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Nationally known artist, community activists and parents honored for volunteerism in Texas public schools

Austin – A nationally recognized artist, long-time PTA volunteers and parents will be recognized for their many hours of volunteerism and their overall contributions to Texas public schools on Friday by members of the State Board of Education.

The SBOE will recognize these 15 school volunteers as Heroes for Children at their meeting Friday at 9 a.m. in Room 1-104 of the William B. Travis Building, 1701 N. Congress Ave. in Austin.

In SBOE District 1, Anita Trevino has been a valued parent volunteer at Honore Ligarde Elementary School in the Laredo Independent School District for the past seven years. She goes to the campus daily and even on weekends to help the teachers and students with the TAKS Super Saturdays and campus activities. Trevino describes her volunteer work as an opportunity to provide a little one-on-one attention that teachers simply cannot offer. “Whether it’s running a copy, taking care of a class or reading a book, my time is valuable to someone,” she says.

Nationally known artist **Santa Barraza** is the hero for **SBOE District 2**. Barraza, a professor of art at Texas A&M University – Kingsville, is well known for her stirring and passionate art that reflects her Chicana/Tejana roots. Barraza is being honored for her work with middle school and high school students and inspiring them to appreciate the arts. She has brought in famous artists to work with these talented young students and has helped them hold art shows and display their work at art galleries.

Giancarla Herrera, a volunteer at Las Palmas Elementary school in the Edgewood ISD, is the hero for **SBOE District 3**. Herrera has volunteered in the Edgewood district for the past 43 years. She volunteers five days a week, eight hours a day for the PTA at Las Palmas Elementary School. Every day she stands with the principal in front of the school greeting parents, students and teachers, and directing traffic. She is also a representative for district activities and has been a strong advocate for the education of all children.

The hero for **SBOE District 4, J. A. Rob Jr.**, has contributed to the social, physical and emotional well-being of hundreds of students at the former M.B. Smiley High School in North Forest ISD. His significant contributions include helping create the Buffalo Soldiers Junior Troop and the 100 Black Men of America Mentoring program for males 11 to 18. He also helped establish the Positive Black Male Association of Houston Inc.

In 2007, Rob chaperoned a trip to Capitol Hill with 10 youths from the North Forest ISD. He has donated food and clothing to students in need; he has exposed students to several informative speakers; he assists the school's teaching and clerical staff and is described as the "epitome of hard work and commitment to youth."

The hero for **SBOE District 5, Theresa Voiss**, does her volunteer work in Austin ISD. She created and developed the Sister School Project for Kiker Elementary School in Southwest Austin and Allison Elementary in Southeast Austin. The program goal is to bring the two communities together to help one another and learn from one another.

In addition to collecting books, clothing, bikes, and other items at Kiker to share with the children at Allison, the program also shares culture. The students from both schools visit each other's campuses to share accomplishments and skills.

In **SBOE District 6**, the hero is **Mary Card**, who started one of the first mentoring programs in the Spring Branch ISD. By partnering with her church, Memorial Drive Presbyterian, more than 175-plus mentors have been sponsored in one-on-one relationships with students at Spring Woods Middle School. The IMPACT mentoring program offers ongoing flexibility, training and support to the mentors.

Card's vision is for mentors to stay with their mentees through high school and into college. Her challenge is recruiting 60 to 75 new sixth-grade mentors each year while perpetuating the interest and commitment of returning mentors through each grade.

When **Hadley Clark**, the Hero for **SBOE District 7**, started volunteering in 2000, his plan was to only tutor a group of third graders for about a year. But once he saw how the students improved, he realized he had the ability to help them and others improve their grades.

Now, eight years later, this volunteer at Red Bud Elementary in the Pasadena ISD tutors third graders, along with first and second graders.

He has become a fixture in the school building as he helps these students work on reading or math foundation skills. He also provides the one-on-one and small group interaction that so many students in schools today need and crave.

Stephanie Collins, Hero for **SBOE District 8**, has volunteered full time at Kurth Primary School in the Lufkin ISD for six years and has become a great advocate for all students she comes into contact with. Her nurturing spirit, patience and encouragement have made her a very positive role model and mentor.

Collins provides kindergarten through second grade students the listening that they need but don't always get. She finds out what their interests are and uses those insights to keep them focused and motivated.

In **SBOE District 9**, Hero **Stacey Hawkins**, is referred to as a "superior volunteer" at Grand Saline Elementary School. Hawkins has been a classroom volunteer and she helps with parties,

field trips, and field day. She also spends many hours volunteering in the library and at the school's spring book fair.

As a youth service club leader, Hawkins has been able to get several educational programs donated to the school through Modern Woodmen of America.

The Hero for **SBOE District 10** is **Allen Weeks**, who has been involved in education for 30 years – 15 as a teacher and the rest as a volunteer coach, community organizer, mentor and supporter of public schools in the Austin ISD. Along with his wife, Weeks formed a small volunteer group called Partners in Hope to mobilize volunteers in healthcare and education. The couple also began mentoring students, working with a local elementary school running club, and building picnic tables and a senior garden behind the school.

After working with the local community to save Webb Middle School from closing, Weeks organized a permanent group called the St. John Community School Alliance that supports four schools.

Stuart Foster, a dedicated volunteer at Benbrook Elementary School in Fort Worth ISD is the Hero for **SBOE District 11**. Foster volunteers four days a week and works tirelessly with 21 students in several grades each week. He tutors these students in reading, phonics, spelling, math and science.

To help dyslexic students, Mr. Foster studied the Scottish Rite dyslexia training and currently holds a once-a-week spelling session with dyslexic third graders.

The Hero for **SBOE District 12**, **Tamra Sadafsaz**, has been involved with Plano ISD PTA for 15-plus years and in her own words she “loves it!”

She has served as the president of three different Parent-Teacher School Associations and has held numerous other offices in the PTA.

She helps with the choir booster clubs at two schools and serves as president of one.

Through her work with the Junior League of Plano she has presented educational training to secondary students on how to protect themselves against harassment and other dangers and by working with a committee studying the ways to combat family violence.

Derrick Smartt, the hero for **SBOE District 13**, landed in Texas following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. With his family, he looked for a place with an exceptional elementary and intermediate school curriculum and environment for his three children. The family settled in the Cedar Hill ISD and he began volunteering daily with the Food 4 Kids Program through the North Texas Food Bank.

Every week, he provides food packages for Cedar Hill ISD students to take home over the weekend. He makes sure that no student in need goes without. He is also a volunteer with the Smiling Dads, greeting children when they arrive at school. He assists with the Mobile Dentist program that provides free dental exams to students.

The Hero for **SBOE District 14** is **Scott Hogue**, a Burkburnett police officer who volunteers at Hardin Elementary School in Burkburnett ISD. For the past 11 years, Officer Hogue has utilized his lunch hour, days off and any extra time to mentor severe at-risk students on the Hardin campus. Officer Hogue has invested more than 600 hours mentoring students.

In addition to mentoring, he speaks to classes about several safety issues such as fire, gun and bicycle safety; 911 calls; respecting yourself and others, the importance of education and much more.

Jim Douglass, the Hero for **SBOE District 15**, is described as someone who doesn't just volunteer, but who immerses himself in opportunities to improve the lives of students in the Lubbock ISD, the Lubbock community and beyond.

Douglass' involvement with the PTA in Lubbock spans two decades. He served as PTA president at the elementary school where his son attended; he also served on the Blue Ribbon Committee on Academic Excellence for Lubbock ISD; on the National Board of Directors for Big Brothers/Big Sisters; as a board member of Special Olympics; and as a parent has served in other capacities including booster clubs for band and athletics.

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