

Rocksprings Record

Texas ^{and} Mohair Weekly

Serving Edwards County Since 1893

Area ninth graders complete first GeoFORCE TX summer academy

Participants in the GeoFORCE Texas summer academy gather for a group shot in front of the U. S. Capitol during a visit to Washington, D.C. The trip was part of a 12-day cross country tour of national parks and other sites of geologic interest. Forty students representing 10 Southwest Texas communities took part in this summer's academy. Representing Rocksprings High School on the 12-day cross country adventure were Miranda Garcia and Joseph Arrevalos and Victoria Herndon of Nueces Canyon High School.

Students were selected for the program last spring through a rigorous application process targeting high achievers in math and science.

Representing Rocksprings High School on the 12-day cross country adventure were Miranda Garcia and Joseph Arrevalos. Victoria Herndon of Nueces Canyon High School also took part in the program.

GeoFORCE Texas is a collaborative initiative, designed by The University of Texas at Austin's Jackson School of Geosciences and Southwest Texas Junior College, to increase awareness of the geosciences and to motivate students to maintain high grades in their coursework through their participation in spectacular experiences outside the classroom. Corporate support for the program is provided by Shell Oil Company, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil Foundation, SBC Foundation, and Priority Oil & Gas Company.

This year's summer academy included travel to Austin, Washington DC, and New Mexico. Students were treated to presentations by leading scientists in topics ranging from the Mars landing mission, to volcanoes and tsunami research. The group also enjoyed field trips to areas of geologic interest in the Austin area, Harper's Ferry and Great Falls National Park in Virginia, the monuments and Smithsonian Museums in Washington, DC, and Bandolier and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks in New Mexico.

Field trip leaders from UT-Austin were Dr. Leon Long, professor of geological sciences and Anna Morisani, graduate assistant. Steve Hammond and Randy Orndorff of the U.S. Geological Survey in Reston, VA., led the activities in the Washington D.C. area. At closing ceremonies in Uvalde, SWTJC Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement Blaine Bennett, Ph.D., congratulated the group for their successful

completion of this summer's academy.

"You represent some of the best and brightest science talent in our area and I congratulate each and every one of you on a job well done," Bennett said.

Julie Spink, GeoFORCE Texas coordinator, congratulated parents for the enthusiastic participation of their children during the intense cross-country tour.

"These kids are the greatest. They endured eating squashed sack lunches, a flat tire on the bus in the middle of west Texas, late nights and early mornings," Spink said. "They did it all with enthusiasm and continual interest in the science being presented each day. They are going to be outstanding scientists in the future."

Spink was assisted by area teachers Wanda Demboske of Uvalde High School, Kathryn Dowlearn of Leakey and Annette Pena of Cotulla High School. Counselors assisting with the project were college students from UT-Austin and SWTJC including Mary Gabaldon, Jennifer Arreola, Michael Cavasos, Michael Ponce, Martha Gomez and Mariana Miranda.

GeoFORCE Texas will continue next year with a new group of ninth graders following an itinerary similar to this summer's academy. This year's group will participate in the academy for tenth graders that will take place at the Grand Canyon.

<http://www.rockspringsrecord.com/front1.shtml>

