**HISD recognizes top volunteers for being “shining stars”**

*May 12, 2016* – The Houston Independent School District honored its top volunteers today during the annual Volunteers in Public Schools Recognition Reception.

Each year, the Volunteers in Public Schools program — more commonly referred to as VIPS —enlists thousands of parents, community members, business professionals, and youth who are willing to dedicate their time to support HISD students. Volunteers help in classrooms, libraries, media centers, clinics and school offices, serving as tutors, mentors, teacher partners, speakers, security patrols, chaperones, interpreters, and even cafeteria monitors.

The theme of this year’s reception is “Volunteers are Shining Stars.” Volunteers were nominated for awards in four different categories. Winners were selected from 12 finalists.

First launched in 1970, VIPS now has more than 35,000 volunteers district-wide who have dedicated countless hours to schools, programs, and events across Houston.

This year’s award recipients are:

**Jean Davis Myers Award: Marathon Oil Volunteers, Browning Elementary School**

Fifty-six Marathon Oil company volunteers shared their time, talents and gifts this year at Browning Elementary School. Marathon Oil has served in some capacity at Browning for more than 20 years. During this school year, volunteers partnered with Junior Achievement to provide at least two to three volunteers in each classroom in grades K-5. The volunteers taught five 45-minute lessons on a range of topics, including family, community, and finance, depending on the grade level. They also coordinated the Pen Pal letters program for 78 fourth-graders for six months. The fourth-graders developed writing skills, as well as a mentor friendships through the program. Marathon Oil financially supported the school this year with a $12,000 donation that was used to promote student academic achievement and attendance. The donation allowed Browning to purchase bikes, prizes, and certificates for students recognized at each nine-week honor roll and perfect attendance ceremony. Part of the donation also was used to strengthen the home-school connections program by purchasing educational door prizes for participants.

**Charles Harding Senior Award: Owen Conerly, volunteer at Milby High School**

Owen Conerly has been a volunteer at Milby High School for more than 15 years. Since retiring from Shell Oil after 40 years, Conerly has volunteered for numerous hours at the school. He is the founder and current president of the Milby Alumni Association. Some of his many contributions to the students and teachers include providing scholarships to students, professional development support, and academic achievement recognition with Kindles for students. He also helped establish the school’s Alumni Plaza Walk of Memories.

**Parent Partner Award: Anne Geyer, volunteer at Wharton Dual Language Academy**

For more than nine years, Anne Geyer has volunteered at Wharton Dual Language Academy. She has initiated and developed numerous programs and activities that promote student achievement. Her literacy efforts include starting Reading Buddies, a Spanish language reading program where students act as mentors and reading tutors to kindergarten and first grade students. She assisted with the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program application process by providing support to the community about the program and planning activities to support teaching and learning. She helped Wharton obtain successful authorization as an IB Primary Years Program World School in June 2014. Her energy to create new and exciting ways to get students, parents and faculty engaged continues to grow each year. One of her latest efforts is the creation of an afterschool yearbook club which recently published its first yearbook.

**Youth Volunteer Award: Amy Fan, Bellaire High School**

The Youth Volunteer Award recipient, Amy Fan, is a force to be reckoned with among her peers at Bellaire High School. Fan is a National Merit Scholar and a founding member of the HISD Student Congress. Her voice has been heard before the Texas Supreme Court where she presented the Amicus Curiae Brief, which sought to sue the state on behalf of 600 school districts for “unconstitutional and inadequate funding” for public education. She also is the founder of the Dear HISD blog, a platform that promotes student voices throughout HISD schools. She excels in her studies and serves in other volunteer capacities as a member of the National Honor Society, French Honor Society and as Bellaire’s Student Council Class Treasurer.

For more information about VIPS or to volunteer, go to [www.houstonisd.org/VIPS](http://www.houstonisd.org/VIPS).

