

## Crothers keeps going strong



Shannon Crothers started her Thanksgiving morning with a half marathon.

Shannon Crothers is adamant that her kindergarten students at Knox Elementary don't quit on anything.

She doesn't just tell them that, though. She backs it up with her actions.

Crothers, who has also taught at West and Adams elementaries, has lived a life of perseverance.

Whether it's been overcoming cervical cancer, a lost job or her hobby as a triathlete, Crothers just keeps attacking life. It's something she's tried to reinforce with her students.

That's why after every race she competes in she brings in her medal to show her kindergarteners.

"I don't come in first or second, but I always

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## A message from Dr. Cavazos

What a great message Knox Elementary teacher Shannon Crothers delivers to her kindergarten students every day.

She's been able to use her life experiences and the obstacles she's overcome as a learning tool for her students. There's never a time to quit, and they're all a part of a big team pulling in the same direction. Those really are great messages, and I hope she continues to have success both in the classroom and in her triathlon training.

Congratulations to our own Dr. A. Tracie Brown for receiving a top honor from LinkedIn. Her message on team nurturing and communicating a clear purpose fall

in line with what we're trying to do in the district. It's also great to see that the message she's delivering about the team is the same one that Crothers is using in the classroom.

I love to see our 2014 Bond in action through the Transformation Through Innovation grants like the one Sam Houston's Jesus Martinez received. I can't wait to see how the new bond starts to impact the district, too.

Congratulations to all of our December employees of the month. They each do an outstanding job representing our district.

I'd like to wish each of you a safe and happy holiday break, and I look forward to seeing you in 2020.



# Give the gift of learning

When I was a kid, I didn't like to read. It wasn't that I couldn't read, I just didn't enjoy it. I distinctly remember being assigned a book to read and feeling the tedious and emotional angst as I slowly went page by page just trying to finish the task. I was a deliberate and methodical reader as a child. I didn't want to miss a word. If there was something I didn't understand, I would go back and reread. While these are good reading strategies that helped with my comprehension, I approached it from a very task-oriented mindset and it was not enjoyable.

People who know me today may find themselves quite surprised by this. Today, it would not be uncommon to find my nose deep in a book or actively seeking out someone with whom I can talk to process something I am reading. As I have mentioned before, I commonly have four to five books that I am reading at the same time simply because I will find myself reading one thing and then drawn to another out of sheer curiosity. I just can't help myself!

So how did this transformation happen? How did I go from a child (and even a college student) who put effort into avoiding reading to one who is so passionate about it? As I have thought about this, I realized that my passion and interest grew when I began to have genuine personal questions I wanted answers to and realized that there was a wealth of literature out there that could feed my inquisitiveness. Reading became meaningful and as I gained answers to the questions I was exploring, the learning then became fun.

As humans, we are born to learn. The learning process begins the moment we enter the world and continues until the second we leave it. Learning shapes us into the people we are. It molds our thinking and constructs our opinions. It modifies our biases and challenges our assumptions. It confirms fact. The individuals we are and the societies we create together are deeply

influenced by the ideas shared and the things we learn through reading.

In an article published by Kites in the Classroom, the author explores the relationship between the science connected to the neurological function of your brain and the learning process. There we learn that "dopamine is a neurotransmitter - a chemical messenger that helps the transmission of signals in the brain. It affects brain processes that control movement, emotions, and the ability to experience pleasure and pain. But to teachers, dopamine is the brain's reward mechanism. It is released in a student's brain when they experience something they enjoy..."

"Why should we care about dopamine? Because our brains are wired to find learning fun! Think about it: Every time we're interested and engaged in a subject, our brains get a shot of dopamine. The feelings of pleasure that follow make us want to keep learning, exploring and pushing ourselves to find out more... But what's more, dopamine not only motivates us to learn, but it also helps us retain that new information... The more interested we are in an activity, the more dopamine is released and

the better we remember it."

This resonates with me and the personal experience I have had. It seems to be true for so many of the students and teachers I have authentically engaged with in the learning process over the years. As teachers, we have the chance to give our students the gift of learning. By getting to know them and the authentic interests and questions they have, we can design learning experiences that tap into their curiosity and make learning not only meaningful, but also fun! What could be better than mastering new concepts and skills all while enjoying the process.

The holiday season is about generosity and service. Thank you for the service you provide to your students. Teaching them to love learning is one of the most valuable gifts you can give. And the incredible thing about it is that it is one that will keep on giving for decades to come.

***Dr. Steven Wurtz is the chief academic officer for the Arlington ISD***





# Brown honored by LinkedIn

Dr. A. Tracie Brown, the Arlington ISD's assistant superintendent of school leadership, was recently named to LinkedIn's Top Voices in Education list.

Brown was second on the fifth annual list that highlights professionals in a variety of industries and regions who are building communities and starting conversations on LinkedIn through their articles, posts, videos and comments.

Brown is on a list that includes educators from the United States, India, Canada and Australia.

The site lauded Brown for her emphasis on team nurturing and communicating a clear purpose.

"I'm honored to be



selected as a 2019 LinkedIn Top Voice in Education," Brown said. "Each week, I share leadership advice, nuggets, and topics relevant to the work of educators in hopes it encourages someone to stay focused

on changing outcomes for students. I have met so many people in person who make reference to a post I made, an article I wrote, or leadership advice I shared and its impact on their practice. That's what fuels

my writing. To be noticed as a top voice in the world is simply remarkable, as I'm simply doing what I love - connecting with others."

The list was put together after LinkedIn editors partnered with their data science team to measure the actions a member generates when engaging on LinkedIn.

That includes the volume of responses a person's contributions created. Editors in each industry then look at the body of work of each member and use factors like whether a contribution is insightful, if it's helpful or self promotional and how does it reflect on the work climate today.

Make sure and follow Dr. A. Tracie Brown on LinkedIn.

## CROTHERS FROM PAGE 1

finish," Crothers said. "It's not about placement, it's about finishing. They have to finish, too. That's why we encourage each other. One student may know all their letters and sounds but another one doesn't. You help that person. I always tell them it's not about how much we know, it's about how much we grow."

Crothers has grown a lot in her life as an educator and been fortunate along with way, even when times were tough.

After joining the Army out of high school and spending time in the Middle East during the Gulf War, Crothers ended up in Texas to be closer to family. Her original plan was to go to school for psychology but that changed during her daughter Karinda's kindergarten year at Swift Elementary thanks to her teacher Connie Cannoles.

"I was the homeroom mom and I remember going to her class and thinking I love this," Crothers said. "I was already in school at UTA and switched my major from psychology to education. I stuck with it for five long

years."

The five-year plan for the single mom netted her a degree as she graduated summa cum laude.

Crothers started her teaching at a charter school, but it closed down in 2012. Losing that job turned out to be a blessing, though. Since she had time she went to the doctor for a checkup.

"I probably wouldn't have gone to the doctor because it was no big deal," she said. "Cervical cancer is something you don't know you have because there are no real symptoms. But being unemployed helped because I was able to get it taken care of."

The cancer had spread to Crothers' lymph nodes, so she had to undergo chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She was cleared in 2013 and started teaching. She spent five years at West before a year at Adams. She came to Knox to start this school year.

After she beat cancer, she told a friend she wanted to compete in a triathlon. A few years later her brother noticed how much time she was

spending in spin classes and bought her a bike. She competed in her first race in 2017 even though the morning of the race she woke up sick.

But just like she preaches to her students, that didn't stop her. She did the 500-yard swim, a 17-mile bike ride and then ran a 5K (3.1 miles).

"The biggest moment was when I got on the running course and I could hear someone yelling, 'That's my Mom,'" she said. "It took me like four hours. I went home and was sick. But I also knew I loved it."

Since then there have been more triathlons, 5Ks and half marathons for Crothers, who trains with the Fort Worth Tri Club.

Her ultimate goal is to compete in an Ironman race in 2021.

With Crothers' approach to life, it should be an easily attainable goal.

"I always tell my students they have to encourage each other," she said. "And then they told me today that 'We don't quit.' I've never been a quitter. When things get tougher, I can't quit. You just have to keep pressing and keep going."

# Bond paves way for Sam Houston project

Sam Houston High School students honored the legacy of John F. Kennedy and commemorated the 56th anniversary of his assassination last month. The nine students, all part of a percussion ensemble, performed live during the world premiere of a new documentary, "Three Hours in Dallas," at the Sixth Floor Museum.

"I really consider this my crowning achievement to this point," said Xavier B., one of the musicians in the ensemble.

The ensemble's director, composer and Sam Houston teacher Jesus Martinez, composed the original soundtrack for the 16-minute film that chronicles the three hours JFK spent in Dallas on that fateful day in 1963. The film itself is mostly silent, except for a few highlights of speeches given by JFK and Jacqueline Kennedy.

Martinez, who has scored a number of other films as well, chose the percussion ensemble "in order to create natural effects throughout the film."



The score syncs perfectly with the footage in the film, bringing the scenes to life and evoking emotion from the audience.

"We get to project the emotion that was felt back then," said Maria B., another member of the ensemble.

"We wanted to keep it as a totally immersive soundscape between the kids and the video," Martinez said in an interview with Amy Bishop on WRR 101.1 FM.

"I like how every note is one small portion of the film," said Bryan C., a senior in the ensemble.

In addition to playing the

piece live with the film, Sam Houston's ensemble also premiered two other pieces written by local composers.

The performance was the culmination of months of hard work.

"My students have really loved the idea of film music," Martinez said.

"When I introduced this idea to them, they were more than willing to do it. Marching season just ended last week for us, so they've been doing double duty until 6, 7, 8 at night sometimes ... It's incredible, and they're willing to do it."

The students are part of a new music and live film scoring ensemble that

Martinez started three years ago with funding from a Transformation Through Innovation grant, part of the AISD's 2014 Bond. The program teaches students how to compose and perform music for film.

"It's the first of its kind in the nation," Martinez said.

The grant money was used to purchase studio quality microphones, a professional mixer and preamps, a fully powered sound system, professional headphones, iPads, switch pedals, and a few other additional sound equipment components.

Currently the film scoring ensemble is incorporated into the percussion and International Baccalaureate (IB) music classes at Sam Houston. In IB music, students receive extensive film music lessons as they prepare compositions and final IB projects.

"Our next step is to hopefully be able to partner with IB Film and pair student composers with student directors to collaborate on a project that is completely student-led," Martinez said.



## Arlington

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

*More Than a Remarkable Education*

Texas School Board Appreciation Month  
National Mentoring Month

New Year's Day  
Teacher Prep Day  
Start of Fourth Six Weeks  
Elvis Presley's 85th Birthday  
Skeptic's Day (Or Is It?)  
World Religion Day  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
Chocolate Cake Day

Jan. 1  
Jan. 6  
Jan. 7  
Jan. 8  
Jan. 13  
Jan. 19  
Jan. 20  
Jan. 27

**Tina Baze, Specialist  
Risk Management  
Arlington ISD  
1203 W. Pioneer Pkwy.  
Arlington, TX 76013  
Office: 682-867-7649  
Fax: 682-867-4682**

**\*\*\*Accident\*\*\*  
What to do next?**

Contact supervisor.  
If an emergency  
response professional  
is needed call 911.

Contact the risk  
management office  
at 682-867-7649.

[Complete workers'  
comp packet.](#)

Completed packet  
should be sent to the  
risk management office  
in the administration  
building.

**It takes but one  
positive thought when  
given a chance to  
survive and thrive to  
overpower an entire  
army of negative  
thoughts.**

**Robert H. Schuller**

# **RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW SAFETY SPOTLIGHT**

## **Maintaining Workplace Safety Through Good Housekeeping**

Workplace housekeeping—the act of maintaining clean and organized workspaces—may seem like a chore, but it can go a long way in preventing on-the-job injuries. In fact, good workplace housekeeping practices can reduce the following:

- Clutter and, subsequently, injuries caused by slips and trips
- Potential fire hazards
- Employee exposure to hazardous dust and vapors



Employees play an active role in workplace safety. As such, it's important to do the following when it comes to ensuring good workplace housekeeping:

- Clean up after yourself. Above all, ensure that you pick up trash and dispose of it properly. Keep your work area clean throughout the day. Be sure to vacuum or wet sweep dusty areas as needed.
- Ensure aisles and stairways are clear of hazards. Address potential slip, trip and fall hazards (e.g., protruding nails, spills and loose cords). Report all slips, trips and falls as soon as possible to help prevent future incidents.
- Dispose of combustibles and flammable materials properly. If improperly discarded, these items can increase the potential for a fire.
- Keep tools in their designated storage areas when they are not in use.

In addition, materials and supplies should be stacked in an orderly manner and secured properly.

Keeping the above practices in mind not only ensures your own safety but also protects the health and well-being of your peers. For questions regarding housekeeping practices, speak with your manager.

## **Safe Driving Practices for Employees**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately three million people are injured in motor vehicle crashes each year.

As part of your job duties, you may be required to operate a vehicle on company time. In order to protect yourself and those you share the road with, it's important to make road safety a priority and keep in mind the following tips:

- Wear a seat belt whenever you operate a motor vehicle. Ensure any passengers in your vehicle are buckled up as well.
- Refrain from driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Ensure you are well-rested before getting behind the wheel. When you drive fatigued, the chances of becoming distracted or getting into an accident increase.
- Avoid adjusting the radio, using smartphones and other distractions whenever you drive.
- Focus on driving and do not let anything divert your attention. When you drive, actively scan the road, using your mirrors to watch out for other vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Practice defensive driving. Increase following distances to give yourself more time to react to slowing traffic and other hazards. Avoid aggressive driving and be courteous to other drivers.
- Keep all lights, mirrors and windows clean to give yourself the clearest possible view of surrounding traffic.

Above all, to remain safe on the road, it's important to follow Arlington ISD policies related to the use of motor vehicles. If you have any questions regarding these policies, speak with your manager.

**Remember: practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.**



# DECEMBER EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



**Stephanie Drew**  
**Crow Elementary**  
**Elementary Teacher of the Month**



**Shelli McGovern**  
**Gunn Junior High**  
**Junior High Teacher of the Month**



**David Trevino**  
**Arlington College & Career High School**  
**High School Teacher of the Month**



**Ryan Pierce**  
**Marketing and Communications**  
**Department Employee of the Month**