

Distinguished Alumni and Scholarship Awards 2025



4/4/2025 By: Todd Martin



While honoring distinguished graduates from Killeen ISD's past, a proud community reserved its primary focus on tomorrow's stars during an annual celebration signaling the coming end of another school year.

The KISD Education Foundation and Alumni Association hosted the annual Distinguished Alumni and Scholarship Award Ceremony Thursday at the Killeen Civic and Conference Center.

See a photo gallery of the event here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/killeenisd/albums/72177720324866072>

The dual event began with the recognition of 76 soon-to-graduate seniors who earned almost \$100,000 worth of scholarships and college waivers from a wide variety of generous donors.

Next, the school district foundation leadership took a look back to honor five distinguished alumni, all sterling examples of success in both career and service.

This year's distinguished alumni honorees include Alison Schanep Belliveau, Rockwall ISD principal and executive director (Ellison Class of 1993), Amanda Burch, U.S. Magistrate Judge (Ellison Class of 1994), Christopher Diem, Texas A&M University School of Medicine Assistant Dean of Student Affairs (Harker Heights Class of 2001), Carlos De Los Santos, NASA senior systems engineer (Killeen Class of 1983) and Leroy Nellis, retired former Travis County budget director (Killeen Class of 1965).

After receiving their plaques, each alumnus addressed the audience, recalling special teachers from their days in Killeen schools and thanking family members and other supporters.



In various ways, they each looked to the award-winning seniors and praised their accomplishments while charging them with using their considerable skills to impact the world for good.

Burch, an attorney recently named as a federal magistrate judge, assured the soon-to-graduate seniors that KISD prepared her well to compete among peers who attended the most elite schools. She also urged the seniors to serve others.

"Think about what you can offer to your community," she said, noting that communities are not limited to geographic proximity, but include populations in need all over the globe.

"I love being from Killeen," said Diem, explaining how he recognized in college how KISD taught him to work with people of all backgrounds and experiences. "KISD prepares you to work with others. It prepares you to be a better person, to be a better leader."

De Los Santos said it took him 15 years to land his current position as a NASA engineer. He encouraged students to persevere and not give up on their dreams.

Nellis told an inspiring story about how his work as Travis County budget director gave him an inside look at the jail system and encouraged him to mentor a kindergarten student from a troubled neighborhood.

His compassion inspired county and city programs that put hundreds of people to work as volunteer mentors and eventually led to development of an organization that has provided up to 700 mentors to children.

Scholarship recipients, chosen among 250 applicants, expressed gratitude and excitement to walk in the footsteps of their distinguished forebears.

"I cannot express how grateful I am for my sponsor to choose me. We have some very studious minds here and I'm grateful to be part of that," said Dakken Thurston, a Killeen High School senior.

"The district is great about providing a variety of education and I love it," he said.

"It feels phenomenal," said Jessica Reesman. "The assistance is great to say the least. I want to pay for college myself without going into debt. To receive a scholarship after applying for so many is like a breath of fresh air. I feel like I can keep going. I'm beyond excited."

This year's scholarship recipients include the following:



Chaparral High School

Madeline Dano, Bunkley "Coach" Morris Scholarship \$1,800.
Madison Edwards, Kevin Bark Memorial Scholarship \$1,000.
William Hickok, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.
Abigail Jimenez, Dick and Barbara Burke Memorial Scholarship \$1,000.
Ahonesty Lawrence, Morgan Family Scholarship \$1,000.
Derek Mercado, KISD Education Foundation Board Scholarship \$2,000.
Abigail Watson, Lolly Buckley Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Amara Wiltzius, Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce Scholarship \$1,000.



Early College High School

Peyton Carpenter, Heart-of-a-Lion Scholarship \$1,000.
Aundrea Del Pozo, Rick and Karen Morris Scholarship \$1,000.
Jasmine Escalante, Beth Robinson Exceptional Abilities Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Ester Farmer, Margaret Hunt Memorial Scholarship \$1,000.
Erica Fumador, Gerald and Juanell Byrd Skidmore Scholarship \$1,000.
Kathrin Hernandez, Vernon-Cummins Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Mario Hinojos Joni Lutz, De Los Santos Education Scholarship \$1,500.
Aariyon Holt, Tyler James Memorial Golf Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Camia Mateo Carrasquillo, De Los Santos Academic Scholarship \$1,500.
Angel Otero, Myrtle Cockerham Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Shawn Owens, Johnny Watson Family Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Angelea Phillips, Gary and Helen Purser Family Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Isabel Ramos, Lions Pride: Exemplifying Character, Honesty, and Sincerity \$1,000.
Ariana Ramos, Lions Pride: Exemplifying Character, Honesty, and Sincerity \$1,000.
Thomas Ramsey, Central Texas College 12-Credit-Hour Tuition Waiver
Jessica Reesman, Educated Angels Scholarship in Memory of C Zachary Sheppard \$1,000.
Evelyn Reyes, Schlueter Scholarship Fund \$1,000.
Aminah Robinson, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.
Nelly Rodriguez, Heart-of-a-Lion Scholarship \$1,000.
Stephany Zamora, Killeen School Retirees' Association Scholarship \$1,500.



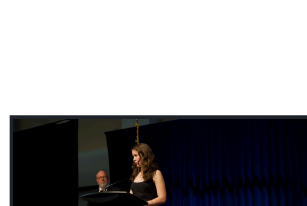
Ellison High School

Kathryn Baldovino, Jennifer Eric Sims Sullivan Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Lynnae Bentley, Bunkley "Coach" Morris Scholarship \$1,800.
Wardah Bhatti, John and Gladys Driver Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Chanelle Cancel, Harriet C. Jackson Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Jonathan Dominguez, Crow Family Memorial Scholarship \$1,000.
Jaylyn Madueno, Brumagim Family Endowed Scholarship \$1,500.
Nabihah Nasir, John and Gladys Driver Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
A'nya Pato, Dr. Henry A. Mayer, Jr. Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$2,500.
DeShawn Sutton, Central Texas College 12-Credit-Hour Tuition Waiver
Frank Yezpe Infante, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.



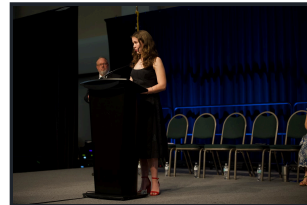
Harker Heights High School

Joshua Bambe, Norma Gray Memorial Scholarship \$2,500.
Fylee Bethune, Dorroh Family Scholarship \$1,000.
Gabriella Del Pilar, Dennis Eakin Kia Scholarship \$1,000.
Cheyenne Harvey, Kyle Hilliard Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Donte Jennings, Central Texas College 12-Credit-Hour Tuition Waiver
Wonkuk Lee, KISD Education Foundation Board Scholarship \$2,000.
Jolie Mounthongdy, Ace M. Connell Music Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Isabella Rivera, The Charlton Family Scholarship \$1,500.
Grant Schoel, Mike Russell Eagle Scout Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Lilly Taylor, Central Texas College 12-Credit-Hour Tuition Waiver
Joshua Veiga, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.
Jordan Wood, Jerry Lisenbe Memorial Scholarship \$2,000.



Killeen High School

Jazmin Arango, Gerald and Juanell Byrd Skidmore Scholarship \$1,000.
Anelisse Arriaga, KHS Class of 1974 Scholarship \$1,500.
Karina Balderas, Brumagim Family Endowed Scholarship \$1,500.
Sophia Camacho Guerrero, Subhani Foundation Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Jasmine Conant, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.
Georgia Daskalakis, James K. Hubert Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$2,500.
Erica Escala, Central Texas College 12-Credit-Hour Tuition Waiver
Janetta Fabian, Cleaver Family Endowed Scholarship \$3,000.
Xavier Flores, Glenn and Pat Collins Scholarship \$1,250.
Saraly Gallardo, GFCW Wednesday Review Club Scholarship \$1,000.
Samantha Garcia, Norma Gray Memorial Scholarship \$2,500.
Stephanie Henriques, Joseph L. Searles, III Memorial Scholarship \$1,000.
Veronika Irizarry, Bill Yowell Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Julie Natividad, Dr. Jim and Nancy Hawkins Scholarship \$1,500.
Devi Ramsumare, Cleaver Family Endowed Scholarship \$3,000.
Dakken Thurston, Andreas O. Garza Memorial Scholarship \$1,500.
Se'Arrah Wright, Killeen School Retirees' Association Scholarship \$1,500.



Shoemaker High School

Chilna Alcine, KISD Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,000.
Carlos Diaz Torres, Emmadell and Wallace Vernon Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Brenden Findley, Al "Doc" Wilson Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Anya Fishburne, Leo Buckley Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Angela Nguyen, Mills Family Scholarship \$1,000.
Benjamin Peevy, Thoppil Family Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Jomar Rodriguez, Santiago KISD Education Foundation Board Scholarship \$2,000.
Kadence Taylor, Brad Pfister Memorial Endowed Scholarship \$1,000.
Rebecca Wilder, Central Texas College 12-Credit Hour Tuition Waiver

[BACK](#)

