



The Uvalde Leader-News

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GeoForce selects academy students

AUSTIN – GeoFORCE Texas, a summer program designed to inspire students to pursue careers in the geosciences, has selected 40 outstanding Southwest Texas rising ninth-graders for the 2007 GeoFORCE Texas summer academy.

The University of Texas at Austin Jackson School of Geosciences manages the GeoFORCE program in partnership with Southwest Texas Junior College. This year, the program received more than 125 applications from 16 school districts throughout Southwest Texas.

A total of seven Uvalde Junior High School students were selected including Anissa Arce, Sanette Bermudez, Daniel Campos, Kalia Elrod, Zenia Garza, Alexis Gonzalez, Travis Kiesling and Cecilia Soliz.

Other area students selected were Leah Carillo and Sarah Rubio of Leakey, Bobbie Jo Castillo and Jesse Ortegon Jr. of La Pryor, Caroline Beltran of Knippa, and JT Morey II of Nueces Canyon.

Other area students from

Brackettville, Carrizo Springs, Crystal City, Del Rio, Dilley, Eagle Pass, Hondo, Pearsall and Rocksprings were also selected for the 2007 class.

The application process requires students to submit a personal essay, letter of recommendation and a personal statement expressing their qualifications for the program. Educators from each district in SWTJC's 11-county service area assist the program in recruiting students.

Doug Ratcliff, director of outreach and international programs at the Jackson School, noted that community support for GeoFORCE Texas continues to grow.

"We can see that the communities are behind the students and this is crucial to making this a rewarding experience for all who are involved," Ratcliff said.

SWTJC Dean of Technology and Institutional Advancement Blaine Bennett echoed Ratcliff's sentiments.

"This year we had more applicants than ever, and we want

to thank all the students, parents and teachers who took time to complete the application process," Bennett said. "I also want to encourage all applicants not selected for the summer academy to take advantage of the young geoscientists field study they will be invited to participate in later this summer."

GeoFORCE Texas encourages students with a high aptitude in math and science to consider careers in the geosciences. The week-long summer academies offer a blend of college preparatory coursework with hands-on field trips to sites of geological interest around the country, at no cost to the students.

Students selected for the program are committed to attend summer academies for four years throughout high school with trips to Washington, D.C., the Grand Canyon, Mt. St. Helens and the Pacific Coast. Students will also have the opportunity to compete for GeoFORCE scholarships and internships after their final summer academy.

Qualified applicants not selected for the summer academy track are invited to participate in the Young Geoscientists Field Course. Similar to the summer academies, the field course includes both coursework and hands-on fieldwork in the Uvalde area, Port Aransas, Austin and Houston.

Funding for GeoFORCE Texas comes from industry sponsors including Shell Oil, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, AT&T, Minerals Management Services,



ASPIRING GEOSCIENTISTS – Uvalde Junior High School students recently selected to participate in the GeoFORCE Texas Program and attend the 2007 summer academy for rising ninth-graders are (front, left to right) Cecilia Soliz, Alexis Gonzalez, Travis Kiesling, Zenia Garza, (back) Daniel Campos, Sanette Bermudez, Kalia Elrod and Anissa Arce.

Dominion, Halliburton, Swift Energy Company, Marathon Oil, Schlumberger and Alcoa.

Their financial assistance supports the program's long-term goals of increasing the number of students – especially minorities and females – who enter into the geosciences and promoting awareness of the importance of Earth science in everyday life.

With this year's recruits, total participation in GeoFORCE Texas now stands at 240 students. When

fully operational, the program will engage more than 1,000 Southwest Texas students across all grade levels.

This year's Ninth-Grade Academy will be held July 14-21 and will visit The University of Texas at Austin campus where students will stay in dorms and attend professor-led classes. The group will then travel to Washington, D.C., to meet professionals at the U.S. Geological Survey in Reston, Virginia. While in D.C.,

students will tour the Smithsonian Natural History and Air and Space museums and the U.S. Capitol, and visit the Lincoln, Korean War and Vietnam memorials.

A Ninth-Grade Academy orientation session for students and parents will be held April 14 on the SWTJC campus in Uvalde.

For more information about the program, contact Julie Spink, program coordinator at the Jackson School of Geosciences, at jspink.jsg.utexas.edu.