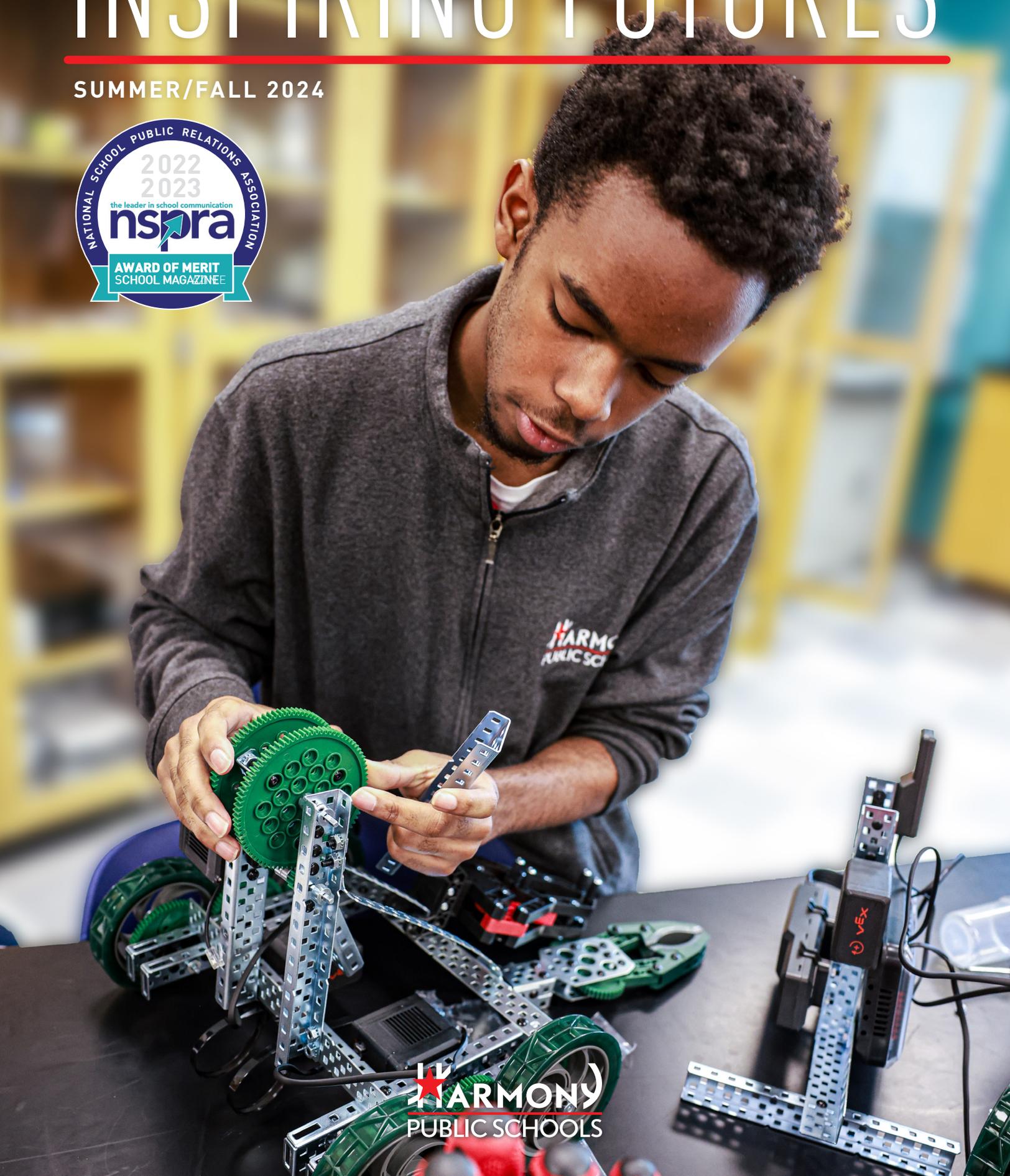


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# INSPIRING FUTURES

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SUMMER/FALL 2024



 **HARMONY**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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# INSPIRING FUTURES

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Great things are happening every day at Harmony Public Schools! As a leader in STEM education, we are preparing students for success in college and beyond.

This issue of Inspiring Futures celebrates our students who are taking what they've learned to new heights.

In the case of 2016 alumnus Luis Boyer, we mean that literally. Boyer, a graduate of Harmony School of Innovation-Houston followed up his time at Harmony with a career as a commercial pilot for United Airlines. Inside, you'll see how he landed this exciting career.

Speaking of pilots, the success of the drone team from the Harmony School of Innovation-Euless also captured headlines and the attention of NBC Nightly News. The team of fourth and fifth graders competed against middle and high school students at a national competition.

In other STEM achievements, students from Harmony Science Academy-Dallas High and Harmony School of Innovation-Dallas are participating in advanced research projects focusing on the development of RNA vaccines for cancers and other diseases.

You'll also read about how Harmony Science Academy-Sugar Land siblings Myra and Neal Gupta became published authors, which began with their teachers fueling their love for reading.

As you flip through this issue, we hope you'll enjoy these and other stories about how Harmony is Inspiring Futures each day for our students.

*Harmony Public Schools is a public charter school system providing a high-quality curriculum that places a heavy emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Our engaging, hands-on, project-based approach allows students to design, build, and experiment on projects that provide real-world solutions to prepare students for college success.*





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# *Motoring to Success*

*HSA-Pflugerville students show their drive to success at electric car competition*

*by Tracie Seed*

Students from Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville put the pedal to the metal on their hand-built electric car this Spring at the Greenpower USA South Texas F24 Showcase, which was held in Edinburg.

The student team not only attended for the second year, but they also entered two cars. The team won first place in the Stock Category and fourth place in the Advanced Stock Category.

Students assembled their cars for competition using materials provided by Greenpower USA, a national STEM nonprofit for students to enhance science, technology, engineering and math education through the challenge of building and racing electric cars. The teams were required to make their stock car per the kit car manual except for the allowed modifications. Teams must use the gearing system supplied with the kit.

Changes allowed to remain in this division include:

- Adding a heat sink to the motor.
- Creating a custom steering wheel.
- Installing a new safety harness.

- Installing a new LED brake light.
- Relocating the horn button.
- Tires must have a sidewall PSI rating that cannot exceed 70 PSI when installing them.

“F24 is for sixth through 12th-grade students,” said Ibrahim Erfidan, Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville physics and CTE instructor. “In addition to showcasing their cars, each team must also give a presentation to the judges and industry partners on their vehicle and design process.”

The learning objectives during this exciting competition are guiding Harmony students down the road toward successful futures. By fostering critical thinking, problem solving teamwork and creativity, Harmony is preparing students for post-secondary education and the workforce with advanced manufacturing and engineering project management.

Greenpower USA’s mission statement explains it all, “The goal of the Greenpower USA Foundation is to advance the understanding of STEM topics and inspire innovation in young people through the immersive experience of designing, building, and racing electric-powered vehicles.”



# Tomorrow's Solutions Today

*Students Work to Provide Real-World Treatments for Cancers & Diseases*

*by Susan Campbell*

In Harmony Public School classrooms across Texas, students are not only mastering the fundamental skills necessary for graduation and future careers, but they're also venturing into groundbreaking research projects at the forefront of biomedical innovation.

Surprisingly, amidst their regular studies, some of these students are actively engaged in advanced research projects aimed at driving biomedical and health breakthroughs.

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, a dedicated group of two dozen students from across the North Texas district met at Harmony Science Academy-Dallas High and Harmony School of Innovation-Dallas ready to tackle the development of RNA vaccines.

Incorporating pseudouracil into their projects, these students create enhanced immunizations that are shielded from the human immune system, ensuring their efficacy and longevity.

"These students are working with real cell cultures and viral vectors," said George Sherfick, HSA-Dallas High CTE: Biomedical PLC Leader, System Course Leader. "By involving students in activities like data analysis, lab experiments, problem-solving, and communication, their work is being integrated into real-world solutions. Not to mention, it offers a glimpse into the cutting-edge field of mRNA technology and its potential to revolutionize medicine."

The group's ultimate goal is to develop vaccines capable of combating a spectrum of diseases.

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***"By involving students in activities like data analysis, lab experiments, problem-solving, and communication, their work is being integrated into real-world solutions."***

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Under the mentorship of Dr. Cengiz Z. Altintas, Research Scientist at Harmony Biomedical Lab, these students are part of the newly established Harmony Public Schools Advanced Biomedical Research Group. The group's goal is to engage students in real-world research and address health concerns impacting their communities.

With Dr. Altintas' guidance, students have embraced cutting-edge concepts like pseudouracil, a pivotal discovery by Prof. Dr. Katalin Kariko and immunologist Drew Weissman in 2005, which earned them the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2023.

Through their involvement in these projects, students are not only gaining invaluable experience, but are also contributing to tangible solutions in the realm of healthcare. Their efforts offer a glimpse into the future of medicine, showcasing the transformative potential of mRNA technology and its capacity to reshape healthcare as we know it.

With these young minds at the forefront of biomedical research, the future of medicine is in skillful hands.



# *The Sky is the Limit*

*A Harmony Alum Earns His Wings* by Ajdina Selimovic

Luis Boyer has always dreamed of soaring to new heights.

Boyer is currently a student on the United Airlines Aviate Program. This program allows a conditional job offer with United Airlines when requirements to transfer from a regional airline to United are met.

But before he was in the sky he was at Harmony School of Innovation-Houston, then an elementary school. Boyer began at HSI-Houston in second grade and continued with Harmony until graduating from Harmony Science Academy-Houston in 2016.

He went on to attain his degree in Computer Science at the University of Houston in 2021 and is set to achieve a total of seven pilot licenses this year.

Boyer's parents believed that making the transition to a Harmony campus from their zoned school would benefit him in the long run. Today, he trusts that the education decision his family made helped pave the way to reaching his current achievements and future goals.

Living his childhood dream today, Luis believes the road to becoming a successful pilot is attainable through a good foundation, starting with one's education and continuing with consistent dedication.

"I knew I wanted to become a pilot since I was six. I used to travel back and forth a lot to Peru as a kid and I would honestly always look more forward to being in the plane rather than the vacations themselves," Boyer said. "You are able to see the world in a different way while in the sky."

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*"I knew I wanted to become a pilot since I was six...  
You are able to see the world in a different way while in the sky."*

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### Did You Know?

Several HPS drone teams from across the state participated in the National Finals of the 20254 Rocketry Challenge. The team from Harmony Science Academy-El Paso finished 8th overall, the highest finish of any team from Texas. As a Top 10 finisher, the team won \$3,000 and was invited to participate in ASA's Student Launch program.



# Flying HIGHER

## Eulesse Drone Team Soars

### Above The Competition by Emma Lewis

In the realm of technological innovation, there's a widely-held belief that experience comes with age. However, the extraordinary Flying Tigers drone team from Harmony School of Innovation-Eulesse has shown that talent knows no bounds when it comes to age.

Fourth and fifth graders at HSI-Eulesse formed a drone club during the Fall 2023 semester, allowing younger scholars to learn about the development of drone obstacle courses, the mechanics of the machines and how to work as a team. In the midst of learning about the science behind drones and teamwork, the Flying Tigers secured the first place spot at the Regional Aerial Drone Competition last year as the only elementary school competing.

The team's success continued to soar from there. HSI's Flying Tigers then competed against 50 middle and high school teams at the Aerial Drone Competition Championship: Ingenuity, hosted by Kettering University, and came out victorious. Not only did the team receive the Judges Award, but they also made it to the quarterfinals and secured a spot in the top 10.

Little did the team know they were about to enter the national spotlight. Not only did the students receive recognition from their peers, but they were also personally invited to meet the Mayor of Eulesse, Linda Martin, featured on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt, and then showcased on all NBC stations across America.

This year, after a remarkable performance in the regional competition, the Flying Tigers represented the North Texas District at the National Drone Championship at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in mid-May. The Eulesse drone team was one of several from Harmony to compete in the national competition.

"We are incredibly proud of our students' achievements and the hard work they have put in to prepare for the National Drone Championship," HSI-Eulesse Principal Rasim Damirov said. "Their dedication to excellence exemplifies the values we instill in our students and they represented our state and the DFW area with distinction at the national level."

Ultimately, the competitions are not just about winning, but also about the invaluable lessons learned, the friendships forged, and the memories created along the way. The Flying Tigers' journey doesn't conclude with the competition; rather, it serves as the beginning of an open-ended exploration.



# Advancement for Good

## Students Tackle Environmental Issues in NASA's Carbon Capture Challenge

by Sally Magnuson

Students at the Harmony School of Advancement-Houston participated in an out-of-this-world opportunity through the NASA High School Scholars Program's carbon capture challenge.

The program was presented by Chevron and empowers students to develop innovative solutions to make our planet more environmentally safe. Participating in the challenge during this school year were Ms. Azra Ali's Advanced Placement Environmental Science classes.

The scholars discussed and analyzed the problem in the space shuttle with increased levels of carbon dioxide. They learned the effects of carbon dioxide on human health and discussed possible solutions.

In addition, students were asked to research compounds that react with carbon dioxide and find ways to safely remove carbon dioxide. After completing their research projects, students presented their solutions to their classmates and their ideas.

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***"This project helped my students to grow academically, socially and emotionally."***

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So, what is carbon capture? Carbon capture and storage (CCS), is a process in which a stream of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from industrial and energy-related sources is separated, conditioned, compressed, and transported to a storage location for long-term isolation from the atmosphere.

Students learned that the greatest danger of carbon capture is storage. There is a significant risk of leakage whether it be all at once, or gradually. Contamination of drinking water and earthquake-like stimulation are other risks.

Guest speakers from Chevron and NASA visited the HSA campus throughout the year and stressed the importance of reducing carbon emissions. In 2015, the United States adopted a legally binding international treaty on climate change called the Paris Agreement. Carbon capture, utilization and storage are crucial processes in supporting this agreement.

Ali's students have been learning about global changes and the effects of carbon dioxide on our environment. This project helped them find solutions to this real-world problem.

"The carbon capture challenge addresses a real-life problem," Ali said. "When this project was presented to my students, they were encouraged to think critically, analyze the situation, conduct research to gain knowledge and then apply their knowledge to find an answer to the problem."

Ali further explained that the students were creative in making a design of a novel system that removes or stores carbon from the air. Each team designed a prototype of a carbon capture system and a presentation explaining the design and how the system works. Students learned to follow the requirements such as scalability, size and effectiveness.

"As they worked in a group they learned to collaborate with other members and work as a team," she said. "They learned to overcome any differences and come up with a solution. This project helped my students to grow academically, socially and emotionally."



# From Scholars to **AUTHORS**

## *Sibling Duo Releases Three Books*

*by Ajdina Selimovic*

Two rising young stars in the literary world, Myra and Neal Gupta of Harmony Science Academy-Sugar Land, have published three books between the two of them in elementary school.

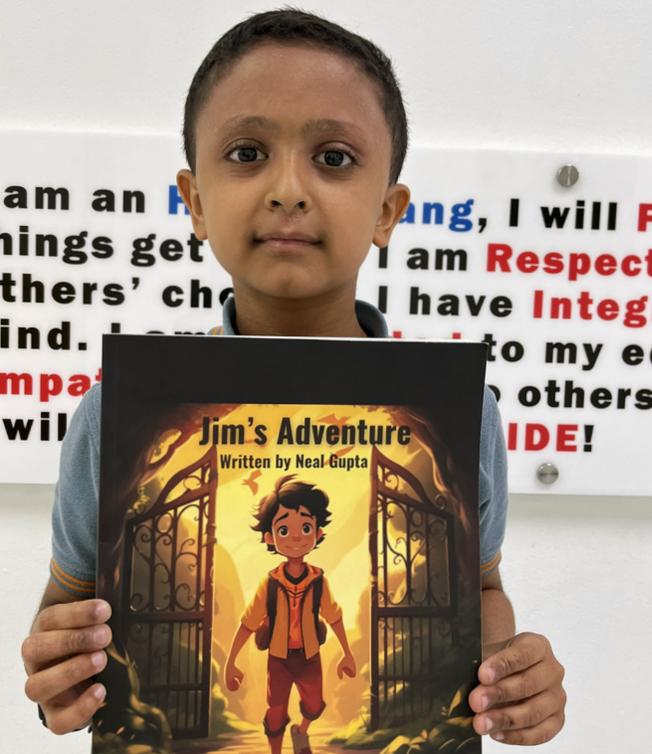
The siblings published their first books in first and second grade. Younger brother Neal was only five years old when he started writing his first book after being inspired by his sister Myra, who is a prolific writer. Their parents worked with illustrators from Pakistan, Ukraine and New Zealand using the platform Upwork to create the illustrations used within this book. The illustrations are inspired by Myra and Neal's hand drawn pictures which are included in the book.

Neal's book, "Jim's Adventures in the Forest," was published on September 2023 when Neal was in first grade. The book follows a boy named Jim who goes for an adventure inside the forest behind his house. He comes across multiple struggles, but finally makes it home after his diligence of never giving up.

Older sister Myra currently has two books published, one while in second grade and another in third grade. She is currently working on publishing her third book which is based on a story she wrote on the gingerbread man. Myra's first book, "Ruby the Mermaid," is about an extraordinary mermaid named Ruby. The story details Ruby's aspirations to leave the sea and explore land. Myra's second book, titled "The Magical Blue Box," revolves around how a child named Myra finds a magical blue box that transports her to a virtual world prompting her sister to bring her back to the real world.

When asked what inspired the siblings to publish books at such a young age, their parents Harsh and Megha said, "while credit in large part goes to Myra and Neal for being diligent about reading, writing and manifesting their imagination using stories, there is a profound contribution from Harmony Science Academy-Sugar Land teachers and administration who focus on developing and showcasing these skill sets," Megha said.

Their books are currently available for purchase on Amazon. With the support of their family and Harmony Public Schools, these young scholars are breaking barriers and showing everyone around them that age is certainly just a number.





# Playing His Own Tune

*Student Prodigy Strikes a Chord in the Austin Music Scene* by Tracie Seed

At the early age of five, Julian Shelton, a ninth-grade student at Harmony School of Excellence-Austin, found himself drawn to the piano keys, effortlessly tinkering out a simple version of “Jump” by Van Halen. Even while mastering the alphabet, Julian made music his playground and passion.

Fast forward to his teenage years and Julian’s musical prowess has blossomed into something truly extraordinary and auspicious. Within the last couple of years, Julian has embraced every facet of the music world, showcasing extraordinary talent in playing more than 10 instruments, performing with a prestigious Austin-based band, and even launching his own music writing and lessons business, aptly named JuelTones.

I definitely want to work in the music field. I am especially interested in music therapy.”

Last summer, when other teens were flipping burgers or babysitting, Julian knew he wanted to do use his passion to earn money.

Julian is the mastermind behind the aptly named JuelTones. This side hustle involves providing music lessons for various instruments or crafting custom songs tailored to his client’s unique tastes and stories.

“To be able to do what you love isn’t working,” he explained. “So, I had an idea how to earn money through music.”

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***“Music is my whole life. It’s something I’m good at, and I am the happiest when I’m putting smiles on people’s faces through music.”***

---

Julian’s crowning achievement came when he auditioned and clinched a coveted spot in The B Team, an elite house band from the prestigious School of Rock Austin. This accomplishment granted him the momentous opportunity to perform at Austin City Limits 2023 (ACL), where The B Team graced the Austin Kiddie Limits stage on a family-friendly Sunday at the festival.

Shelton rocked out and took center stage as the featured drum player on several iconic songs by Alice In Chains, Journey and Def Leppard.

Beyond the glitz and glamor of stardom, he envisions a career dedicated to spreading joy and healing through music.

“Of course, my number one choice is to be a famous musician,” explains Julian. “But, if that doesn’t work out,

Through teaching, he imparts technical skills and fosters music appreciation in his students. For Julian, seeing the smiles on his students’ faces is more than just a paycheck—it’s a validation of his purpose and passion.

“Music is my whole life. It’s something I’m good at, and I am the happiest when I’m putting smiles on people’s faces through music,” Julian shared. “With JuelTones, I can make money in an enjoyable way rather than mowing lawns or other dull or grueling tasks. I get a euphoric feeling when my students get a smile on their faces.”

As Julian’s journey unfolds, Julian eagerly awaits his next chapter. With each beat of the drum and each note sung, he continues to leave an indelible mark on the music world and beyond.



# Growing Responsibly

*Central Texas Partners Up to  
Preserve Local Plant Life* by Tracie Seed

In a groundbreaking initiative showcasing a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, Harmony Public Schools-Central Texas (HPS-CTX) joined forces with the Native Plant Rescue Project (NPRP) in December 2023 as they prepared to construct a new campus in Georgetown. But instead of revving up a bulldozer, participants joined forces to harvest vital local vegetation.

NPRP, a collaboration of esteemed Williamson County nonprofits The Native Plant Society of Williamson County and the Good Water Texas Master Naturalists, focuses on saving significant native flora before construction commences. NPRP carefully transports the plants to conservation partners such as the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and the San Antonio Botanical Gardens to be transplanted.

Ashley Landry, Texas Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society Member explained, “NPRP volunteers play a crucial role in rescuing important native plants, ensuring their preservation, and contributing to habitat restoration projects. The rescued plants are also utilized for local community pollinator gardens in Williamson County.”

On December 2, NPRP volunteers engaged in a successful harvesting event at the new construction site, rescuing various native plant species, including False Foxglove, Golden Prairie Clover, Blazing-Star, White Heath Aster and more.

This initiative aligns with Harmony’s goal of providing quality education while fostering awareness of environmental responsibility. By partnering with NPRP, HPS-CTX furthers its dedication to sustainability, contributing positively to the local ecosystem and promoting a harmonious coexistence between educational development and environmental conservation.

“We’re so proud to partner with NPRP and help rescue native Central Texas plants from the heart of Williamson County,” said Victoria Mancha, Public Relations Director for Harmony Public Schools-Central Texas. “This endeavor is more than a simple rescue; it is a commitment to nurturing a deep appreciation for local ecosystems that we hope will inspire our students to become sustainability ambassadors and guardians of our natural heritage now and into the future. Our community partnership with NPRP underscores the importance of collective action in preserving Central Texas’s unique biodiversity.”

Harmony Science Academy-Georgetown officially broke ground in Spring 2024. The district eagerly awaits the opening of the new campus in Fall 2025, and remains proud to be a part of a project that enhances the educational landscape while maintaining a commitment to environmental preservation.





# A Dream Come True

*HSE-Dallas Leads Texas as NFL/MLK Realizing the Dream School of Choice*

*by Susan Campbell*

Harmony School of Excellence-Dallas has been selected as the first charter choice in not only the Dallas area – but the entire state of Texas – to participate in the Martin Luther King III service cohort, a partnership between the Martin Luther King “Realizing the Dream” initiative and the NFL.

Texas is one of only eight states in the initial program. Other states include California, Wisconsin, Florida, Maryland, Illinois, Minnesota and New York. The Martin Luther King III Foundation is an organization dedicated to building a new culture of compassion, trust, dignity, acceptance and love through ideas, words and insights. The organization is leading the way in representing the three values: justice, equity and peace.

Since its launch, some students have clocked over 100 personal service hours and, collectively, students have amassed more than 200 hours for the MLK III Realizing the Dream initiative.

Students have worked toward the Realizing the Dream service goal through:

- Leading Black History Awareness, Down-Syndrome and Autism Awareness programs;
- Implementing anti-bullying campaigns;
- Organizing community food drives;
- Advocating for underprivileged children;
- Engaging in self education and civic engagement.

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***“Being an MLK/NFL School of Choice in Dallas is a testament to our continued commitment to service learning, and creating future leaders who are cognizant of their social responsibilities.”***

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Launched in February, Realizing the Dream is a monumental new movement to unite and uplift communities across America by calling for 100 million hours of service by the 100th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birth. The initiative is an ambitious five-year initiative to mobilize and inspire youth, educators and entire communities to take action on local issues and make a meaningful difference through acts of service.

As the only NFL School of Choice in Texas for the 2024 school year, HSE-Dallas is using student volunteers and student leaders from CRLP, Key Club, Student Council and Service Learning Society to lead the program.

HSE-Dallas College and Career Counselor and Seminar Advisor Dr. Pam Paramahamsan oversees the initiative at the school. Prior to the program’s launch, she was invited to speak at the official MLK Jr. Realizing the Dream event attended by MLK family members, including Martin Luther King III and his wife, Arndrea Waters King.

“Being an MLK-/NFL School of Choice in Dallas is a testament to our continued commitment to service learning, and creating future leaders who are cognizant of their social responsibilities,” Paramahamsan said.



# Putting the **SERVICE** in SLS

## Service Leadership Society Help Out in Communities Statewide

by Rebecca Murry

Harmony Science Academy-Dallas' Service Leadership Society members are extending their reach to make connections and support community causes in North Dallas.

Dallas City Council Member Kathy Stewart of District 10 met with SLS members during the second semester to discuss the role of local government, issues and challenges in the district and also to brief Stewart on the purpose of SLS.

During this meeting, current community leaders exchanged ideas and concerns with Harmony's future civic leaders. Stewart has a variety of responsibilities in her Council role and stressed the importance of volunteering to support local causes and events.

The councilwoman shared a number of projects, especially supporting efforts of the nonprofit Lake Highlands Public Improvement District (LHPID). SLS members were able to meet the organization's executive director Vicky Taylor, who shared how the LHPID strives to stimulate growth by creating and maintaining a safe, attractive and powerful economic environment that serves the surrounding community and welcomes new neighbors and businesses.

Throughout the year, SLS participants sharpen their research skills, form arguments, and develop presentation skills while engaging and serving their local communities. SLS programs also host elected officials and their staff at their campuses to learn more about careers in public service, legislative processes, and internship opportunities.

To learn more, visit [ServiceLeadershipSociety.com](http://ServiceLeadershipSociety.com).



# HARMONY AT A GLANCE



More than 20 years ago, Harmony Public Schools opened its first campus in Houston's historic Braeswood neighborhood.

Since then, we've grown into one of the state's most trusted and recognized schools for college preparation, character education and STEM curriculum. See how we'll be expanding to create even more opportunities for children across the Lone Star State.



## RECENT AWARDS

 x 23  
Best High Schools in America  
(U.S. News & World Report, 2024)

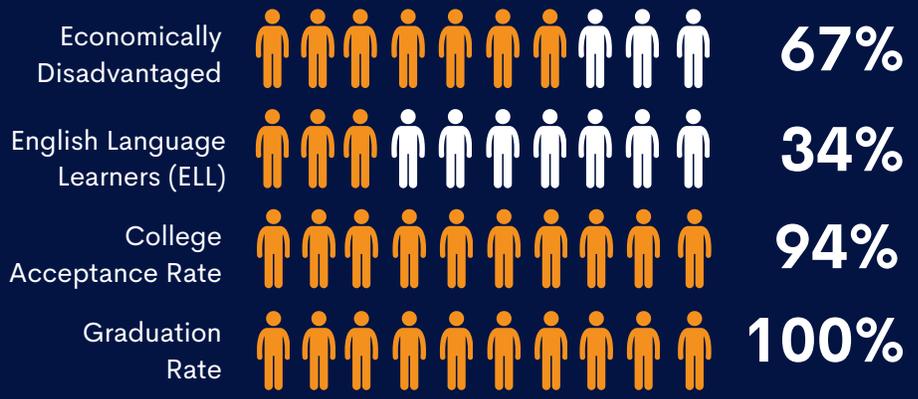
 x 21  
National Schools of Character  
(Character.org, 2020-24)

 x 40  
State Schools of Character  
(Character.org, 2020-24)

 x 7  
"A" Rating for Financial Accountability  
(Texas Education Agency, 2023)

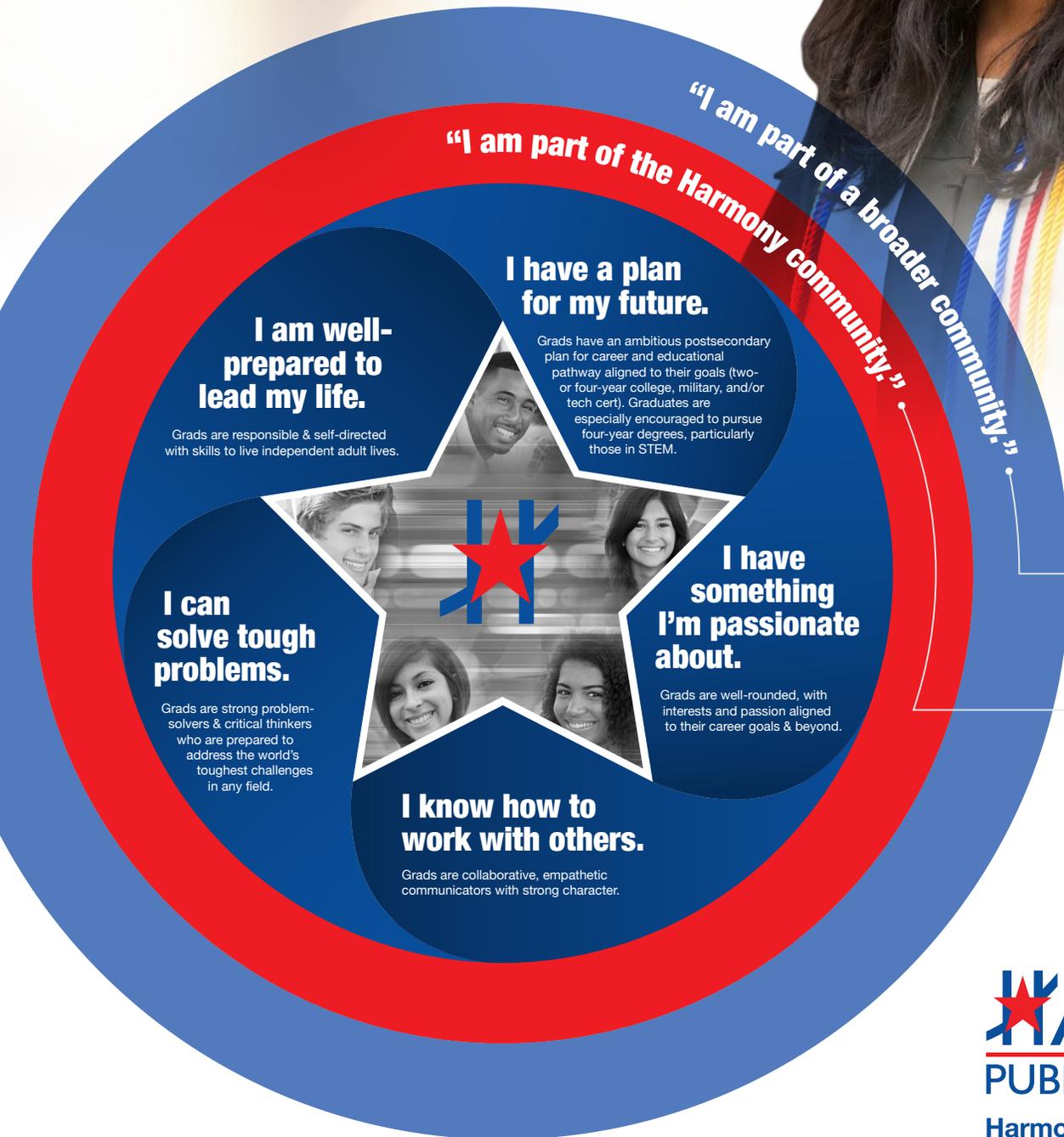
## STUDENT DATA

**41,977**  
Students Enrolled PreK-12



# Harmony Public Schools Graduate Profile

Our North Star



**I am well-prepared to lead my life.**

Grads are responsible & self-directed with skills to live independent adult lives.

**I have a plan for my future.**

Grads have an ambitious postsecondary plan for career and educational pathway aligned to their goals (two- or four-year college, military, and/or tech cert). Graduates are especially encouraged to pursue four-year degrees, particularly those in STEM.

**I can solve tough problems.**

Grads are strong problem-solvers & critical thinkers who are prepared to address the world's toughest challenges in any field.

**I have something I'm passionate about.**

Grads are well-rounded, with interests and passion aligned to their career goals & beyond.

**I know how to work with others.**

Grads are collaborative, empathetic communicators with strong character.

**"I am part of the Harmony community."**

**"I am part of a broader community."**

Grads understand themselves as part of - and are ready to contribute to - **their community, state, country, and world.**

Grads understand themselves as part of - and are ready to contribute to - **the HPS community.**



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