

# Last two GeoForce groups finish summer academies

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With the recent completion of the ninth and eleventh grade academies, the 2008 GeoFORCE Texas summer academies are officially over.

Closing ceremony for the ninth grade academy was held on July 19 on the SWTJC Uvalde campus, while 11th graders ended their summer activities with a closing ceremony Aug. 2 at the Uvalde Adult Activity Center.

The 40 students in the ninth grade academy visited the University of Texas Austin campus to experience university life and to learn basic geological concepts prior to a cross country trip to the Washington, D.C. area and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Reston, Va.. At the USGS offices, students were treated to presentations by leading scientists on a wide range of topics.

While on the east coast, students also toured Harper's Ferry, Great Falls National Park and the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where students visited several monuments and the Smithsonian Museum of Natural Sciences.

A total of three Uvalde Junior High students were selected including Nora Cruz, Brandon Guerrero and Briana Vasquez.

Area students selected were John Henry Contreras of Knippa, Nairobi Gonzalez of La Pryor, Hannah Carnes of Nueces Canyon, Carrie Hernandez of Sabinal and Alex Dibbens of Utopia.

Participants in the 11th grade academy traveled to the Northwest U.S., visiting geological sites of interest in Washington and Oregon, including Mt. Saint Helens, Mt. Hood and Crater Lake.

Uvalde High School juniors making the trip to the Northwest U.S. were Alex Talley, Caleb McBride, Greg Martinez, TJ Martinez, George Melchor, Teresa Gaitan, Neil Tobias, Adriana Jarosek, Christine Reyna, Brittney Sanchez, Athena Sevilla, Leigh Aromin, Martha Ortiz and Julia Quiroga.

Area students in the 11th grade summer academy include Christopher Vanderveer of Utopia, Christopher Graham of Sabinal, Hannah Windham of Leakey and Jordan Hicks of Nueces Canyon.

The coordination it takes to organize summer activities for over 300 students from across Southwest Texas is unbelievable, SWTJC Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement Dr. Blaine Bennett said. Andrea Flores and Jeanelle Perez coordinate the program for SWTJC and they do an outstanding job.

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) and The University of Texas at Austin began GeoFORCE in 2005 as a long-term experiment to increase the number of students pursuing degrees in math and science. Starting with 80 students entering ninth grade, the program has grown to 320 students in grades 9-12 from the SWTJC service area and, by 2009, another 320 from Houston.

Free to students, GeoFORCE Texas depends on significant funding from sponsors. Total cost for all four years of an academy program is \$330,000. Sponsors include Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Marathon, ConocoPhillips, BP, Halliburton, Devon, AEP Texas, Vulcan Materials, Valero Energy, Texas Workforce Commission, AAPG Foundation, GDL Foundation, and Bill and Marilee Fisher.

For more information about the program, contact director Julie Spink at the UT Austin Jackson School of Geosciences (512-471-4360), or visit the GeoFORCE web site at [www.jsq.utexas.edu/geoforce/](http://www.jsq.utexas.edu/geoforce/)



**SCIENCE PROGRAM** – Area 11th graders who participated in the summer academy in Oregon and Washington include (front, left to right) Adriana Jarosek, Christine Reyna, Brittney Sanchez, Athena Sevilla, Leigh Aromin, Martha Ortiz, Julia Quiroga, (back) Alex Talley, Christopher Vanderveer, Caleb McBride, TJ Martinez, George Melchor, Christopher Graham, Teresa Gaitan and Neil Tobias.



**WASHINGTON VISIT** – Uvalde area ninth graders taking part in the GeoFORCE Texas summer academy trip to the Washington, D.C., area include (front, left to right) Alex Dibbens, Hannah Carnes, Nairobi Gonzalez, Carrie Hernandez, Briana Vasquez, (back) John Henry Contreras, Brandon Guerrero and Nora Cruz.

