

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Students with special needs love Comal ISD's STAR Sports Program Bowling Competition

Before this school year began, Rhonda Thigpen's son with special needs dreaded going to the bus stop.

"He absolutely hated it," said Thigpen, who lived in a rural out-of-state community before moving to Texas over the summer. "I had to do everything in my power to get him to go to school."

That all changed when Thigpen's family moved into Comal ISD.

Her son Chinedu was definitely all smiles on Nov. 20, when he received his silver medal during the award ceremonies of Comal ISD's STAR (Specialized Training in Athletics and Recreation) Sports Program Bowling Competition at Fiesta Lanes in New Braunfels.

"Now, he can't wait to get up and get on the school bus," Thigpen said. "The teachers here have done wonders for him, and he absolutely loves activities like this."

Members of the New Braunfels Fire Department handed out gold, silver and bronze medals to every one of the more than 75 students from around the district participating in the event.

"I've seen such a big difference in my son since he's been competing in this program," said Lolanda Espinosa, whose son Xavier is a student with special needs at Canyon High. "He's more outgoing in everything he does in his life because of the confidence he's gained here."

Omar Palos, Smithson Valley High paraprofessional, was working with SVHS student Sergio Aguilar.

"I think this is so important because it shows them they can do the same things other kids can," Palos said. "This is such a great life experience for them. It's one they'll remember in 20 or 30 years."

Matt Rodriguez, a student with special needs at Canyon High, said he loves competing against his classmates.

“It’s pretty cool,” Rodriguez said. “It’s fun to show off in front of my friends and family. I love it when I get strikes and spares.”

The competition was aided by dozens of volunteers, including helpful students from Canyon High and Canyon Lake High, and Church Hill Middle. Many family members turned out to watch the bowlers.

STAR Sports Program students will celebrate their victories at the Winter Wonderland Dance at SVHS on Dec. 4.

“We couldn’t have done this without our volunteers,” said Terry Werchan, the head of Comal ISD’s STAR Sports Program. “I think everybody involved went home with a smile on their face and a tear or two in their eyes.”

Comal ISD’s STAR Sports Program will next have a track and field competition in the spring at Canyon Lake High.

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IN PHOTOS:

Canyon Middle’s Xavier Espinosa, a student with special needs, is all smiles before hurling his bowling ball in hopes of a strike during Comal ISD’s STAR Sports Program Bowling Competition at Fiesta Lanes in New Braunfels.

Sergio Aguilar, a student with special needs at Smithson Valley High, gets a little help from SVHS paraprofessional Omar Palos during Comal ISD’s STAR Sports Program Bowling Competition at Fiesta Lanes in New Braunfels.