

newstalk

UH initiative partners with 3rd Ward schools

By **ASWAD WALKER**
Defender

Principals at two Third Ward schools, Blackshear Elementary and Cullen Middle School, are commending efforts by the University of Houston to improved student outcomes through the recently launched Advancing Community Engagement and Service Institute (ACES).

Blackshear's Principal Alicia Lewis identified literacy as her campus's top priority, and said that the support provided by UH has been stellar.

"I'd give UH an A-plus because even before it was called ACES Institute, UH had already started supporting us through the Third Ward Initiative," said Lewis.

She referred to multiple points of contact, including counseling program students providing support for Blackshear's social worker, scholars and teachers; UH athletes who participate in HISD's Houston Read Program and serve as mentors; College of Education students instructing four days a week; and 10 Cougar Literacy Corp students who provide one-on-one attention for Blackshear students.

"They're helping us make sure that our scholars are growing in literacy," Lewis said. "That one-on-one attention works every time."

Anne McClellan and Jonathan

Schwartz are co-directors of ACES, a program that traces its roots back to UH's Third Ward Initiatives led by Dr. Elwyn Lee and UH's University Neighborhood Partnership Forum (UNPF).

"The whole idea was for [the UNPF] to come together and figure out what were best practices for universities and communities to work together to



Principal Alicia Lewis chats with Blackshear scholars during lunch

make the community better," said Lee of the effort he and former Pastor William A. Lawson co-chaired.

Their research led them to the nation's top-rated university/community partnership – the University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center – which became the model for ACES.

"All you have to do is look at the evaluations of the [Yates High feeder pattern] schools and you can see that so many of the schools have ratings that need to be elevated," said Lee.

According to Cullen Principal Clayton Crook, ACES is living up to its promises.

"With the dynamics of the communities surrounding Cullen – high poverty and high crime – there's not a lot of individuals giving kids encouragement, asking about grades or if they're going to college," Crook said.

"With some of our students moving from school to school, they have people walking in and out of their lives, making it difficult to trust anyone," Crook said.

UH mentors place a premium on building trusting relationships "so that students grow to care about coming to school every day, on time and applying themselves to the best of their abilities."

Crook graded UH's efforts an "A-plus-plus" noting that they have had powerful impacts upon some of Cullen's most mentor-needy

students, like the two Crook highlighted who literally had no one caring for them at home.

"Their issues showed through their poor hygiene and grades, and inability to smile or look people in the eye.

"I knew those students cared because they walked every day all the way from Peck Elementary," Crook said. "And with their mentors, now they've made a complete turn-around, smiling, high-fiving teachers, making good grades and feeling confident in their abilities."

People on the move

Bledsoe named interim TSU Law School dean

Former Texas Southern University Regent Gary Bledsoe will assume the role of interim dean at the Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Bledsoe will lead the law school through its American Bar Association compliance requirements.

Bledsoe specializes in public interest law, employment and civil rights law. He is president of the Texas NAACP and has held that position since 1991. He has a longstanding relationship with the NAACP as a member of its National Board since 2003 and is chair of the National Criminal Justice Committee of the NAACP. Bledsoe earned his bachelor's and juris doctorate degrees from the University of Texas at Austin.



Gary Bledsoe

Fisher named to SWAC Hall of Fame

Dr. Dwalah Fisher has been selected for induction into the 2017 Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Hall of Fame. The enshrinement ceremony will take place on Nov. 30 at the Westin Galleria.



Dwalah Fisher

Fisher, who serves as assistant director and senior woman administrator for TSU Athletics, was a top volleyball player at TSU. She earned three All-SWAC nods and four All-Tournament honors for the Lady Tigers and her team won three conference titles.

She took the helm of the Lady Tigers volleyball program in 1994, guiding the team to the SWAC volleyball championship, and coached until 2010. Fisher also coached the women's basketball team in 1996.

localbriefs

THE TEXAS GOVERNOR'S OFFICE has granted \$4.4 million to law enforcement and prosecutors in Harris County to aid in the ongoing fight against sex trafficking. City and county leaders say the money will be used to improve services to victims of violent crimes and increase prosecution of traffickers and buyers. The grant is emblematic of a sea change in the way sex trafficking cases are handled. In decades past, sex trafficking survivors – adults and minors – were often jailed for selling sex. In recent years, however, law enforcement's focus has turned to the demand and not the supply.....
FORT BEND ISD OFFICIALS have broken

ground at the District's new James Reese Career and Technical Center, which will open in the fall of 2019. Located at University Boulevard and Chatham Avenue in Telfair, the new center will offer advanced junior and senior level courses and give students an opportunity to gain real-world experience working at one of five student-operated learning labs that will be open to the public, including a cosmetology studio, automotive shop, restaurant, credit union and early education center. Industry certifications and dual-credit courses will also be available.....
ASPIRING ARTISTS CAN GET A CHANCE TO WORK with Project Row Houses (PRH) and

the Center for Art and Social Engagement (CASE) at the University of Houston through the CASE-PRH Fellowship. This multi-year program builds on PRH's history of leadership in social practice and community-engaged art projects. Two new Fellows will get a mentorship and year-long engagement with Project Row Houses and the University of Houston's Center for Art & Social Engagement. The fellowship program brings artists, cultural practitioners, urban planners, educators, and policymakers to engage with the PRH process and the greater Houston community. The deadline is Nov. 21. The application can be completed at www.ProjectRowHouses.com.