

Westside

Wire

News and information for WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL
Parents and the West Houston community.

From the Principal *Michael McDonough*

How Do You Make a School Important to Everyone?

So I was at dinner with my father last week, and he had just seen the new education documentary, *Waiting for Superman*. He asked me what I thought of it, and where I thought it was that public school was heading. I'll spare you the details of our entire conversation, suffice to say that it came down to the normal question of "how do you make a school important to everyone?" That's the million-dollar question.

Finding ways to make Westside High School important to everyone forces you to first ask how it is that we value each student. How do we ensure that we know who everyone is and what he or she needs? If we miss a step, it can cost us.

An example of this has to do with the various codes we attribute to students when they enroll. We designate their achievement levels, their previous schools, and their immunizations. Gender, ethnicity, and birth

You must work it hard every period, every day, with every kid.

date are also required. These are all important, and they must be maintained with accuracy. In fact, it is our misstep in one of these coding areas that has cost us a TEA rating of Recognized for the recent 2009-10 school year. Failing to follow through with accuracy left a student miscoded and thus our completion rate was one student short in one of the accountability groups.

This led to our achievement levels (all at the recognized or exemplary level) being overshadowed by a TEA rating of acceptable. Echoing members of our Board of Education, that is simply not acceptable.

It's not acceptable to not pay attention to detail and to not know our kids well enough to be able to address any needs. It's all in the details, and we must, as a school and community, sweat that small stuff. So let's talk about our efforts



to improve in this area. We have made some organizational changes this year that enable our kids to find their place on campus within their school day. Whether that is through participation in a club, organization, or team is less important. The chance that it may come through merely being able to find a tutorial that finally helps is also secondary.

Or maybe it is simply by changing the way in which we interact with all kids – perhaps that is the next step. Regardless, we must all agree that something must be done.

I imagine that right now, as you read this, you may be nodding your head in agreement. Others may think, "But how is that helping my kid as he is overwhelmed by the size of everything?" And still some of you will seek more specifics – "the details, Mr.

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Thanks for a Great Homecoming Week!

Westside spirit was high for Homecoming with outstanding participation from our students, faculty and community. More students (and yes, faculty, too) dressed in the daily themes than we can recall, the dance was a sell-out, we had a record number of parade participants and packed the stands at the Homecoming game! Our thanks go out to all who worked on the week's events, too numerous to name.

We'd also like to extend congratulations to our Homecoming Court winners: Freshmen Lady **Erin Anderson** and Lord **Christian Aleman**; Sophomores Duchess **Kellie Currie** and Duke **Christian Decuire**; Juniors Princess **Maddie Garcia** and Prince **Paul Garcia**; and Seniors Queen **Victoria Noriega** and King **Matthew Sterling**.

Homecoming has evolved to a great tradition thanks to the efforts of our entire Westside community!

WHS on the Web
For a complete calendar of Westside events, visit us at www.westsidewolves.org

Principal *from page 1*

McDonough.” And to all of that, I would reply, “Exactly.”

I met with a group of parents in early September, and we were having a great conversation about the start to the new school year. Ideas and opinions were being shared, and I found the conversation energizing. It wasn't due to the fact that all ideas being shared were reasonable and appropriate, and it wasn't because we were all in agreement. To the contrary, the discussion was wonderful because at the heart of it was the common value of opportunity and access. Front and center was an acknowledgement that we must use every resource on campus, and designing programs that helped kids (in real time) was paramount. That is what communities do every day. They labor toward a greater good.

The faculty, staff, and administration are working tirelessly alongside me as we strive toward this vision every day. We have not perfected this and I hope you will push us to keep at it. I know there are kids that come to

school every day, make good decisions, perform above average, and bring little attention to themselves. I was that kid in school. And so I am sensitive to their needs and their desire, whether admitted or not, to simply fit in. We can't overlook them and we cannot ever take that ritualistic engagement for granted. We must be authentic in our effort, our strategies, and our outcomes.

So as I looked to my father, he of such great wisdom when I was young, I fumbled with my napkin and adjusted my silverware.

“How do you make school important to everyone?” he asked.

I answered him with only what I have ever known to offer the most leverage:

- Surround yourself with the smartest and most well-intentioned people you can.
- Seek support from the outside through parents and the community with integrity.
- Trust the feedback you receive to be genuine – even when it seems otherwise.

- Have as many different programs, interventions, and opportunities as possible for kids, and do everything you can to not limit access to them.
- See things for what they can be as opposed to what they aren't yet.
- Finally, you must work it hard every period, every day, with every kid.

“Sounds hard.” he said.

“It is. And being a Principal is the best job I have ever had.”

Westside High School is working hard every day to try and ensure that your child is emotionally and physically safe, challenged in the classroom and through activities, as well as supported as they learn to advocate for themselves in all facets of life. As I said earlier, we have not figured out how to do it well for everyone. And that is exactly the motivation we need to sustain our effort. I hope you will never let us waiver from this mission.

Seniors Honored in National Merit Scholarship Competition



On September 30, our National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists, Commended Scholars and National Hispanic Recognition Program Finalists were honored at a breakfast in the WHS Library. Pictured L-R: James Wang (Commended), Melissa Logan (Commended), Cheng Li (Commended), Garth Ornelas (Hispanic Recognition), Maxwell Hummel (Semi-Finalist), Luis Cartagena (Commended and Hispanic Recognition), William Sides (Commended), Alex Carrejo (Commended and Hispanic Recognition), Sandy Qi (Semi-Finalist and Principal McDonough). Not pictured: Tucker Clemensen (Commended)

Annual Alumni Breakfast

All Westside alumni are invited to breakfast on Thursday, January 6th, at 8:30 a.m. in the library. Come visit with your former classmates and teachers.

Anyone interested in donating food/drinks please contact Judy Thompson at judydthompson@gmail.com.





Humming Along

It's hard to believe that we are already well into the Fall season -- and I mean really Fall, complete with cooler temperatures, football games, parades. We've run through all of our back-to-school activities without a snag. PTO was able to help with Wolf Camp, the Bash, the Homecoming Dance and College Night. In addition, it always seems like we are feeding a deserving group of staff, students or volunteers on campus, and we are happy to do it!

If you were not involved with Homecoming activities, especially the PTO/ Junior Class – sponsored dance, mark your calendar now for next year! This is a great opportunity to jump in and get involved early in the school year. There is a job for everyone: ticket sales, facilities liaison, coat check desk, check-in desk, food coordinator, decorations chairperson and of course, Dance Chairman. You might make a new Westside friend.

Mrs. McDonnell and Westside PTO,

Thank you for the PTO Scholarship. It is helping to pay for my education at the University of Chicago and for that I am deeply grateful. I am equally grateful for the education that was available to me at Westside High School. The support I received from friends, teachers, coaches and parents was instrumental in my development as a student. Thank you, again for continuing to support my education.

*Thank you,
Matt Klein '08*

Soon we will be in the gift-giving season. As you think about where you would like to spend your dollars, please consider Westside High School PTO's "Dollars for Scholars Campaign". This is the PTO's one big fundraiser and one of the top sources of income for our operating budget. In large part, the "Dollars for Scholars Campaign" funds our scholarship program. The PTO Spirit Scholarship will be awarded to ten of our seniors this year and each will receive \$1000 for use at the college of their choice. This gift alone can make the difference between a student enrolling in college or postponing further education.

To think it all began when my parents purchased a brick with my name engraved on it, to support the fundraising for what was to become WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL. To think that was 10 years ago, and I was only in the 2nd grade. And now, here I am, sending you all greetings from The University of Texas at Austin.

I have come a long way, and I have worked hard to be where I am. I am lucky to be here, and I have my parents to thank as well. They have always been a part of my academic life and have always been involved in the PTO and all school activities, ever since my brother and I started at Ashford Elementary School. I strongly feel that their being a part of the school and contributing to it made an impact on me, and encouraged me to join clubs and activities and be a part of the Westside Community as well.

I blinked and High School was over- it went fast- enjoy it, embrace it, and take advantage of all the opportunities Westside has to offer you. Thank your parents often, and encourage them to get involved and contribute to the growth of our school. Who knows- you may be in for a great surprise- as I was- not too long ago, being one of the 10 fortunate recipients of the PTO SCHOLARSHIP!

Years will pass, but I will never forget how much my school influenced me, and I will always appreciate how lucky I was to have such wonderful teachers, and such a strong community of parents involved in our education. All of this helped me reach my goals and arrive here at UT. This simple "brick" that my parents bought will always be a part of me.

Good luck to all of you and have a great school year!!

Christina Valencia '10

The Westside Story, 10th Anniversary Celebration a Big Success

Our anniversary celebration, held August 12 at the Westchase Marriott, was a fabulous evening of re-connecting with the friends, past and present which make Westside a family. Alumni ran into favorite teachers; staff visited with former colleagues; parents found family friends "all grown up".

We had a chance to honor those who pushed Westside High School into being ten years ago, including Dr. Rod Paige, Mr. Leonard Sturm and Ms. Laurie Bricker.



Over 250 attendees were entertained by the always witty Master of Ceremonies, Rob MacGregor and performances by our Jazz Band and Choir ensembles and HIStory. The groups appropriately were composed of past and current students. We heard remarks from our Principal McDonough, and former Principals Van Beck and Castro. Our mini silent auction came in over goal at more than \$4000, which is to be used to establish our Alumni Endowment Fund.

Look for our anniversary Time Cap-

sule in the Commons. The historical items will be on display in one of the cases. The rest of our historical items and important awards in the remaining cases will be spruced up and organized in honor of our anniversary. Take a look next time you are at Westside.

Westside to Host NCAA & Athletic Info Meeting November 4



The road to the NCAA can be confusing. There are steps that high school athletes and their parents need to know about and complete to be eligible to play at the college level.

Westside High School will host an **NCAA & Athletic Information Meeting** on Thursday, **November 4, 2010** at 7:00 pm to assist students and their families in the process. The event is open to all HISD students; you need not attend Westside.

In addition to general college athletic information, we'll cover:

- NCAA Clearinghouse Requirements and Registration
- College Admission Qualifications
- Handling Recruiting
- College Entrance Exam (SAT and ACT) Preparation & Registration
- Title 1 Waivers

While the topics will be of particular importance to seniors, it is not too early for younger high school athletes to learn what it takes so they will be eligible when their time comes!

Music Boosters Selling Brookwood Poinsettias

Music Boosters will be selling Brookwood Poinsettias again this holiday season. The cost is \$15.00, with delivery on December 8. The plants are large, florist quality and always healthy and beautiful. An order form can be found on wolfband.org.



Westside Salutes America Concert November 9

Westside's Music Department is proud to present its third annual Veterans Day concert to honor the heroes of our country's armed forces and instill patriotism in our community. On Tuesday November 9, more than 350 student performers from band, choir, orchestra, and ROTC will come together to pay tribute to our country in "Westside Salutes America." If you have not attended this concert in the past, you don't want to miss it this year!



This will not be your typical high school concert; it is an interactive experience for the audience! Our performers will surround you, and will perform from all areas of the auditorium - not just the stage. While there will be an emphasis on

patriotic tunes, our ensembles will also perform American favorites and feature selections from important American composers that have defined our culture.

As always, we are proud to collaborate with student members of the ROTC who will also perform. In addition, students from the theatre department provide assistance with staging, lighting, and setup. This is truly a Westside community event!

The Westside Music Boosters will host a dinner prior to the concert. Order forms will be available at www.wolfband.org. The concert starts at 7:00 pm but make sure you come early as the auditorium fills up fast!

Westside's Culinary Arts Program Scores Big at September 23 Event

The Outback at Westside scored big at the 7th annual Steak Night Dinner. Nearly 500 steaks were served in the Commons to hungry supporters of the program. The seated dinner featured linen table cloths and decorated tables.

Chef Chelsea Gumm says that this is their biggest fundraiser of the year. The evening garnered \$11,311 to help maintain the program and purchase additional equipment and supplies. Additionally, the Greater Houston Restaurant Association donated a \$1000 scholarship, which was matched by the Outback Steakhouse – South Texas.

There are four levels to the Culinary

Arts program: Travel and Tourism Management, Lifetime Nutrition and Wellness, Culinary Arts and Practicum in Culinary Arts. There are currently 118 students in the Westside program, directed by Ms. Gumm and Mr. Martin.

Ms. Gumm is proud of her alumni that are attending or have graduated from these distinguished schools: the Art Institute of Houston, Le Cordon Blue Austin, Culinary Institute of America New York, Johnson and Whales-Florida, Johnson and Whales-Colorado and the University of Houston-Conrad Hilton Hospitality School.

“It’s a Wonderful Life” on the Westside Stage

The inspiring saga of George Bailey, the Everyman from Bedford Falls, comes to life in the WHS Theatre production of James W. Rodgers “It’s a Wonderful Life” on December 2-5! When George (Evan Marks) feels his dreams of escape and adventure have been quashed by obligations to his wife, Mary (Elizabeth Malone) and debts owed to the local banker, Mr. Potter (Max Hummel), his guardian angel Clarence (Jake Sikinger) descends on Christmas Eve to save him from despair and remind him—by showing him what the world would have been like had he never been born—that this has been, after all, a wonderful life.

Five performances are planned with 7:00 pm shows on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 2:00 pm matinees on Saturday and Sunday. Bring your family and friends to enjoy this holiday classic!



And coming to the Black Box January 13-15, is “The Story” by Tracey Scott Wilson. An ambitious black newspaper reporter goes against her editor to investigate a murder and finds the best story but at what cost? Wilson explores the elusive nature of truth as the boundaries between reality and fiction, morality and ambition become dangerously blurred. Shows are 7:00 pm nightly.

For ticket information on both productions, please call the Black Box at 281-920-8054.

Inertia Performs at China International Folk Art Festival

At press time, members of our Inertia Dance Company were still off on their trip to China representing the United States at the 8th China International Folk Art Festival in Shanghai, Suzhou and Beijing. Inertia was the only non-professional group invited to perform at the Festival and if you caught the preview show at Westside on September 30, you know they were sure to impress! Cast members making the trip included Abby Cramer, Brandon Cano, Catherine Drake, Geovanny Marin, Morganne Mazeika, Pierry Louis, Jeffrey Louis, Canarus Bisch, Joseph Garcia, Sidney Pritchett and Johan Ortiz.

On November 6, Inertia will perform “Sensemaya” at the Houston Symphony’s “Lunada Concert”, 8:00 pm at Miller Outdoor Theatre. On the 12th please join us for Random Acts of Dance and on the 18th for No

Costume Concert, both at 7:00 pm in the WHS Auditorium. You can also catch Inertia in the H.E.B. Holiday Parade on November 25 and the Houston Symphony’s Children Holiday Concert at Jones Hall on December 4.



Westside HOSA Walks For the Cure

Westside’s Health Occupation Student of America organization, under the direction of Jamaal Robinson, again participated in the Breast Cancer Walk for the Cure, October 2. They exceeded their fundraising goal and raised \$615. The 10 Westside walkers experienced first-hand the power of this huge Houston event. Way to go HOSA!



Westside HOSA students participated in the Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure October 2 and raised over \$600 for breast cancer research. Pictured L-R is sponsor Jamaal Robinson with son Brayden, Drew Scott, Ingrid Sivvast-Kaiser, Zaina Duwaji, Kendra Keahey, Selvira Rahmanonic, Priclslya Riquelme and in front, T’keyah Dixon, Monika Lava and non-WHS friend.

Yearbook Photos

All Seniors who want their picture in the Westside yearbook MUST be photographed at Prestige Studio by November 13.



Prestige has several Houston locations; call (281) 492-9361 for details. Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors will be photographed during school on November 17 and 18.

Westside Way Graduation Requirements Updated

The Graduation Requirements (Section II – The Road to Graduation) of the Westside Way included the Recommended Degree Plan for freshmen entering high school this year.



As graduation requirements are **those in effect the year a student enters high school as a freshman**, we have amended this section to reflect this and (1) add the Recommended Degree Plan requirements for students entering as ninth graders in 2007-2008 to 2009-2010, and (2) add the Technology Applications provision for ninth graders entering 2010-11 inadvertently omitted from the Way. The online version of the Westside Way (see Student/Parent Handbook at www.westsidwolves.org) has been amended to reflect these changes.

Please remember that while this information was included to assist you in developing a four-year plan, your dean will advise you to ensure graduation requirements are satisfied.

Senior Dues Discounted for Early Payment

It's time to pay senior dues! Dues cover cap and gown, graduate panoramic picture, Senior Honors Night, graduation expenses, diploma and diploma cover, and the Senior Picnic.

Pay before 11/19/10 (3:30 pm) \$125
(\$90 if on free/reduced lunch)

Pay 11/22/10 – 12/17/10 (1:00 pm)
\$150 (\$115 on free/reduced lunch)

Pay after 12/17/10 (1:00 pm) \$175 (no
discount for free/reduced lunch)

Cash or money order only, to Ms. Matlock in A-205. Payment plans available.

“Pride” in Our Community

Pride has been working hard all football season performing feature routines and competing with the band. They have been accepted into the Disney Performing Arts and will perform in Los Angeles, California in a thirty minute production! They will meet world class choreographers and take a master dance class at the prestigious Edge studio.

During the month of November, the Pride Booster Club will be selling delicious pies; all proceeds will help the dancers travel to L.A.! And look for Pride on November 11, 2010 marching in the Veteran's Day Parade in downtown Houston!

Last but not least, the team will be volunteering at Parkway Place in December. Entertaining a retirement home with their high kicks and energetic moves is sure to be a crowd-pleaser!

Keep up the great work PRIDE!



What is ConnectEDU and How Do I Register?

Connect(EDU) is a web-based program that enables online communication between the College Center staff, Deans, students and parents. It replaces *PrepHQ* (formerly used by Westside), and will provide information regarding scholarships, college planning, financial aid, test information, resources, and college searches. Also available is an individual portfolio that will create a resume, a college list, and will hold information that the student inputs along with their grades, GPA, test scores, and class rank. Additionally, *Connect* offers practice college prep tests, as well as interest, values, and skills assessments. This new tool also has the ability to compare and contrast colleges on one screen. *Connect* may be accessed through the Westside website as long as you are using Internet Explorer 8.

ALL CONNECT USERS: You must either use Internet Explorer 8 or Firefox. (Google www.firefox.com and sign up. Once installed, go to www.connectedu.net and register.)

FORMER PREPHQ USERS: You may register now! You will need your username and password along with our school ID (txwestside). If you do not remember your username or password, you will have to see either Ms. Karacek or Ms. Turner. *Connect* is experiencing a few glitches with the Westside Community. Please be patient while they roll over your saved info from *PrepHQ*. (You still should be able to add and save new data). We are working daily, and patiently, with the *Connect* support team to get Westside fully operational!

STUDENTS NEW TO WESTSIDE: You are now able to register for *Connect* as a new member.

PARENTS: Once your child has registered and is in the system, you will be able to create your own account!





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**Next PTO Meeting
November 2nd!**

Be sure to check
www.westsidewolves.org and
www.westsidepto.org
for the most current events information!