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# THE COUGAR CHRONICLE

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A Cornerstone Academy community newsletter

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## From the Director

On behalf of the students and staff, I would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all of those parents who have volunteered their time working on projects, chaperoning and especially teaching CESIT classes! We have had a record number of parents offering their talents, and the quality of CESIT choices have dramatically improved. SBISD is hosting a thank-you breakfast for all volunteers on Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. at Memorial City Mall (Gessner Entrance). I hope that you indulge yourself to allow us to celebrate your efforts and I look forward to seeing you! And, if you have yet the share your talents with us, please call us! We'll squeeze you in!



Important change! Beginning immediately, the parent pick-up for students after 3:30 p.m. will be at the end of the A-Hall on the west side of the building.

This change does not impact the parent pick-up location for right after school. Until construction is complete, we ask that any student staying for tutorials, practice, not picked up on time, etc. meet his/her parent at the doors at the end of the A-hall. We feel this change is necessary for your child's safety and allows better supervision than the east side. Students can wait indoors while watching for their parents to arrive. When your vehicle pulls up to the entrance, only then will your child step outside to greet you. We appreciate your cooperation and your understanding!

The long anticipated Pi Day is quickly approaching! Pi Day is scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup> (get it?) and we'll be throwing pies at staff members in the afternoon. This event is heavily dependent on parents to assist at tables so that as many staff members are available to be targets as possible. If you'd like to volunteer, please e-mail me!

Thanks again for everything you do to support your child and your teachers!

Jill Wright, Director

## Spring Fundraiser

Our spring fundraiser this year will be the ever-popular coffee sale. Some of you may remember that our students sold coffee in the past. Our coffee contact spent the last year in Iraq with his reserve buddies. Now he is back and ready to start his business again.

Here's the deal! The coffee is wonderful and just about as fresh as you can get. It is not roasted until it is ordered. You will find it comparably priced to other premium coffees and this year, we have added a few teas to the list as well.

The students will sell coffee for two weeks. We will kick-off the sale on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. All order forms and money are due in on March 15<sup>th</sup>. We will distribute the coffee to students at the end of the month for delivery to your purchasers.

We will be serving "Mount Java" coffee at the PTA meeting on February 28, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., so drop by for a flavorful cup!



## Is Your Adolescent Gifted?

The nominating period is now open for all SBISD students currently in grades 6 through 11 who wish to apply for the gifted and talented program (SPIRAL) for the next school year. Gifted and talented screening for students in Spring Branch schools is open to all currently enrolled students and the applications are due on Friday, February 24, 2006.

Do many of the characteristics listed below describe your middle school child, especially as you compare your child to others of the same age?

- § reads a great deal on his/her own
- § uses an advanced vocabulary
- § exhibits a well-developed sense of humor
- § understands complex concepts
- § learns easily
- § collects and organizes many things
- § shows originality/invention in ideas
- § likes dealing with "adult" issues

If this describes your child, you may want to nominate your child for SBISD's gifted and talented program. The G/T screening process involves testing, a portfolio of student work, teacher recommendations, and a review of previous scholastic records. G/T testing will take place Thursday, March 23rd at 8:15 a.m. here in the Cornerstone library.

Please refer to the pink flyer that was sent home with your child on Thursday, Feb. 9th for more details.

Students may pick up an application from Mrs. Perkins.

## Tennis Tournament

Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>

There will be a tennis tournament on Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. at the Cornerstone Academy's tennis courts. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders may play. Limit to 16 players.



Students must see Mrs. Hamilton to get permission slips in order to play.

## Looking for another way to become involved at Cornerstone?

Enter the lottery to become a member of Cornerstone Academy's Campus Improvement Team (CIT)!

The Cornerstone CIT meets the first Thursday of each month during lunch and occasionally in the late afternoons or evenings when necessary. We discuss campus concerns, issues and events. We examine our instructional program and measure the success of our initiatives.

If you're interested in obtaining a deeper understanding of our school and contributing time and energy, we encourage you to complete this application form to be a Parent Representative. Currently, we are seeking two parent representatives to complete 2-year terms. All applicants must complete the form (downloadable from the CSA website or available in the CSA office) and turn it into the Cornerstone office no later than 2:00 p.m. on February 24, 2006. The lottery will be held on Friday, March 3rd at 2:00 p.m. in the Cornerstone office. We're looking forward to having the opportunity of drawing YOUR name!

## Parent Surveys

Parent surveys are coming home today, Thursday February 16th! Please take a few minutes to provide your feedback! It is invaluable for us as we make programming decisions for next year!



## PTA General Meeting

Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

After some brief PTA business, Jill Wright will talk about Internet safety and the use of blogs by our very own students! Please come hear and see what's happening and how you can help protect your children! Mark your calendars now!

# Help your 7<sup>th</sup> Grader Prepare for the TAKS Writing Test

Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>

Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, all 7th graders will be taking the TAKS Writing Test. We have a modified schedule that day. There will be no elective/CESIT periods to allow students maximum time to take the test. Testing will begin between 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. Each student will write an essay and complete a multiple choice section. Students will be allowed to test until 3:10 p.m. if needed.

It is really important that your child get plenty of rest the night before and eat a good breakfast that morning! Thanks for helping your child come prepared.



## Expanding Your Horizons

Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>

Some very fortunate 6th, 7th and 8th grade girls from Cornerstone Academy will be attending the Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) program at The Rice School, on February 25<sup>th</sup>. This outstanding program is designed to nurture the interest of middle school girls in math, science and technology and expand their career vision in these areas. EYH fosters an awareness of opportunities in science and math based careers for women. The girls will have the opportunity to meet and interact with women using math and science in their professions and participate in fun and exciting hands-on workshops. EYH encourages young women to study as much math and science as possible by showing them the benefits of education and its relevance to their lives. EYH seeks to create a culture that says, "It's cool for girls to become scientists, mathematicians and engineers."

School buses will be leaving Cornerstone Academy at 7:00 a.m. on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

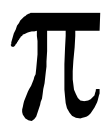
Although registration is closed for the EYH program, if you would like to learn more, visit their web site at:

<http://www.aauw-whc.org/eyh/>

## CESIT

Cornerstone Academy needs you! Please consider volunteering as a CESIT teacher for the last 6 weeks of our school year. CESIT stands for Career Exploration Special Interests and Talents. Our students would benefit hugely from your experiences and talents. What they learn from you might help encourage them to explore career paths they might not consider otherwise.

All we need is 45 minutes of your time, every other day for 6 weeks (about 13 sessions). Please call the school, 713.365.5766 or email Neera Chopra at [chopran@springbranchisd.com](mailto:chopran@springbranchisd.com). We look forward to hearing from you.



## National Pi Day

Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>



National Pi Day is celebrated on Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> (3.14). The sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet, pi, was first used for the familiar value 3.14159. 2006 will be the 300th Anniversary of the introduction of the mathematical symbol. Pi is well known as the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle.

The entire CSA community participates in mathematically themed activities that demonstrate the importance of math in everyday life on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Math teachers at every level pose challenges to the students such as memorizing as many digits of pi as possible. These challenges are turned in to the teacher who posed the challenge, and the winner of every challenge gets a prize. As an added fun activity, at 1:59 p.m., Cornerstone students will get the opportunity to "pi" their favorite teacher. Whipped cream pies will sell for \$1.00 each. Volunteers are needed to man the "pi" tables from 1:30 – 3:10 p.m.

Please e-mail Barbara Stephens ([Barbara.Stephens@springbranchisd.com](mailto:Barbara.Stephens@springbranchisd.com)) or call CSA at 713-365-5766 if you are able to volunteer. Our goal is to raise \$1,000 with all proceeds benefiting the CSA Math department.

Here is a little-known fact: A billion digits of pi, in standard type, would stretch from New York City all the way to the middle of Kansas.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade News

In the exciting conclusion of our Variables unit, 6th graders will be launching a variety of objects with flippers, which are small catapults. The Variables unit is about designing good controlled science experiments, and using two-coordinate graphs to analyze data and make predictions — skills the students will be using in field studies later in the year.

The culminating activity will be Flipper Field Day, February 24<sup>th</sup>. Students will work in teams of no more than three to construct their own catapult. Events will include maximum distance for an object, maximum height, accuracy, biggest catapult, smallest catapult, and most interesting design.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade News

LA/SS

What a whirlwind the 7<sup>th</sup> graders have been enjoying as they study early Americans in the original 13 Colonies. The students have used their study of this time period to create newspapers and magazines of original articles. We are quite impressed with our writers! In addition, historical novels helped to enhance the study, as well as learning what it meant to be part of a community by participating in an at-home project focusing on helping others. This community service project allowed student to understand the interdependence developed in the United States from the very beginning and enhance our objectives of involving students in good citizenship practices. We are very proud of their involvement in our "taking the learning outside the classroom" activity.

French I

Bonjour!

French I students have been concentrating on School, Home and Family. Topics included:

- § the school day and school supplies
- § family members and pets
- § birthdays
- § homes/apartments
- § rooms and furnishings

In addition to learning the correct French vocabulary and grammar for these units, students have completed several creative projects. Students have created a family tree, a family storybook, and a home (or room) floor plan. They have truly worked hard to learn many new verbs and vocabulary.

Upcoming topics include:

- § Mardi Gras
- § going to a cafe/restaurant
- § food and meals
- § going to the supermarket
- § clothing and clothes shopping

Do you or your student have a great recipe from a French-speaking country? Submit your recipe to Mrs. Becker. We are hoping to compile them into a "French Recipe Book" that will be available online in PDF format (or in print for those who submit recipes). Submissions are open to all grade levels. The recipe form can be found at:

[http://csa.springbranchisd.com/beckerj/french\\_culture.htm](http://csa.springbranchisd.com/beckerj/french_culture.htm)

Bon Appetit!

Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trip

Ms. Marianne Vergult received a \$500 grant and our 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have been using the Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips in Social Studies. If parents would like to visit the website they can go to:

<http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org>

Go to the "explore and learn" link, and then to "Electronic Field Trips". The user ID is history and the password is lives4ever.

We will be using a new software next six weeks called Photo Story 3 to create American Revolution projects. This software is a free download from Microsoft and lets students create presentations using photos, music, text, and voice-overs. It is a nice change from always using PowerPoint.

Ms. Vergult was also named Technology Teacher of the Month of February for SBISD. You can read more about her accomplishments on the Spring Branch ISD website at:

<http://it.springbranchisd.com/>

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade News

To segue from Manifest Destiny or the Westward Expansion, we are studying more thoroughly, reform movement during roughly the same time period.

The focus in Language Arts is directed toward the Transcendental Movement where we are reading/studying certain authors, their works, their philosophies, and, to a lesser extent, "Utopian Societies" and communes. Some of the authors studied in this unit are Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson, and Thoreau.

In Social Studies, reform movements in prisons, mental hospitals, orphanages, as well as the temperance movement and the push for women's rights are being studied. The unit will conclude with the construction of shadow boxes and with an Oregon Trail Scavenger Hunt activity.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents

We are in the planning process for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance and need your help! Does anyone belong to a club or organization that has a facility where we could hold the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance on either April 29<sup>th</sup> or May 6<sup>th</sup>? We are also looking for people interested in helping with decorations!

Please contact Kathleen Johnson at:  
Samuel\_johnson@sbcglobal.net

## NJHS News

National Junior Honor Society students have been sewing heart-shaped pillows for young patients at Hermann Hospital. The students have been working on the pillows for several weeks cutting patterns, sewing, and stuffing pillows. We will deliver these comfortable gifts, visit with patients and participate in a Valentine's Day Party with the patients on February 15<sup>th</sup>. NJHS is pleased to have the opportunity to help others in such a way!

## Band News

On Saturday, February 4, the Cornerstone Band attended the SBISD Middle School Solo and Ensemble Contest held at Northbrook Middle School. The students played individual solos with accompaniment which were heard and then rated by an impartial judge. They were rated on a scale of 1 - 5 with 1 being the best.

We were using a computer program for the accompaniment this year rather than a pianist, which we've used in all previous years. Well, on contest day the computer broke and we were unable to fix it in time to keep our schedule. The students, being the troopers they are, went on and played without accompaniment, and did really well! We sent 19 soloists and one brass quartet and came away with 19 1<sup>st</sup> rating medals! The medalists are as follows:

### Class 3 solos:

- § Aimee | - Clarinet
- § Andrea - Clarinet
- § Khoa - Flute
- § Kara | - Flute
- § Tzitziki - Flute

### Class 2 solos:

- § Grant - Clarinet
- § Monica - Flute
- § Gabriel - Alto Sax
- § Ethan - Alto Sax
- § Emily - Alto Sax
- § Dean - Trombone
- § Eric - Euphonium
- § Kyle - Trumpet

### Class 1 solos:

- § Sean
- § Seth . (Also received an Outstanding Performer medal)

### Class 2 Brass Quartet:

- § Sean , Kyle , Dean , Eric

Congratulations to all participants and thanks for your hard work and preparation! I am proud to be associated with you.

Reggie Goebel  
Band Director



## Student Council News

The Student Council has been awfully busy with carnation sales, Pennies for Patients, and getting ready for our Haybales and Hearts Dance.

This year students could have their carnations delivered to the recipients' class with or without a song. Thanks to all of our great vocalists who serenaded their classmates.

Cali Isaac brought the Pennies to Patients program to Cornerstone this year. Student Council decorated milk jugs and has been collecting money through the Language Arts classes. They have raised almost \$150 to donate to medical research in the areas of leukemia and lymphoma.

Our Haybales and Hearts Dance should be especially fun this year since our 6<sup>th</sup> graders have been learning to line dance and country western dance in P.E. this six weeks. Giant cowboys and cowgirls have been created by the Student Council for decorations. Concessions will be available at the dance this Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

## StraightWay News

The Cornerstone StraightWay team is bringing hope to hundreds of elementary students and is growing rapidly. Using Rap, Dance, Singing, Drama, Comedy, and Motivational Speaking, these young people have taken a new approach concerning the importance of making good choices. Their life-giving message has proven to leave a lasting impact on the lives of our youth.

They have recently performed at Sherwood Elementary and Edgewood Elementary. Upcoming elementary schools where they will perform include Shadow Oaks, Buffalo Creek, Ridgecrest, Meadowood, and Treasure Forest Elementary Schools. At each school they will share the message that substance abuse, bullying, and gangs are the WRONG choices and that students should loudly say NO to these dangerous things!

## Mark Your Calendar!

It won't be long before you find yourself in the middle of a mystery, where you and the other guests must put on your detective caps and try to solve a crime...

Join us for:

### MURDER at Ilbredde Manor



### Dinner and Auction

Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>

For donations, questions, or to join a committee  
call Nancy Durrschmidt, auction chair, at 713.939.0944

# Library News

Hours: 7:10 AM – 3:30 PM  
Open on designated days for lunch.

Did you know the Spring Branch Education Center Library serves both Cornerstone Academy and School of Choice students? Many parents aren't aware of the uniqueness of this library. The library uses a rotating schedule with Cornerstone students being scheduled for library and/or research on one week and the School of Choice students on another week.

The library collection might be compared more to a public library rather than a traditional middle school library. The titles are not separated according to schools or grade levels. You might, on the fiction shelf, find a Stephen King novel just an arm's reach from the Harry Potter books.

At the beginning of the school year during library orientation, the Cornerstone students are made aware of the uniqueness of the library. I teach them the philosophy of "self-censorship". Self-censorship is making choices for themselves with regards to their families' beliefs and values.

In addition, the Intellectual Freedom Self-Censorship Statement is posted at the circulation computer and in strategic locations throughout the library. It states: Reading is a joy, a privilege, and the right of every student. As you select the library books you read, please understand that every book is not the best choice for every student. If a book is unappealing or offensive to you in any way, please return it and select another. You, the student, know better than we, the library staff, what reading materials best serve you and your standards and beliefs.

Learning to make wise choices is an ongoing lesson for our youth. Selecting appropriate reading materials from the library is another such choice they have to learn. If you are concerned about your child's choice of reading materials, take a few minutes to sit with him or her and discuss it. The SBEC Library has a wealth of materials for middle school readers. If your child is finding it difficult to find appropriate materials, I will gladly assist!

Don't hesitate to call if you have any questions.



Sue Tallerine  
Spring Branch Education Center Librarian  
713.365.4190 x3509  
talleris@springbranchisd.com



Dear  
✉ **edwina**  
Junior

Presented by Cornerstone Academy  
Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> and Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup>  
9016 Westview Drive, Houston

# Upcoming Events

## FEBRUARY

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February 16		Parent Surveys Sent Home
February 17	7:00 p.m.	Haybales and Hearts Dance
February 20		CESIT Sign-up
February 21	7:45 a.m.	7th Grade TAKS Writing Test
February 21		No CESIT classes
February 22		8th Grade Social Studies Benchmark during LA/SS
February 23		Math Benchmark (Release TAKS)
February 23		Shortened CESIT schedule
February 23		Spring Fundraiser Coffee Sale Begins
February 24		6th Grade Flipper Field Day
February 24		Reading Benchmark (Release TAKS)
February 24		Shortened CESIT schedule
February 24		SPIRAL (Gifted/Talented) Applications Due
February 24	2:00 p.m.	Campus Improvement Team (CIT) applications due
February 25	7:00 a.m.	Expanding Your Horizons Conference
February 25	9:00 a.m.	Tennis Tournament at Cornerstone
February 28	8:00 a.m.	SBISD Volunteer Breakfast at Memorial City Mall
February 28	6:00 p.m.	PTA General Meeting

## MARCH

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March 3	2:00 p.m.	Campus Improvement Team lottery
March 6 – 10		Spring Break
March 14		Pi Day
March 15		Spring Fundraiser Coffee Orders Due
March 23	8:15 a.m.	SPIRAL (Gifted/Talented) Screening Test
March 29		Early Dismissal at Noon

## APRIL

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April 6 – 8		Dear Edwina Performances
April 22		Cornerstone Dinner and Auction