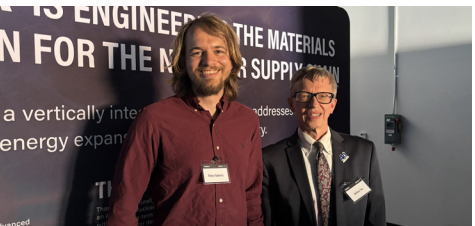


Alacritous Alumni



Why do cell phones last longer? Better lithium batteries. At the forefront of the Lithium boom in NE Texas is honors alumnus **Matthew Jordan**. He is shown above with Dr. Yox at the opening of the EnergyX factory in Hooks, Texas last spring. Jordan designed a plastic membrane that isolates the desired lithium compound.



Ricky Huitema, longtime friend of Jordan, was also at the opening of the EnergyX plant above. Huitema, after graduating from Texas Tech, accepted an all-expense paid fellowship to study at Luoyang China. He then returned to our region to work as an electrical engineer at Priefert Manufacturing in Mount Pleasant. He married a young woman from Diana, and has now has three children. He reports that he is working on a new operation at Priefert's which will in the next year involve the use of robots.

Alacrity: Newsletter of Honors Northeast

College Leaders

President: Dr. Kevin Rose
Exec. VP Advancement: Dr. Jon McCullough
VP Instruction: Dr. Anna Ingram

Honors Committee: Araceli Landaverde, Emma Mendoza, **Professors:** Dr. Andrew Daniel, Dr. Melissa Fulgham, Dr. Chris McAllister, Dr. Drew Murphy, Dr. Karyn Skaar, Heidi Wooten, 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.

Monica Paredes was our first Cypress Bank Scholar in 2008. She presented work in biology at the Washington DC meeting of the NCHC in 2009.



She is now married and living along the foothills of Colorado, though interested in returning to Texas. She had her first daughter last year. She works as a Senior Client Relations Manager at a consulting firm focused on Defined Benefit Administration. **Cade Bennett** starred in two of our films, as Bo Pilgrim in 2020, and Carroll Shelby in 2021. He presented at the Orlando Meeting of the NCHC in Orlando in 2021. He has now graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in Art. This past summer, Bennett



returned to help us with our film effort on Jovita Idar. As of this writing, we are hoping he will also work part-time for honors this coming fall.



Want more information?
903-434-8229 • ayox@ntcc.edu
www.ntcc.edu/honors

NTCC is an AA, ADA, Equal Opportunity institution.

Summer 2026



Volume: 19
Issue: 1

ALACRITY



Again at the Apex. NTCC Scholars Win National Accolades

A wag has suggested that whenever one sees a turtle at the top of a fence post, one knows it has had help. We again at NTCC are honored to again be at apex in terms of individual student achievement. We know again that it has taken a lot of help, teamwork, in fact, at its best. This past spring, Stephanie Hernandez, our top, award-winning scholar of all time made the All-USA Team. She thus made a top national group of twenty who were culled from 2,300 already highly successful nominees. She is the 5th student in NTCC history to attain such a level, after Noah Griffin, Brenda Godoy, Jordan Chapin, and Neida Perez. At the same time, José Fuentes, our first international president of Phi Theta Kappa won a Guistwhite Award, our 9th!

Both Hernandez and Fuentes have profited from a robust Phi Theta Kappa presence at NTCC led by Dr. Melissa Fulgham. Fuentes was elected president thanks in part to his peers here in PTK, including his campaign manager,

Emma Mendoza. Both Fuentes and Hernandez were recipients of donor scholarships in honors. Fuentes is our Dr. Jerry Wesson Scholar, and Hernandez won our Texas Heritage National Bank Scholarship. Both excelled in scholarship. Fuentes and Hernandez both won Caldwell Awards on the state level for essays in Texas history, and both essays are on the docket for publication with the state journal, *Touchstone*. Both have participated in the upsurge of scholarship in biology on our campus under Dr. Chris McAllister, and Hernandez has two publications in this field by this date. Our donors have also provided remarkable opportunities in the field of merit dynamism. Hernandez has taken the greatest advantage of this winning both a \$300 poetry, and \$300 poster award. Finally both have added their participation in a prize-winning film to their resume. Our 2025 film was about Hernandez's work on murals, and Fuentes had a starring role in that same film as the leader of a Chicano art association.

17th Annual Thank You Dinner in April



Above: our pre-dinner discussion, see p. 5. From a provocative discussion of Jonathan Heidt's *The Coddling of the American Mind* with Jennifer Gardzina, Emma Mendoza, Laurencio Velazquez, and Dr. Maryna Otero to *Pollo del Rio*, and Hand-Cut Sirloins at the at Rancho Seco in Mount Pleasant, it was a very fine time. We thank our donors who have made meals like this possible from our inception. No other time brings all the main components of our initiative to realize the American Dream together like this--college personnel, donors, and our best students. We even had on hand the Archers who initiated some of our first meals at the old Carson house in Pittsburg, and at their home in 2007-2008.

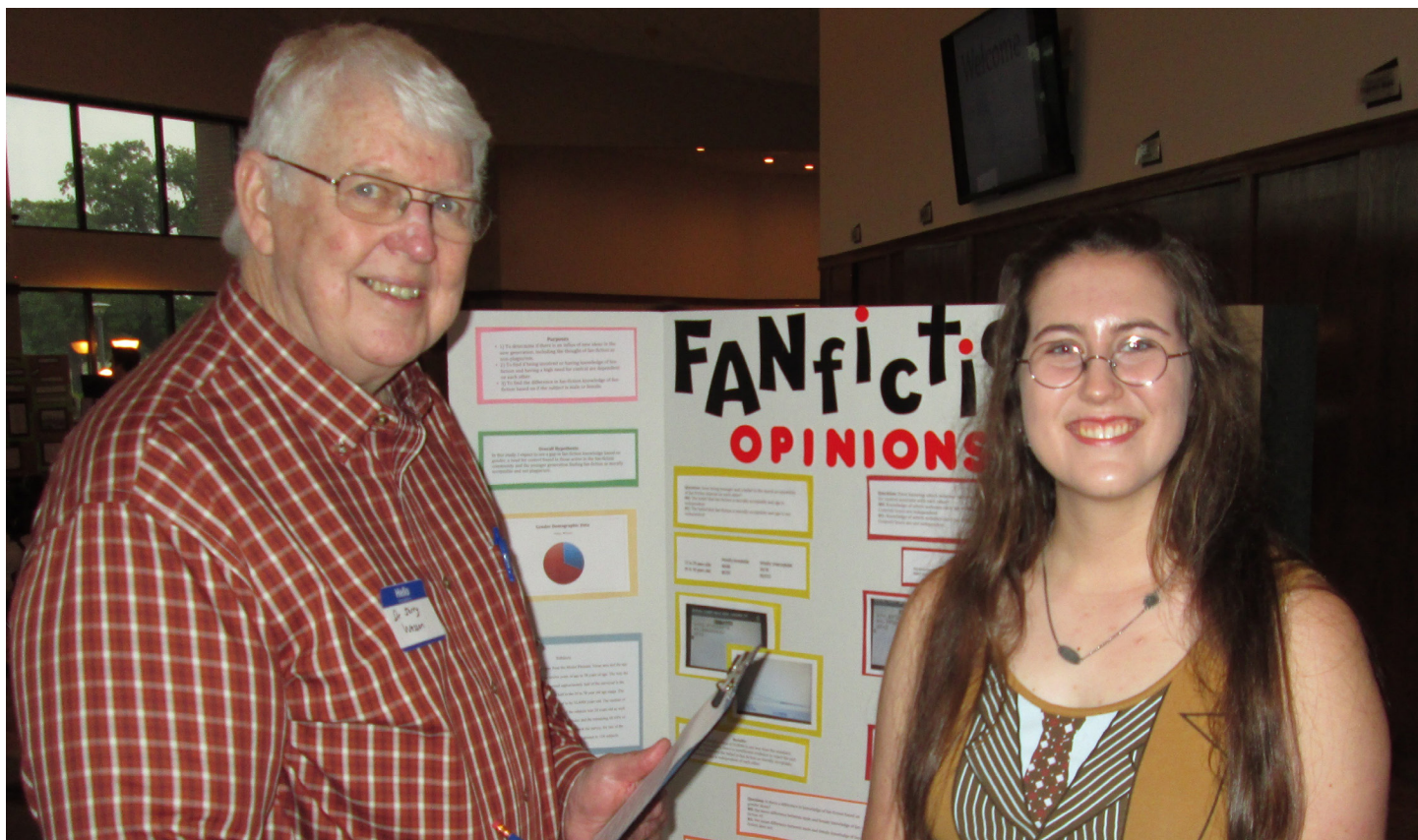


In this
Edition:

Regional
Vanguard

Caring
Donors

Alacritous
Alumni



Dr. Jerry W. Wesson (1940–2026). Author of our college story, *The Miracle on FM 1735*, he was a wonderfully personable leader and a persevering friend. A founding administrator of NTCC, he retired in 1997 as Vice President for Student Services. Honors formed after his tenure. But he returned from retirement as our most enthusiastic of poster judges, recruiting two to four other judges beside himself each year, from 2014–2020. We also now have, thanks to his son, Scott, the Dr. Jerry Wesson Scholarship given yearly to our most personable leaders in honors. Dr. Wesson’s legacy lives on. Our current Wesson Scholar is also the international president of Phi Theta Kappa, José Fuentes. Our longest reigning Wesson Scholar was Monse Rivero who noted: “I wish I could again tell Dr. Wesson how deeply I appreciated his support of NTCC, as it gave me the opportunity to meet him and his wife, and an overall experience that impacted me more than I can express.”



Awards: We thank our anonymous donor for the 33rd, and 34th \$100 Eckman Awards for star performances in honors seminars. To the left, Stephanie Hernandez won among the sophomores for best overall seminar performance, and Johnathan Ventura scored the highest GPA in the ChemPsych Seminar. To the right, Adam Richards was our 13th winner of the Chitsey Award given to the honors student who most exceeded expectations. Below, left we see Caldwell Award winners not shown elsewhere--Andrew Higgins, Emma Mendoza, and José Fuentes. The essays by Fuentes and Mendoza, both winning first-place in the college and university divisions, broke new ground in Mexican-American history. Finally Estefani Garcia placed second in the McGraw Hill Contest, with a poster on bacteria, oxygen and pH in regional watercourses.





Generous Donors: We thank Sam Ferguson of the *East Texas Journal* for the portrait here of our summer film troupe and crew. We also thank our donors for unprecedented activities this past summer, such as our 5-day Laredo/Fort Worth research trip, and plan to confer awards to the three best actors. Above: Erik, Andrea, and Demi Reyes, Grace Zittel, Silas Mendoza, Sky Bass, Dr. Andrew Yox, Sabrina Otero-Svirska, Emma Mendoza, Gwynn Roberts, Martin Mata, Johnathan Ventura, and Alex Garcia. Winkle Scholar, Emma Mendoza in red is both the film scholar and the director.

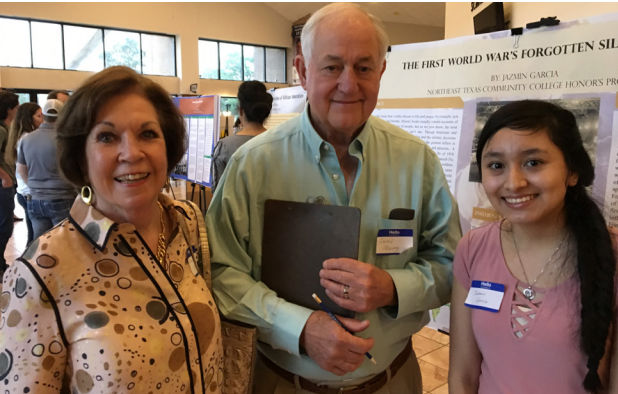


Honors Professor Chris McAllister and his team of student researchers showcased their work last April at the 59th annual meeting of the Southwestern Association of Parasitologists (SWAP) in Lake Texoma, Oklahoma. Three of the four in the picture on the left were honors students in the last year, Xenia Esparza (2nd from left), Estefani Garcia (4th), and José Fuentes. Each students delivered a fifteen-minute oral presentation highlighting original research on fish parasites to an audience of parasitologists representing colleges and universities from across the southwestern United States.



Synergism in Honors: At its best Honors offers the dynamic of synergism where 1 plus 1 can equal three. Teamwork becomes something more than a mere sum of actors. By combining assets and resources between donors, administrators, students and faculty, we can attain a special edge in scholarship, cultivate artistic activity and special public service projects. At the forefront in some ways of the synergistic effort is the summer film initiative which in 2026 was dramatized by several encounters. Above left: film participants and friends in Mount Vernon; and (right) with Kenny Goodson, our film composer.

Beneficent Benefactors



Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery of MountVernon have remained a year-round presence, judging posters in spring, fascillitating our films in summer, as well as special luncheons, and Shakespeare trips, and our poetry contests in the fall. They also gave a special Giving Day Gift and sponsor a Russell Mowery Scholar!

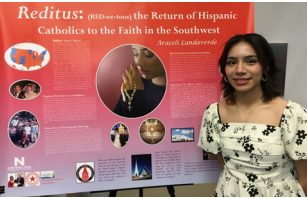


This 2013 poster contest image of **Dr. Mary Hearron** with Noah Griffin caught some of the elation that characterized much of her teaching with us. We thank Dr. Hearron for a Giving Day gift, and the Chitsey family for numerous Chitsey Awards, an honor that through the years seems always to leverage into greater national accolades.



The parents of Emmalea (Shaw) Cunningham continue to help commemorate the stellar years our sixth GuistwhiteAward winner (above) had with us. We thank Ron and Lori Shaw for yet another Giving Day gift. Lori has directed several students to us.

Our Graduates: Report on the 2024-26 Cohort



Our 2024-26 cohort had a shaky start. As with the entering class of 2022, they lacked big names from the start, and only six emerged from the first semester with presentable works of scholarship that would be presented. 2024 was the last year we received a nucleus of home-schoolers, but they tended to be younger students. Nevertheless, those who persevered through the two years of honors with us, shown above and to the right--Araceli Landaverde, Stephanie Hernandez, Stephani Garcia, Rebecca Martinez, Yahir Garcia, Andrew Higgins, and Andrew Perez all presented works at major conferences. Together, counting now the new major inputs from Biology, they will set a publication record of about 8 or 9 works of scholarship. They did everything that we could hope for, presenting admirably at the NCHC, winning between them a film Caldwell, a Britt, an All USA Team, a GPHC election, a Portia Gordon Award, a Webb Chapter Award, and two Red River Awards.

Regional Vanguard



NTCC Scholars (left) won over \$2,000 in scholarly awards in Texas history this past March in Irving at the Texas State Historical Association, a new record. NTCC won more awards at TSHA'sWebb Meeting than any other university of college in the state. Individual essay winners included: Emma Mendoza (\$400), José Fuentes (\$400) Adam Richards (\$300) Haily Randall (\$150), Andrew Higgins (\$150), and Manuel Ramirez (\$75). Our film and chapter also won cash awards. Right, Emma Mendoza became the10th NTCC student in history to win a Britt PosterAward of the Great Plains Honors Council.

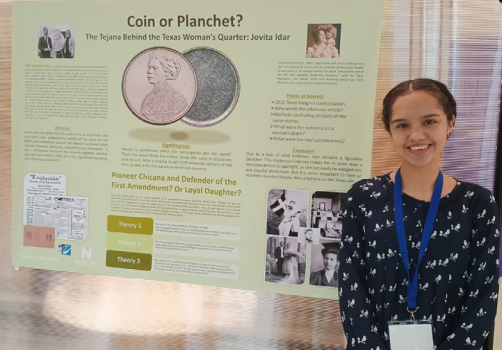


Spring and Summer Happenings



We thank **Drs. Jim and Paula Archer** for our 37th day trip--to Dallas! That's more than a calendar month of pretty intense excitement. We enjoyed Starbucks, a pipe organ recital, features at the Galleria, the arts district, and the musical, "Curtains." Right, **Emma Mendoza** won \$400 at our annual poster contest. Her work has become this year's film topic. Estefani Garcia, Andrew Higgins, and Hailey Randall won \$300, \$200, and \$100. We thank the **Mowerys** whose generosity has been boundless.

Winner of the 19th Annual NTCC Honors Poster Contest



Deo Gratias! "Best Pedagogical Traditions" By Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director

Would a kingfisher forfeit the use of its beak? This question came to me at our annual dinner last April as we discussed another significant book in education. This year we read Jonathan Heidt's, the *Coddling of the American Mind*. Heidt showed how many universities have shunned classroom debate and First-Amendment freedoms after 2010. The findings of clinical psychology that words can cause harm led to a new arsenal of charges that could cripple serious forms of classroom debate. For 'microaggressions'—or put downs of any kind could 'trigger' traumas. Thus, the campus should become a "safe space" with all triggering tropes, words, and expressions, outlawed.

We read last year in the *Closing of the American Mind* how universities have disavowed a common idea of truth. Only power then is left. This has played out in the case of campus mobs at Berkeley, Missouri, Middlebury, and Evergreen which succeeded in silencing individuals whose language involved the use of "triggering expressions," however defined.

Heidt's more recent critique of smartphones in his *Anxious Generation* has inspired a public outpouring. States like New York have banned smart phones completely, and many have mandated severe restrictions on their use. For Heidt, smart phones are simply the obverse side of the coin to anxieties over triggering expressions. Smart phones and social media sites have over-sensitized students to the threat of doxxing,

Getting Together (below): from 2013 to 2026, Collins Knighton, the popular Radio Morning Host of K-Lake 97.7 FM Radio, featured NTCC honors students in an annual show. This feature has highlighted the poetry winners, and films of Honors Northeast, and the NTCC Webb Society.



Students had a unique opportunity on 24 July. They viewed one of the all-time great works of classic theatre—*Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, thanks to a donation by **Dr. Chuck Hamilton** of Daingerfield.



and verbal attack. They have made normal face-to-face interaction seem dangerous.

To make his point in *Coddling*, Heidt draws on the thought of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT takes the side of Marcus Aurelius that one should choose not to feel harmed. The human tendency to catastrophize should not be honored but checked. Independent of this appeal, the University of Chicago issued an early challenge to the attack on First Amendment freedom. What has become known as the "Chicago Principles," has now been endorsed by some 110 major universities.

Great teaching excites erudition. Conscientious mentoring impels scholarship. Debate too is vital. Students do not really understand ignorance until their peers define it for them in real time. Debate showcases the value of the spontaneous in an age of online learning. Debate incites student tropology, the honing of rhetorical skills. At NTCC we are thankful that the kingfisher has used his beak, that traditional endowments of educational excellence have been employed.

