

# Comal Independent School District

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Four alumni honored as CISD Outstanding Graduates

Four CISD alumni were honored with the prestigious 2010 Comal ISD Outstanding Graduate Award during the Comal Education Foundation's Academic Recognition Banquet May 19.

The award recognizes Comal Independent School District alumni for



excellence and notable achievements since graduating. This is the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the program. Each recipient received a specially designed acrylic award and a photo plaque of each honoree will hang on the schools' Wall of Honor.

The honorees are:

**Courtney Christine Hurst Bridgeman DVM** (SVHS '98) It was easy to see at an early age that Courtney Hurst was going to be somebody. At Smithson Valley High, she was a silver medalist in the Academic Decathlon, a standout on the speech and debate team, and the salutatorian of her class. After earning her bachelor's degree in animal science as a Cum Laude graduate from Texas A&M University, Courtney was accepted into the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine. After volunteering her time in the Aggie guide and service dog program before graduating with her degree in veterinary medicine, it seems very

appropriate Courtney would make her life's work unique. Instead of opening a private practice that might have ensured her a bigger bank account, she took a job at the San Antonio Humane Society, where she became its first full-time veterinarian in 2008. Since then, Courtney has continued to collaborate to bring a strong and effective medicine program to the shelter, has established a high-volume spay and neuter facility and continues the struggle to save each homeless pet one at a time. Courtney was recently married to her husband Jason in 2009.

**Tonya S. Williams Drake** (SVHS '82) If you've ever been to downtown San Antonio, chances are pretty good you've seen Tonya's work. As the Special Projects Manager for the City of San Antonio, she's coordinated and overseen downtown events like the Alamo Plaza Tree Lighting, the River Parade, the New Year's Eve Celebration, the Houston Street Fair and Market, the San Antonio Marathon and San Antonio Spurs world title celebrations. She works closely with the San Antonio Police and Fire departments, as well as many other companies to make sure these projects are completed. Tonya honed her skills first as an administrative assistant then as an administrative services manager at the Alamodome. She has also acted as the chairman and president at the Rolling Oaks Baptist Church for six years and is the commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Department in Converse. Tonya has helped send more than 75 children to summer camp through mission work, and has managed "Operation Home Front" in San Antonio, which has provided more than 450 children holiday gifts over the past three years. Tonya has one daughter, Kristin, a teacher at Smithson Valley Middle.

**Deborah Linnartz Wigington** (CHS '96) showed leadership qualities at an early age – as historian of the Canyon High student council, as the captain of the color guard and as a member of the National Honor Society. She then graduated with honors from Southwest Texas State University before deciding to pursue a profession in law. She continued to impress, graduating from Baylor Law School as a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society. Deborah completed her course work at Texas State and Baylor Law School in a combined five years time. Her first job after college in *Waxahachie* took her even further away from home,

but Deborah got back to Central Texas as quick as she could, opening up her own law firm in New Braunfels in 2007, which she operates with her husband Steve. She has been elected as both treasurer and secretary of the Comal County Bar Association. Deborah prides herself on the pro bono cases she is able to accept to assist those who cannot afford legal representation, as well as the cases she takes on to aid Child Protective Services. She has been known to seek out resources to assure the children leaving her courtroom have the best chance possible to become productive members of society. She is also active at First United Methodist Church in New Braunfels and her Sunday school class where she offers her time, talents and funds. Deborah and her husband Steve have one daughter.

**Charlene Wunderlich** (CHS '66) Charlene is a rare treasure who has dedicated her life to serving others. Shortly after graduating from Canyon High and Southwest Texas State University, she began a teaching career that would span four decades. Her first job in Comal ISD started in the fall of 1974 at Bulverde Middle School. After a stop at Smithson Valley Middle, Charlene returned to Rahe Bulverde Elementary before helping open Arlon Seay Intermediate in 1996. Wunderlich's final stop in Comal ISD came when she helped open another new school, Rebecca Creek Elementary, in 2002. After teaching sixth-grade science for 25 years in Comal ISD, Charlene spent the final 10 years of her career teaching in the special education department. She was named Comal ISD's Teacher of the Year in 2000, and taught many children of former students before retiring after 35 years in the district in 2009. It's easy to see why Charlene was described by one principal as an invaluable pillar of the community. She has also through the years been a member of the Spring Branch Volunteer Fire Department, and has been a strong supporter of both Girl Scouts of America and 4-H. Charlene has helped organize and has judged and volunteered at the Comal County Junior Livestock Show for more than 25 years, and is an active member and volunteer at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Charlene and her husband Ronnie have three children and two grandchildren.

