



SMSD SPOTLIGHT

Spring 2007-08

WHERE CHILDREN ARE IMPORTANT
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25 YEARS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

On May 10, 2008, Stafford voters will have the opportunity to participate in the election process by casting a vote in the SMSD Board of Trustees election. Included in this edition of the SMSD Spotlight is important candidate and voting information. I want to take this opportunity to strongly encourage all Stafford citizens to educate themselves on each candidate and take the time to vote during early voting or election days. In an effort to provide a convenient voting experience for the citizens of Stafford, SMSD and the City of Stafford will be conducting a joint election. This simply means that voters will be able to vote in both the SMSD Board of Trustees election and the City of Stafford City council election at the same locations. I would like to see the same voter enthusiasm for the local Board and Council elections that was seen at the Primary Elections in March.

Also included in this edition is specific information regarding Texas School Finance and how Stafford taxpayers are being negatively impacted. As we continue moving forward with developing a 2008-09 SMSD Budget, I want to continue keeping all Stafford citizens informed on financial issues that impact our school district.



H.D. CHAMBERS

Early Voting For SMSD Board of Trustees
April 28, 2008 through May 6, 2008
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

SMSD Administration Building
1625 Staffordshire Road
and
Stafford City Hall
2610 South Main

Extended Early Voting Hours
May 5 and 6, 2008
7:00 am - 7:00 pm

Stafford City Hall
2610 South Main

Election Day Voting
May 10, 2008
7:00 am - 7:00 pm

Stafford City Hall
2610 South Main

Candidates' Forum -
April 22, 2008 - Stafford Civic Center - 7:00 pm

Election Day May 10, 2008



Meet the Candidates for SMSD School Board Trustee Positions



Rodney Butler

Mr. Rodney Butler believes the greatest challenge facing SMSD and public education is "dealing with deficit spending without cutting back on the quality of the curriculum and extracurricular activities that help develop character and citizenship in our youth." The 20 year Stafford resident is the father of an SMSD graduate and a current junior, attended Panola Junior College and has been with the US Postal Service 27 years. He wants to "get parents more involved with the district and active with the educational process for their children".

Mr. Butler has served as President of the Stafford Cobras and coached youth football and basketball. He believes his exceptional listening skills and the ability to communicate on a diversity of issues and needs for all members of the SMSD community are skills he brings to the position on the school board.



Cindy Hoelscher

Ms. Cindy Hoelscher, a Certified Public Accountant and Financial Advisor, has lived in Stafford for ten years. After attending Texas A&M University, she graduated from the University of Houston. Currently holding a trustee position, she is seeking to be elected because she feels "it is very important to be involved in the education of children". She has a son currently enrolled at Stafford Middle School and a daughter who graduated from SMSD and is attending TAMU. She has served with many SMSD campus organizations which gave her insight of how School Board decisions

impact campuses, children and parents. Hoelscher believes her open-mindedness is a strength she lends to serving on the board as well as her experience in analyzing information from a financial perspective which is "critical to the funding and expenditure issues the district is currently facing". "The changing methods in which students today learn" is a challenge for SMSD and public education as well as finding "teachers who are cognizant of this changing dynamic and motivated to reach the children in a higher tech atmosphere." The obstacle to that challenge "is finding a way to fund this newer educational process".



Virginia Rosas

Mrs. Virginia Rosas has lived in Stafford for 25.5 years and holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of St. Thomas in Political Science. She is employed as a Court Coordinator, County Court at Law No. 2, Fort Bend County. Her first concern in seeking a trustee position, is the educational welfare of all SMSD students. "I am running to represent and promote the students, parents, teachers, and taxpayers," she said. Seeing many challenges facing SMSD, she begins with "increasing the school's overall academic excellence and attracting students back to SMSD". Other challenges are student

discipline and maintaining stringent budget measures and obtaining maximum efficiency in view of Chapter 41. As a parent of a recent SMSD graduate and a current sophomore, she believes she has insight of reports and assessments of activities and effects on the students. "I believe it is important to be familiar with events that influence the framework of our District.



Felix Vega

Mr. Felix Vega, a retired Houston ISD teacher holds a Masters degree in Business Administration and a Master of Arts-Management. A Stafford resident for 16 years, Mr. Vega is the father of seven grown children, one having graduating from SMSD. He currently has a grandson attending Stafford Elementary. Mr. Vega believes the greatest challenges facing SMSD and public education are curriculum; rewarding and retaining quality teachers; and "improving the perception of Stafford and other communities that their school is the one that they want their children to attend and learn in". Having served on Stafford Planning and

Zoning Commission and Parks Committee, he believes his strengths to serve on the SMSD Board of Trustees are previous large and small organizational and fiscal management skills; teaching experience; past fundraising experiences; and being a proven team player.

Candidates' Forum - April 22, 2008 - 7:00 pm - Stafford Civic Center



Build the Bridge Breakfast - February 26, 2008

The Stafford MSD Education Foundation and the City of Stafford hosted the inaugural Build the Bridge Breakfast at the Stafford Centre February 26, 2008. Stafford businesses, churches, and community members were invited to a breakfast buffet to learn more about being involved with Stafford Municipal School District and the Education Foundation. Ten students addressed the audience with their individual aspirations for their futures. Representing Stafford High School was Lindsey Alf, DeAnna Bordelon, Kara Frazier, Joe Fields, Janile Patriarca, Rizza Santa Ana, and Henry Yang. Stafford Middle School was represented by Morgan Shelton and Eleanor Verkirk. The students' selected fields ranged from medicine to business with careers as engineers, finance executives, diplomats, seismologists, and elected officials. Eighth grader Eleanor Verkirk cited a field trip to the Museum of Natural History as the motivation to explore a career in seismology.



Pengling Yang

The event was also the kickoff of an award that will be presented annually to an individual or organization who has aided in furthering education and supporting students and teachers in SMSD. The first Bridge Building award was awarded posthumously to James (Jim) Noel Ratcliff, a former SMSD teacher, coach, trustee and Board President. His wife, SMSD teacher Kathy Ratcliff, accepted the award in his behalf reminding those who knew him that one of Jim's favorite titles was The Voice of the Spartans, by announcing football games.

The Stafford MSD Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports needs within the district that fall outside the scope of the normal operating budget. It places emphasis on academic excellence in SMSD by providing an avenue for the community to augment the education process; offering academic scholarships and grants; rewarding excellence in teaching; funding development of innovative academic programs; and creating public awareness of academic achievement. For more information on the Foundation go to the SMSD website, email foundation@stafford.msd.esc4.net, or call Terry Loudenburg at 281-261-9219.



TI Donates Models for Anatomy Class

Texas Instruments-Stafford representatives have delivered a box of goodies to Ms. Kristin Booher's high school anatomy class - a skeleton and a heart. Fortunately both were plastic models of the human versions. The local business donated the human framework and the heart model was donated by TI employee Hilda Nanez' family, John and Alyssa, an SHS senior. While students anxiously assembled the skeleton and heart model, TI representative Gene Frantz and Mr. Nanez assembled the stand. As valuable as the models, the stand enables Ms. Booher to roll the model through the classroom, unlike the previous skeleton. "These models allow the students to actually conceptualize the body better and create a more real-life environment in the classroom. It is difficult not only to teach without models but also for the students to comprehend without seeing, touching, investigating, etc.," said Booher. The students were grateful for the new additions to their class citing "she has all her teeth and we don't have to use dental floss to hold her elbows together!"



Ms. Booher and students

TI's Catalog Processors & Emerging End Equipments group and manager, Suman Narayan, were responsible for the generous skeleton donation. Mr. Frantz, the only TI employee worldwide to hold the title TI Principal Fellow, was one of the inventors of 'Speak & Spell' a very successful children's educational game. "I wanted to see what TI could do for the Science Department," said Ms. Nanez, "because Ms. Booher is an awesome teacher . . .(who) motivates and encourages her students."



SHS DECA Goes International

Between February 28 and March 1, 2008, 36 Stafford DECA students competed at the annual State Career Development Conference (ICDC) in Corpus Christi. Of those 36, 13 placed as winners and will advance to at the International Career Development Conference competitions in Atlanta, Georgia, April 26-30, 2008. The entire Chapter was recognized as a Super Star Chapter for excellence in membership recruitment, being the 2nd largest chapter in the state of Texas. Two DECA members, Janile Patriarca and Richard Hua, will be going to Georgia competing in the Learn and Earn Project. This is the first year Stafford has entered in this event and the duo have taken us to the international level! Other finalists and their events are Joshua Lui and Benny Huang (Internet Marketing - team); Stanley Liu and Ozair Khan (Financial Services - team); and Ike Enwere and Alex Huynh (Buying and Merchandising - team). Alternates, who will travel to Georgia if called, include Pengling Yang (Marketing Management); Erica Jackson and Christian Garza (Hospitality Services - team); and Rizza Santa Ana and Kevin Nguyen (Business Law and Ethics - team).



Janile Patriarca
Richard Hua

Two DECA District offices are held by Stafford Chapter members. Chapter President Rizza Santa Ana is also the District President and Quincy Edwards serves as the newly elected District Secretary. Both Santa Ana and Edwards will be attending the Leadership Development Academy at ICDC. To cover the expenses of the trip, the students will conduct silent auctions for donated items. For more information to help these successful SMSD representatives, contact DECA sponsor Ms. Emily Taxis at 281-261-9239.



Marcus Veal Wins Grand Champion Brahmousin



Marcus Vela and Mr. Pibb

Stafford High School FFA member Marcus Veal's Brahmousin bull was chosen as Grand Champion at the 2008 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. This is a continuation of Veal's champions at HLSR. In 2005 and 2006 his heifer, Pepsi, won Grand Champion and in 2007 Pepsi and Mr. Pibb won Grand Champion Cow and Calf Pair. This year's champion is a native of Stafford and a natural born Spartan - he was born in the SHS FFA Ag barn. Veal had purchased his heifer Pepsi in 2005 and raised her calf Mr. Pibb to become the 2008 Grand Champion Brahmousin.

Cuesta Wins Best of Show

Fourth grader Ian Cuesta won Best of Show Elementary in the 2008 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's Rodeo Art Contest and 7th grader Lily Huang won Best of Show Middle School. Cuesta used chalks to depict a cowboy hat for his "Texas Still Life". Other SMSD winners were Meenu Kuruthu (2nd grade) and Albert Nulisch (7th grade).



Ian Cuesta

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

Target Fund Field Trip



Kindergarten teacher Sherri Hobbs received a field trip grant from a Target grant program. The grant includes tickets, fees, transportation, supplies, equipment, or resource materials. Hobbs received a gift card, first aid kit and other goodies and selected a live production of "Sleeping Beauty" at the Stafford Civic Center.



Write Thing Writers



Stafford Middle School has two outstanding writers! Jay Amomoy (8th grade) and Jameelah Tate-Jackson (7th grade) participated in the 'Do the Write Thing' writing contest and were chosen to represent SMSD out of 17,876 entries. Do the Write Thing is a national youth anti-violence program challenging students to avoid violence in their lives. Harris County Judge Ed Emmett sponsors the local writing competition.

Mighty Spartan Band

Under the direction of Mr. Rod Rodriguez, assisted by Mr. Jim Ellis, the Stafford High School Mighty Spartan Band has earned the title of Sweepstakes Band - the first time in 20 years. At the UIL contest in March, the band received a Division 1 rating in the Stage category and Division 1 in Sight-Reading. The Sweepstakes award is given to bands that received a Division 1 rating in marching, concert, and sight-reading contests. SMSD offers band in 6th grade and has seen growth in talent and enrollment over the years. The Middle School Band will perform May 13, 2008, and the High School Band on May 12, 2008, both at the Stafford Civic Center.



March 28, 2008, saw Stafford High School named District Sweepstakes Champion at the UIL Academic Competitions at Wharton County Junior College. First place individuals and teams will advance to regional competitions at Blinn College on April 12. SHS will have representatives at that event in Calculator Applications, Current Issues and Events, Editorial Writing, Feature Writing, Headline Writing, Journalism, Mathematics, Number Sense, Social Studies and Spelling and Vocabulary.

Tax Information . . .

Every Stafford Business Should Know HB 621 - Freeport Exemption

If you are a business in Stafford, Texas and meet the requirements of House Bill 621, there may be an opportunity for your company to significantly reduce your local school tax bill.

What are the laws?

House Bill 621 (80th Legislative Session, 2007) expanded current law SJR 6 (77th Legislative Session, 2001) that allows for certain tangible personal property to be exempt from ad valorem taxation if the property is located in Texas for assembling, storing, manufacturing processing or fabricating purposes by the person who acquired or imported the property. As you may know, this exemption is commonly known as the Freeport Exemption. However, SJR 6 did not cover other types of property such as warehouse inventory and, as a result, created some potential competitive disadvantages for similar industries in neighboring states and countries. HB 621 provides that both interstate and intrastate "goods in transit" qualify for the same form of local tax exemption from local taxing jurisdictions as the original goods exempted by SJR 6 in 2001. Basically, HB 621 attempts to address many of the inventories that remained taxable after SJR 6. Please understand that HB 621 has not created a new tax; rather an opportunity for local taxing jurisdictions to continue taxing or exempt from taxing certain tangible personal property.

Why should you be interested in this information?

According to the Fort Bend County Appraisal District, many Stafford companies have been identified as eligible for the second local Freeport Tax Exemption granted under HB 621. Depending on the value of eligible taxable goods, these companies could realize a significant reduction in local tax liabilities should SMSD choose to grant the tax exemptions as called for in HB 621. According to information received from the appraisal district, the total taxable value of commercial and industrial personal property eligible for possible exemptions from school taxes total approximately \$5.8 million in SMSD. Depending on the amount

of eligible taxable inventory companies possesses, school tax liability could be significantly reduced.

What is the current status of this issue with SMSD?

In 1991, the SMSD Board of Trustees approved a recommendation to grant the Freeport Tax Exemption for the goods eligible under SJR 6. The original Freeport Exemption is still in effect and will remain in effect until legislation is passed that changes the current law. However, HB 621 (Freeport Tax Exemption 2) has not been approved by the SMSD Board of Trustees due to the significant negative impact it has on revenue for our school district.

What are possible solutions for your company and SMSD?

Realizing there are significant financial implications to each company that qualifies for the new Freeport Tax Exemption under HB 621, the SMSD Board of Trustees and administration are interested in having constructive dialogue regarding possible opportunities for your company to receive this additional tax exemption while protecting SMSD's sources of revenue to provide educational services to the students of Stafford.

Currently, a large portion of the SMSD tax collections received from all Stafford tax payers is accrued at the State of Texas and redistributed to other school districts across the state. It is SMSD's goal to work with every company and similar companies toward a meaningful solution financially beneficial to the company and SMSD. It is important that we seek an agreement that allows for all tax collections in Stafford to remain here locally for the students of SMSD.

In the near future, SMSD will be inviting every Stafford business that may be impacted by HB 621 to a meeting to discuss the details and the possible strategies to join a partnership. This potential partnership could possibly reduce tax bills for businesses as well as address financial challenges facing SMSD.



School Tax Information Every Stafford Taxpayer Should Know Chapter 41 - Robin Hood

Based on the current state definition, Stafford Municipal School District is a Texas mid-sized school district (student enrollment between 1,800 and 5,000) and is considered to be property wealthy. The property wealth definition is based on the taxable value of all eligible commercial and residential property divided by the student enrollment of the district. As a result of being defined as property wealthy, SMSD must send an unfair and significant portion of property tax revenues from local taxpayers to the State of Texas (under Chapter 41) for use in the state's general fund. It is important that Stafford citizens and taxpayers realize that 20% of the school property taxes paid to SMSD are NOT used to help support education for SMSD students. It is also important that Stafford citizens and taxpayers know that since the 2005-06 school year, taxes received through the growth in taxable property value has been sent to the State of Texas and has NOT remained in SMSD. In other words, the additional money

each property owner has been required to pay in property taxes due to the increase in the appraised value of their property has been sent to the State of Texas instead of being used for the students of SMSD.

As an example, for the 2007-08 tax year, an SMSD taxpayer will pay \$1,812.50 in school taxes based on a home appraised for \$200,000. Approximately \$363.00 of the \$1,812.50 will be sent to the State of Texas and NOT be used in SMSD.

This information is being provided in order to educate Stafford citizens on the financial challenges facing SMSD as well as other school districts in Texas. As the 2009 Texas legislative session nears (January-June 2009), you will be receiving more information on this subject and eventually a request to take an active role in communicating with your elected state officials.

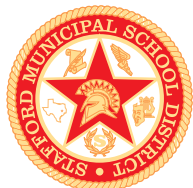


SMSD Board of Trustees

Greg Holsapple President
Mike Guerra Vice President
Michael Cropper Secretary
Rose Berberian Assistant Secretary
Hector Acevedo Trustee
Cindy Hoelscher Trustee
Ettienne Zak Trustee

School Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month. Executive session begins at 6:30 pm with the public session following at 7:00 pm. Meetings are held in the SMSD Administration Board Room. To contact any board member via email, please use: board@stafford.msd.esc4.net.

- 2007-08 School Calendar
- Apr 14 School Board Meeting
- May 12 School Board Meeting
- May 26 Memorial Day Holiday
- May 30 Early Release
- Last Day of School
- Commencement Exercises
- Jun 02 Inclement Weather Day
- Jun 03 Inclement Weather Day
- Jun 04 Staff Development Day
- Jun 05 First Day of Summer School
- Jun 09 School Board Meeting
- Jul 02 Last Day of Summer School
- Aug 25 First Day of 2008-09 School



SPARTAN SPRING ATHLETIC CALENDAR

HENRY COLEMAN - ATHLETIC DIRECTOR



STAFFORD HIGH SCHOOL 2007-08 VARSITY BASEBALL

Date	Opponent	Time	Site
Apr 01	Sweeny	7:30	H
Apr 04	Wharton	7:30	H
Apr 08	Columbus	7:30	A
Apr 12	Needville	7:30	H
Apr 15	Sealy	7:30	A
Apr 18	Royal	7:30	A
Apr 22	Columbia - Senior Night	8:00	H
Apr 25	Sweeny	7:30	A

2007-08 JUNIOR VARSITY BASEBALL

Date	Opponent	Time	Site
Apr 01	Sweeny	5:00	H
Apr 04	Wharton	5:00	H
Apr 08	Columbus	5:00	A
Apr 12	Needville	5:00	H
Apr 15	Sealy	5:00	A
Apr 18	Royal	5:00	A
Apr 22	Columbia - Senior Night	5:00	H
Apr 25	Sweeny	5:00	A

STAFFORD HIGH SCHOOL 2007-08 VARSITY SOFTBALL

Date	Opponent	Time	Site
Apr 01	Sweeny	7:00	H
Apr 04	Wharton	7:00	H
Apr 08	Columbus	7:00	A
Apr 12	Needville	7:00	H
Apr 15	Sealy	7:00	A
Apr 18	Royal	7:00	A

2007-08 JUNIOR VARSITY SOFTBALL

Date	Opponent	Time	Site
Apr 01	Sweeny	5:30	H
Apr 04	Wharton	5:30	H
Apr 08	Columbus	5:30	A
Apr 12	Needville	5:30	H
Apr 15	Sealy	5:30	A
Apr 18	Royal	5:30	A

Basketball Teams in Playoffs

Stafford Spartans have a history of great basketball, and this year followed tradition. They finished the season as Co-District Champions with a 14-1 district record. They went to the Area round of playoffs and fell to the state semi-finalist Silsbee Tigers. The freshmen finished as District runner-up (12-2) and JV was District Champion (13-1).

Lady Spartans were not to be outdone! Finishing the season as District Runner-up (11-3), they proceeded to the Bi-District

round of playoffs falling to LaGrange Leopards. The JV's finished as Co-District Champions with a 14-1 district record. All teams are looking for a championship season for 2008-09!

Boys Soccer Team in Playoffs

For a 3-year old team, the Spartans are playing as if they have been around a while. Under the coaching skills of Chris Parker our Spartans played head-to-head against local 4A teams. Our 3A boys' winning record put them in the first round of playoffs.

Stafford High School Commencement Exercises

WILLIAMS TRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

Seniors and their families can mark their calendars for the 2008 Commencement Exercises. This year graduation will be conducted at the Williams Trace Baptist Church, 16755 Southwest Freeway, Sugar Land, Texas 77479, on May 30, 2008, at 7:00 pm.

With a senior class of around 190, the district has held graduation ceremonies outside the district to accommodate the graduates and their families. This will be the first time Spartans will graduate at Williams Trace Baptist Church.

During the final week of their senior year, seniors will participate

in rehearsals for commencement both in the district and at the church facilities. Detailed information, including dates and times, along with other activities occurring that week, will be sent home to the parents of seniors. Students will also receive information packets with directions to the church and recommendations on which routes families should take.



Administration encourages families to take the recommended routes that will be based on students' last names' to help avoid major traffic congestion in the areas around the church.

Construction Bond Update

Below is an update of the SMSD 2006 Bond Program. As you can tell, many of the facility renovations, repairs, and upgrades are complete or very near complete. One point of clarification relates to the proposed Primary/Middle School cafeteria. In 2006, the projected cost for a cafeteria to meet the needs of the Primary and Middle Schools was slightly less than \$2.1 million. However, after a thorough review of this project, it was determined that there was a need to include a full-scale

kitchen, and stage for student performances and parent meetings. These additions, as well as a dramatic increase in the cost of materials such as concrete and steel, have increased our projected cost to approximately \$3.3 million. Due to previous projects being under projected budgets, SMSD is in a position to absorb the additional costs and construct a facility that meets the needs of our district.

Project	Budget	Actual Cost	Balance Saved	Update
Central Plant Renovation	\$3,200,000	\$3,017,437	\$182,563	Complete
Primary and Elementary Foundation Repair	\$2,938,557	\$2,770,000	\$168,557	Complete
High School Gym Foundation Repairs	\$247,577	\$147,577	\$100,000	Complete
Elementary Science Labs	\$45,000	\$28,000	\$17,000	Complete
Primary and Elementary Playground	\$241,500	\$191,500	\$50,000	Complete
Primary, Elementary, Middle, High Schools' Fire Alarm Retrofit	\$569,000	\$523,000	\$46,000	Primary, Elementary 95% complete
SUB TOTAL	\$7,241,634	\$6,727,514	\$514,120	
Technology	\$320,000	\$329,000	\$(9,000)	Complete
Roof Repairs	\$348,203	\$269,500	\$78,703	Complete
Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$200,000	95% complete
Primary, Elementary, Middle, High Interior Repairs	\$1,600,000	* **\$600,000		Primary complete; remainder complete by August 2008
High School Science Lab Conversions	\$150,000	Unknown	Unknown	Planning stage; complete by August 2008
Cafeteria	\$3,500,000	Unknown	Unknown	Bids being received with Board recommendation on April 14, 2008
Professional Fees	\$898,144	\$438,000	**\$150,000	Architectural Consultant Fees
Contingency	\$492,019	\$0	\$492,019	Estimated savings
AGGREGATE PROJECT TOTALS	\$15,050,000	\$13,024,158	\$2,025,842	

* Expected to be under budget due to current market. ** Projected