



**October Employee of the Month Jasmine Imo
Answers the Call to Serve Without Question**

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THE CONNECTOR

A Weekly Newsletter From The Superintendent Of Harris County Department Of Education

**HCDE HONORS ITS CAMPUS LEADERS
DURING NATIONAL PRINCIPALS MONTH**

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**REI, LEADERSHIP TEAM DIVE INTO DATA DURING
THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN HARRIS COUNTY**

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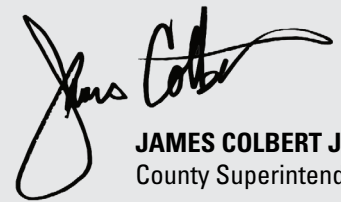
▶ Superintendent James Colbert Jr., right, competed at the Alief ISD Education Foundation Golf Tournament on Sept. 28.

I like to say that one of HCDE's primary goals is to find the blind spots in education and provide services to help districts address them. But blind spots are hard to find because they are just that: something you can't always see.

So it was with pride that I attended our Research and Evaluation Institute's State of Education in Harris County this week to delve into data pertaining to our 25 client school districts. This was a fascinating discussion that looked at trends in demographics, enrollment, test scores and accountability grades around the county. When you look at this data it is easy to see certain trends: who got what letter grade, how student populations changed from year to year and changes in enrollment. However, when you dive deeper into the data unique patterns and trends emerge, specifically dealing with data that drives behavior and actions of districts. This type of specific examination is part of HCDE's unique perspective, our ability to dedicate resources to seeing the trends in education locally and tailoring our services to address those issues. It was gratifying to listen as division leaders discussed how the data showed insight into ways their programs could better support districts and how we can continue to positively impact education in the region. I am proud that our leaders can see past the numbers of data to trends and patterns that shed a light on issues our partners are dealing with. Kudos to REI for their dashboard and the disaggregation of the data that allowed HCDE leadership to see how we can help bring clarity to a couple of blind spots.

I started the week representing HCDE at the Alief ISD Education Foundation Golf Tournament on Monday with Mr. Parker and Dr. Rodgers. On Tuesday, I met with a local superintendent followed by meetings with ELT members to discuss ongoing projects and initiatives. On Wednesday, I attended REI's State of Education in Harris County workshop followed by meetings with staff. Thursday started with reading at Dogan Elementary as part of my SuperMENTor duties followed by meetings with staff. Today, I met with staff at my NPO office.

Have a great weekend.



JAMES COLBERT JR.
County Superintendent

JASMINE IMO GOES THE EXTRA MILE FOR HEAD START FAMILIES, STAFF



Assistant Superintendent of Education and Enrichment Dr. CJ Rodgers nominated Head Start Family Services Manager Jasmine Imo for Employee of the Month because of her passion, expertise and ability to jump in to help families find the necessary support and resources to succeed.

► **Some people can walk into a room and immediately know their purpose is to lend a helping hand. They have the innate ability to see past a stranger's carefully crafted façade and reach the soul within that is calling for aid.**

It's a gift Jasmine Imo possesses, one that was recently demonstrated when a mother of four walked into Harris County Department of Education's (HCDE) Irvington building to enroll her children in school.

"I saw her and could tell this lady was distressed and needed some help," Assistant Superintendent of Education and Enrichment Dr. CJ Rodgers recalled. "The first name I thought of was Jasmine. I heard people speak highly of her and knew she helped families, so I called her up and thank God she answered."

Imo, a Head Start family services manager, currently develops processes and procedures to help more than 20 family service providers (FSPs) better support families. When she arrived downstairs to find Rodgers sitting with his laptop open, surrounded by a mom, three toddlers and a third grader, she recalled taking a moment to observe.

"When I finally sat down, he turned to me and said, 'What are you thinking?' I looked at the mom, and she just looked heavy, like the weight of the world was on her shoulders, and something clicked," Imo said. "I knew she needed more than a number to call, so we brought them upstairs and ended up turning the third-floor conference room into 'Operation Do Something.'"

Imo put aside her daily tasks and enrollment deadlines to

help the family in front of her. Upon getting to know them, her mission shifted from not only helping get the kids enrolled in school but also helping the family find shelter from a challenging home life.

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Jasmine Imo put aside her daily responsibilities and answered the call to help a mom who came to HCDE for help getting four kids enrolled in school. It turned into a mission to also help them find shelter from a challenging home life.



October Employee of the Month Jasmine Imo has a passion for providing services and resources to students and families. She graduated from Howard University with a master's degree in social work.



Imo photographed with the kids who made her realize she didn't want to become a teacher, but a social worker who provided direct services that could change their lives and circumstances.

"Jasmine had that drive in her, and she wasn't going to stop until they got exactly what they needed," Rodgers said. "You can tell that she was doing it because she knows what it means to provide exceptional services to people who are in dire need. She helped change the trajectory of that family and those kids' lives, and yes, it was that serious."

But that's just who Imo is at her core. She has a willingness and ability to step in whenever she's needed, and it's why she was named HCDE's October Employee of the Month.

The California native grew up believing she wanted to be a teacher, but during a student-teaching internship, Imo's heart called her in a different direction.

"I noticed one of our students looked a bit disheveled," she recalled. "Her clothes weren't clean often, she didn't talk much, and I knew there was something more to the story. I realized, as a teacher, my responsibility was to call the family and refer them to a case worker, but I knew that I wanted to do more."

That single moment changed the course of her life and career. Imo decided to enroll at Howard University, where she earned a master's degree in social work with an emphasis on children and families.

Today, her passion for helping others is ever-present in her work, as she supports FSPs and strives daily to improve division recruitment and enrollment across 12 campuses. She works behind the scenes to strengthen systems that connect families with the people, resources and opportunities they need.

"She is a true social worker all around, and it's refreshing to see how she interacts with staff and families," said Family Service Coordinator Cesilia Pereira. "This is not a career for her, it's a passion, and you can tell that she loves working with people and advocating for them."

"...SHE KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES TO PEOPLE WHO ARE IN DIRE NEED. SHE HELPED CHANGE THE TRAJECTORY OF THAT FAMILY AND THOSE KIDS' LIVES, AND YES, IT WAS THAT SERIOUS."

As a member of Head Start's leadership team, Imo has made it her mission to ensure everyone knows that FSPs are the "heart" of each campus. Beyond enrollment, they check in with families when a child is absent, conduct home visits when needed and build relationships with parents and guardians to learn about their individual needs. The support staff also connects families with community resources and services, including housing, food, health care and employment opportunities.

"If Head Start did not have family services staff, I don't know what Head Start would be," said an emotional Imo. "Families would not gain half as much access to the services they need and deserve, but that's why I love coming to work. They do so much for the littles and their families, and it brings me joy to pour into our staff, because I want them to be well enough to pour into the families that they work with."

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Jasmine Imo founded a nonprofit, *She is More Than Enough*, which helps teenage girls and young women navigate life, college and decision making.

Although Imo does not work on campus or regularly interact directly with families, when the opportunity arose in July, she took initiative to find a solution. She helped the mother enroll the oldest child in school and called a friend at Baker Ripley Head Start in north Houston to secure an immediate placement for the two-year-old. Head Start staff rallied to help throughout the day, with nutrition service providers bringing snacks, FSPs supervising the kids as Imo and the mother made calls, and Rodgers and Assistant Superintendent of Academic Support Services Jonathan Parker even brought lunch for the team.

"There was no laughter in the room. Everyone was concerned and doing whatever they could to help," Imo recalled. "I'm shocked and humbled at this recognition, but it wasn't just about me. That day showed the power of HCDE and the people who work here. We can always give you the information, but the caliber of people who work here will always go the extra mile to ensure families get exactly what they need."

In the months that followed, Imo has kept in touch with the family, receiving updates on their circumstances, offering

assistance or resources as needed and working to get a Head Start placement for the one-year-old twins.

"I was in Jasmine's office when the family notified her that they were able to find housing, and she just lost it," Pereira laughed. "She was so excited for the family, it was amazing to see."

Imo's story is a reminder that helping others is rarely about having all the answers. Sometimes, it's about recognizing when someone needs help, answering the call and refusing to walk away until you have done everything you can. That instinct has shaped Imo's career from the very beginning and is evident in the systems she builds to protect Head Start families.

"If you're lucky, you'll find yourself in a situation where you can serve, but you don't always get the chance to pick and choose," Rodgers explained. "Most times those situations find you, and I'm just so lucky and blessed that on that day, Jasmine answered the call without hesitation and with no questions asked. She's very deserving of the title, Employee of the Month." 🌟



Imo works with Head Start staff to inventory books, toys and other supplies that are distributed across 12 Head Start campuses for families in need.



▶ VIEW VIDEO

NATIONAL PRINCIPALS MONTH

MORE THAN PRINCIPALS: THE LEADERS BEHIND HCDE'S SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Whether someone is a born leader or develops their skills over time, they have the power to impact countless lives. Jatata Hutton, Trent Manuel, Courtney Waters and Travita Godfrey lead Harris County Department of Education's four special schools with a shared commitment to helping every staff member, student and family find a path to success.

National Principals Month, observed annually in October, is an opportunity to honor that dedication and showcase the profound impact a principal's leadership has on a school community. From creating spaces where students can grow and thrive to championing new opportunities and believing

in what's possible, these principals do far more than lead schools. They lead people, inspire teams and help students see beyond their current circumstances to their potential.

Throughout the month, the Communications and Creative Services team will highlight the principals in a campaign that includes a special video tribute and a short story about their lives and the paths that led them to careers in education. Principals will also be recognized for their leadership and impact during a special encore presentation at the Oct. 21 board meeting. Thank you for everything you do for Harris County! ★



41st ANNUAL R.T. GARCIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD WINTER CONFERENCE

Blooming *Strong* Beginnings

Where Educators Matter.
Purpose Takes Root & Curiosity Grows.

**Saturday
Jan. 30, 2027**

SAVE THE DATE: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS INVITED TO BLOOMING STRONG BEGINNINGS ON JAN. 30

Mark you calendars for the 41st Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference (ECWC) on Saturday, January 30, 2027, at the Kingdom Builders' Center, located at 6011 W. Orem Drive in Houston, TX, 77085.

This year's theme, Blooming Strong Beginnings: Where Educators Matter. Purpose Takes Root and Curiosity Grows, celebrate the educators and leader who help young learners thrive. Designed for PK3-2nd grade educators and leaders, the conference will offer meaningful profession learning, hands-on experiences and opportunities to connect with peers from across the region.

Attendees will be inspired by keynote speaker Angela Maiers, internationally recognized educators and founder of the You Matter movement, whose message reminds us that every child and every educator matters.

More than a professional learning event, the Early Childhood Winter Conference is an educator appreciation experience where participants leave feeling seen, valued, inspired and renewed.

Sponsor and exhibitor opportunities are available.

For more information, please visit, www.hcde-texas.org/ecwc. 🌟



CLICK TO REGISTER NOW!



REI LOOKS BEYOND THE NUMBERS TO UNDERSTAND THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN HARRIS COUNTY

Numbers can tell a story about where education has been, where it's headed and where new challenges may emerge. During its annual "State of Education in Harris County," the Research & Evaluation Institute brought nearly 30 members of #TeamHCDE together to examine that story through student demographics, enrollment trends and A-F accountability results from the districts Harris County Department of Education serves. The interactive session looked at current and historical data to identify performance patterns, emerging challenges and opportunities to fill gaps across the county. The conversation gave leaders a broader view of the educational landscape and helped connect those trends to the work, division priorities and the services HCDE provides to more than 25 local school districts. 🌟



HCDE NEW FACES: SEPTEMBER

Please join us in welcoming HCDE's new hires for September! Thirty-three new faces have joined our Administration, Adult Education, Business Services, CASE for Kids, Center for Safe and Secure Schools, Head Start and School-Based Therapy Services and Special Schools divisions.



KAALA DUFFY
ABS East



MASON DENLEY
ABS West



RITA AKINRINADE
Administration



KETRA BERGERON
Adult Education



CYNTHIA BUDWINE BAKER
Adult Education



OSCAR GALVIS
Adult Education



HUGH GRIFFIN
Adult Education



MELISA MARTINEZ
Adult Education



PATRICIA O'BRIEN
Adult Education



SUSANA QUINTANAR IBARRA
Adult Education



CAMILA RAMIREZ
Adult Education



DONALD ROBERTS
Adult Education



NATALY VASQUEZ LOPEZ
Adult Education



SALINA ZAMARRON
Adult Education



CHRIS RODNEY
Business Services



GARY JACKSON
CASE for Kids



OSWANEL REED
Center For Safe And Secure Schools



EVELYN ALMAGUER
Head Start



GINA DE LA CRUZ
Head Start



GISELLE HERNANDEZ
Head Start

HCDE NEW FACES: SEPTEMBER



DANA HINTON
Head Start



HAYLEY MANNING
Head Start



LETICIA ROSAS
Head Start



ERIKA TORRES
Head Start



REGINALD MITCHELL
Highpoint School



ADRIAN LEWIS
Procurement Services



NASEEME ASADI
School-Based Therapy Services



SHEENA MARI CARAMBA
School-Based Therapy Services



SYDNEY DARBE
School-Based Therapy Services



ORNA ROONEY
School-Based Therapy Services



SUSAN SCHWAITZBERG
School-Based Therapy Services



KYLEE SMATHERS
School-Based Therapy Services



TRANG VU
School-Based Therapy Services

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

8-11

TASA/TASB txEDCON

21

Board Meeting

22

Choice Partners Nutrition Show

23

Healthy Minds, Healthy Families Conference

NOVEMBER

3

Election Day

18

Board Meeting

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Richard Cantu
Board President



Dr. Erica Davis
1st Vice President



Dr. John McGee
2nd Vice President



Andrea Duhon
Position 2, Precinct 4



Eric Dick
Position 4, Precinct 3



Amy Hinojosa
Position 1, Precinct 2



Silky Joshi-Malik
Position 7, At-Large

DYNAMIC STRATEGY: HIGH-QUALITY STAFF



James Colbert, Jr.
Superintendent

► The success of any organization is ultimately determined by its people. Programs, services and facilities matter, but it is dedicated professionals who turn opportunities into outcomes and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. From Jasmine Imo, being named

October Employee of the Month for going above and beyond to support a family in crisis, to our Special Schools' principals being recognized during National Principals Month, HCDE employees lead with expertise, compassion and an unwavering commitment to service. That level of commitment is exceptional and runs throughout the culture of HCDE.

This month, we welcomed 33 new employees to HCDE. As the Department continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of Harris County, attracting and retaining talented professionals remains one of our greatest strengths. Every new hire brings skills, experiences and perspectives that help us better serve students, educators and communities.

Our employees are the driving force behind HCDE's impact. They build relationships, solve problems and create opportunities to help students, families and school districts succeed. Thank you to each member of #TeamHCDE for the work you do every day. Your dedication, expertise and commitment are what makes HCDE Unrivaled. 🌟