

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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HLES has reason to celebrate Public School Volunteer Week

When the idea of forming a science club came to Hoffmann Lane Elementary teacher Sheila Pfeffer last summer, she had no idea how much work it would entail.

Luckily for Pfeffer, HLES is one of many Comal ISD schools district-wide that has a strong base of volunteers.

In stepped Richard and Nancy Wackerbarth, who are members of the Comal Master Gardeners Association, and the science club began to take shape.

"I quickly realized with all my other duties as a teacher, it would be hard to start a science club on my own," Pfeffer said. "I simply could not have done this without Richard and Nancy."

The Wackerbarth's were presented a special plaque by Pfeffer and members of the science club on April 22 to help commemorate Public School Volunteer Week, which runs April 19-23.

There will also be a permanent plaque placed in the school's outdoor garden area to honor the couple for all they have done to help HLES students.

"Richard and Nancy really stepped up when we needed them to," Pfeffer said. "They've been coming up to the school every Friday, and our students have learned so much from them."

The outdoor garden was built at the beginning of the school year when gardening was chosen as the science club's theme.

In the fall, students planted cabbage, broccoli, carrots, spinach, lettuce, peas, rosemary and onions. In the spring, they planted tomatoes, squash, beans, and flowers to help attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

“Mr. Richard and Mrs. Nancy have taught us how to grow and take care of things,” said HLES student James Lowry. “Now I’m thinking of plating my own garden at home.”

Richard said it’s been very rewarding for he and his wife to spend time volunteering at HLES.

“I think it’s great we’ve been able to pass on some of our knowledge to the kids,” he said. “The best thing about it is seeing their faces light up when they see something new.”

Nancy said she looks forward to the days she and Richard spend with the students.

“It’s nice to be able to give back to the community,” she said. “It’s been wonderful to help teach the kids things they might not have known about before. Some of them had never seen a tomato or carrot grow.”

HLES student Matt Boothe said he’s been inspired by the time Richard and Nancy have spent at the school.

“They’ve taught us to be helpful toward others,” Boothe said. “I definitely plan on volunteering when I get older.”

Pfeffer said she’s already seen the volunteerism affect rub off on her students.

“I see a lot of the older students taking the time to help the younger students when we’re working in the garden,” Pfeffer said. “I think that’s a direct result of what Richard and Nancy have done for our kids and our school.”

HLES is lucky enough to have many volunteers that help throughout the school year. They were honored with a lunch at the school during Public School Volunteer Week.

“We have a great tradition of parents and grandparents volunteering at Hoffmann Lane Elementary,” said HLES principal Janice Tubb. “Whether it’s coming up and reading to the children or working in the garden like Richard and Nancy do, our volunteers greatly increase the morale of all of our students and faculty here, and we think that’s fantastic.”

IN PHOTOS: Hoffmann Lane Elementary teacher and science club sponsor Sheila Pfeffer hands a plaque to Nancy and Richard Wackerbarth, members of the Comal Master Gardeners Association who volunteer at the school on a weekly basis.

Volunteers Richard and Nancy Wackerbarth explain to Hoffmann Lane Elementary students (l-r) Zoe Judice, Hope Pfeffer and James Lowry, that it's about time to see new tomatoes in the school's outdoor garden.