The Velazquez awards augment what we have now with the Chitsey, Cunningham, Florio, Eckman, poster, poetry and image awards—prizes gained during the school year for achievements in erudition and scholarship. And this incentivization corridor is also coming with accolades, hon-

ors that they can affix to their résumés. This superstructure of encouragement, meanwhile, subsists on a foundation of matriculation-covering scholarships. We not only have generous NTCC institutional commitments to basic matriculation costs, but also special privately backed scholarships in honors. The next issue of *Alacrity* will detail a new Sid Greer Scholarship of Texas Heritage National Bank, but to this we add, the Cypress Bank Scholarship, the Texas Heritage National Bank Scholarship, the Whatley, the Winkle, the Russell Mowery, and the Dr. Jerry Wesson.

Such support makes it costly for students to work off campus. Thanks to our friends, a student who seriously pursues the accolade, award, and scholarship possibilities of Honors Northeast has a promising full-time position, an auspicious spaceport for the pursuit of the American Dream.



Velazquez left, and Premiere Six

Avery Woods, upper left-hand corner, below, was the winner of our third Dr. and Mrs. Bradley Witt Scholarship, for winning an entrance to the meeting of the NCHC with a poster that covered the realms of art, philosophy and history. To the right, Mary-Faith Wilson was our Winkle Scholar in the Humanities. Mary-Faith has been a leader in journalism, in the English club, Sigma Kappa Delta, in humanities, musical composition, and in Texas history. In the lower left below, Isabel Tresidder won the 2024 Florio Award for leadership as a first-year student in honors. She researched LBJ for the film, wrote the script, and excelled in research under Professor McAllister. Finally, Alison Majors is our 2024-2025 James and Elizabeth Whatley Scholar who presented at the NCHC and helped us win the Portia Gordon.



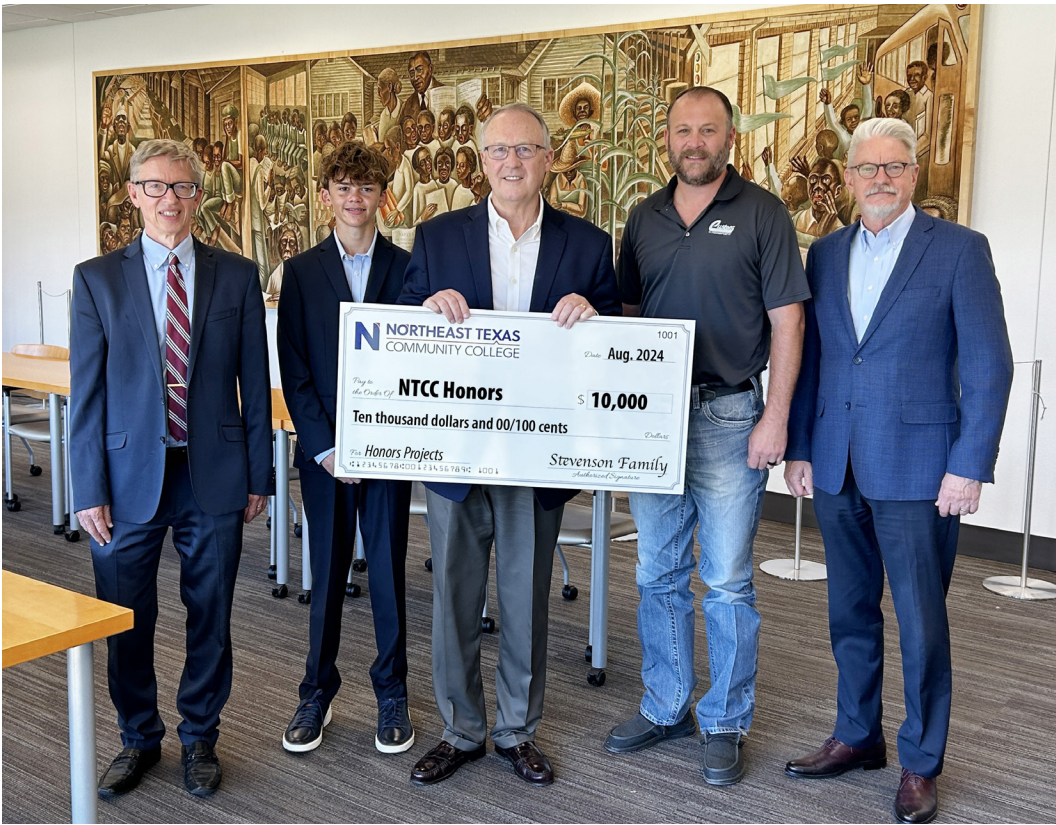
**Community Spirit:** We will miss the spirit and presence of Chuck Johns (1946-2025) whose life ended while still serving as the Chairman of the Board at NTCC, and also as a member of the Community College Association of Texas. At the same time that he was occupied with many other matters, he judged our May poster contest seven times, served as a consultant for our films on Bo Pilgrim and Carroll Shelby, attended a local Webb Meeting, and also allowed us to use his Yantis Building, itself a classic structure, for our film on Harriet Potter Ames. Johns was also active in helping our Phi Theta Kappa chapter at NTCC and other student organizations.

He is shown here in one of our more classic poster shots with Brenda Godoy, our 2018 Jack Kent Cooke alumna, who has served recently, working rotations as a medical student at Titus Regional Hospital.



**Portia Gordon Awards:** As in 2022, scholars of Honors Northeast in the fall of 2024 won the top student prize of the East Texas Historical Association. For their panel, “Entrenched Problems in Modern Texas History,” four NTCC sophomores won \$300 for the best student panel at the association’s plenary fall conference. The meeting occurred in Nacogdoches, in September.

What has been won by students from Texas A&M at College Station, has been won again by our students. We had as a team of essayists-- Vanessa Bayna (right), Alison Majors, and Skylar Hodson (center) who have all won major awards. We also had Mary-Faith Wilson (left), as moderator, a 2024 Leader of Promise.



**Major Donation:** Last August, the NTCC Foundation received a donation of \$10,000 from the Stevenson family of Gilmer. These funds will help the Honors Northeast program continue its legacy of unique special projects, specifically their annual feature-length film. Pictured at the check presentation is (from left): Dr. Andrew Yox, William Stevenson, David L. Stevenson, David A. Stevenson, and Dr. Ron Clinton, NTCC President. David Stevenson was curious when he first heard about an NTCC film.

He learned that NTCC Honors students had produced an original work in 2023 that explored the history of Methodist traveling preachers who came to northeast Texas in the early 19th century. One of the characters in the movie was William Stevenson, who happened to be David's great-great-great grandfather. The film can be viewed by googling <Honors Northeast Films>.

"Not only were we excited to see our ancestor brought to life on screen, but we were also very impressed with the quality of the film. After meeting Dr. Yox and learning more about the honors program, we really felt led to make a contribution to help make their film projects sustainable into the future," David L. Stevenson said.

Three generations of the Stevenson family were present at the check presentation, an example of how legacies in regional history can matter.

**A Gift that Gave:** For the 17th-straight year in a row, Cypress Bank has presented a high-end laptop for the use of Northeast Texas Community College honors students. This year's Cypress Bank Scholar is Yahir Garcia, who graduated from Mount Pleasant High School.

Cypress Bank President, B Gooding, presented Garcia with this gift (right). Cypress Bank has five locations: two are in Mount Pleasant with the main bank in Pittsburg. The two other branches are in Lone Star, and Commerce.

This gift proved remarkably helpful. Not only did Garcia as a computer science major need a new laptop, the honors film project needed an editor. Garcia proved to us for the first time how creative editing, using royalty-free clips can be an artform in itself.

