

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Foundation banquet honors graduates, alumni

Two alumni will be honored with the prestigious 2011 Comal ISD Outstanding Graduate Award during the Comal Education Foundation's annual academic recognition banquet on Tuesday, May 17. Called the Jan Heckendorn Academic Recognition Banquet in honor of one of the Foundation's founding members, the banquet also honors the top students at each of the district's three comprehensive high schools. The event will be at the McKenna Events Center.

Outstanding Graduates are nominated by members of the community to recognize Comal ISD alumni for excellence and notable achievements since graduating. This is the 13th year of the program. Each recipient receives a specially designed acrylic award. A photo plaque of each honoree will hang on each of the school's Wall of Honor.

The honorees are:

Jennifer Saunders (CHS 1971). Justice of the Peace Jennifer Saunders is a 1971 graduate of Canyon High School. Her lifelong service to Comal County began soon after high school as Precinct 4 Court Clerk, where she served for more than 20 years. She was elected Justice of the Peace in 2002, and through the years she has mentored a number of students who come through her court with truancy challenges. A strong believer in family, Jennifer has been married for four decades to Robert "Jiggs" Saunders and they are the proud parents of their son, Stryker. At Canyon High, she was named

Homecoming Queen and FFA District Sweetheart and was a member of the National Honor Society. She is a member of the Canyon Lake Republican Women.

Jillian Hurst Tappan (SVHS 2000). As executive director of STARRY Inc., Jillian Hurst Tappan's primary role is to help underserved youth in Central Texas. A graduate of Smithson Valley High School in 2000, Jillian has worked for STARRY Inc. —a nonprofit agency that provides services to children and families through counseling, emergency shelter, mentoring and foster care—for five years. Family is a high priority for Jillian and her husband, Brandon (also a graduate of Smithson Valley High School), who are proud parents of Branson and Aubrie. At Smithson Valley High, she graduated 7th in her class and was a member of the National Honor Society. She was awarded the Mitte Circle of Excellence Award twice for academic performance and community service during her time at Texas State University, where she earned a bachelor's and master's degree.

Forty-five seniors at Canyon High School, Canyon Lake High School and Smithson Valley High Schools, their families and the one teacher who has made the greatest difference in their lives will all be honored at the banquet. Portraits of each of the students and his/her special teacher, provided by Sam Roberts Photography of Bulverde, are included in the evening's program. Wells Fargo is Presenting Sponsor of the event.

The banquet is named after Mrs. Heckendorn, who was instrumental in the founding and creation of the Comal Education Foundation. She was a driving force behind the Foundation's long-standing academic recognition banquet. In addition, the Heckendorn family awards two scholarships each year to graduates of Smithson Valley High School.

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