

## **CY-CREEK GRADUATE SHARES THE MEANING OF THE “POWER OF \$5,000” AT CFEF’S ANNUAL “SALUTE TO THE STARS” GALA EVENT**

Attorney Mindy Harper told a distinguished crowd of more than 800 teachers, spouses, parents, business partners and community members gathered at the 2009 Salute to the Stars Gala that the \$5,000 scholarship she received from the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation in the spring of 1993 transformed her life.

CFEF’s 12th Annual "**Salute to the Stars Gala**," held October 22 at Cy-Fair ISD's Richard E. Berry Center, raised over \$145,000 for for Cy-Fair ISD’s Instructional Excellence Grant program and CFEF’s student scholarship program. Over \$1.1 million has been raised for those vital programs since 1998.

Harper told the crowd that when she learned that CFEF had awarded her a \$5,000 scholarship, it was one of the most exciting moments of her life.

“It affirmed what I had been working for in school, and empowered me to take the next step to college,” Harper said. “I was thrilled to have earned it, and determined to show that I deserved it.”

A graduate of Cypress Creek High School, Texas A&M University and Southern Methodist University’s Dedman School of Law, Harper said the “Power of \$5,000” did many things: sent her to college; gave her confidence to pursue a law degree; launched a career in law that began at Fulbright & Jaworski, L.L.P. and brought her to her present role as in-house litigation counsel for Cooper Industries; pushed back the fear of financial insecurity and allowed her and her husband, Thomas, at teacher, to provide for their three children’s educational future; and enabled her to contribute time and resources to causes she believes in and loves.

“It truly was an honor to be invited to speak at the Salute to the Stars Gala,” Mindy said. “I knew immediately that I wanted to emphasize how a scholarship, in any amount, can transform a life. My scholarship was for \$5,000, and in my case I felt like that \$5,000 was a turning point. It empowered me not only to pay for college, but to thrive while I was there and set higher goals for myself afterwards.”

“I could tie that \$5,000 to every significant event in my life,” she said. “You cannot underestimate the effect that a scholarship in any amount can have on a person.”

Harper said the opportunity to speak at the Salute to the Stars Gala was also meaningful because her husband, aunt, and friends were with her.

“It was an evening I know I will never forget,” she said.

The event also had a lasting impact on 79 Cy-Fair ISD “Spotlight Teachers” and those who came to celebrate an evening in honor of them.

Each year, Cy-Fair ISD recognizes one teacher from each of its campuses - 50 elementary schools, 29 secondary schools and three special programs facilities in the 2008-09 school year - who represents a unique balance of skill, art, and heart in teaching students in his or her subject area or program.

CFEF holds the Salute to the Stars Gala event each year to honor these “Spotlight Teachers,” who were also saluted by the Cy-Fair ISD school board at a special meeting in May.

Lauri Baker, a counselor at Cy-Fair ISD's Arnold Middle School, and Ted Lewis, Dean of Instruction at Lone Star College-CyFair, co-chaired the 2009 Salute to the Stars Gala. Cy-Fair Federal Credit Union was the underwriter and has generously agreed to underwrite the 13th annual event in October 2010.

At this year's event, CFEF presented a check for \$88,273 to Dr. David Anthony, Cy-Fair ISD Superintendent, which represented the funds raised at the 2008 Salute to the Stars Gala. Those funds will be used by Cy-Fair ISD to fund instructional excellence professional development grants this school year.

Harper encouraged all Cy-Fair ISD students to pursue their post-graduate educational goals, no matter how difficult or challenging the path ahead seems. With the help of CFEF, and other scholarship and grant-funding sources, anything is possible, she said.

"The thing about my story is that it's not that unusual and it never has been," Harper said to the crowd on Oct. 22. "There are hundreds, probably thousands, of young people in Cy-Fair who want something better for themselves. They just need someone to contribute to that effort, and to motivate them to prove that they deserve the contribution. It can change lives, no matter the amount."

"That's the power of \$5,000" she said.

Planning is already underway for CFEF's 2010 fund-raising events. Contact Marie Holmes for information about underwriting and sponsorships opportunities at 832-381-2333, or e-mail [marie@thecfef.org](mailto:marie@thecfef.org)

The 2009 Spotlight Teachers included:

#### **Instructional Strategist**

**Julie Hague**, Duryea ES; **David Hallmark**, Cypress Falls HS; **Lisa Kreiner**, Hamilton MS; **Rebecca Ann Reynolds**, Cypress Ridge HS; **Carmela McCain Simmons**, Millsap ES; and **Wendi Zabadal**, Gleason ES;

#### **Creator of Student-centered Environment**

**Carol Barron**, Watkins MS; **Hazel Berry**, Hancock ES; **Senisa Blume**, Spillane MS; **John O. Busby**, Aragon MS; **Connie Butcher**, Truitt MS; **Meredith Laborde Calcote**, Lowery ES; **Robin Casteel**, Dean MS; **Anne DonLevy**, Post ES; **Oksana Shanya Gensior**, Danish ES; **Gabe Hernandez**, Tipps ES; **Melanie L. Jackson**, Birkes ES; **Sharon S. Jones**, Sampson ES; **Betty Melker**, Copeland ES; **Don Murchison**, ABC; **Charlene Norris**, Kahla MS; **Diane Prestridge**, Ault ES; **Jacqueline Roberts**, Horne ES; **Maria-Isabel Rodriguez**, Metcalf ES; **Joyce Simmons**, Matzke ES; **Denman Watson III**, Hopper MS; and **Kerry Watson**, Yeager ES;

#### **Positive Role Model**

**Meredith Akers**, Black ES; **Louis Ashworth**, Cypress Creek HS; **Jennifer Baehr**, Cypress Springs HS; **Cindy Bailey**, McFee ES; **Linda Cates**, Wilson ES; **Michele Comeaux**, Cypress Woods HS; **Katherine Cunningham**, Cypress Ranch HS; **Hollye Derrick**, Lamkin ES; **Edith Dunbar**, M. Robinson ES; **Misty K. Finch**, Walker ES; **Charlsie Gomez**, Kirk ES; **Cheryl Herpich**, Arnold MS; **Jessica Ann Hooker**, Fiest ES; **Andrea Hornbeak**, Postma ES; **Michelle Logback**, Hairgrove ES; **Cheryl Malone**, Emmott ES; **Melissa Martin**, Sheridan ES; **Melissa M. Martin**, Thornton MS; **Becky Mendez**, Jowell ES; **Tommie Deniece Montgomery**, Langham Creek HS; **Amber Neufeld**, ALC; **Pam Robbins**, Lieder

ES; **Sherrye Scott**, Bane ES; **Aaron Shelton**, Campbell MS; **Lisa Strahan**, A. Robison ES; **Danny W. Tipton**, Jersey Village HS; **Angela Wilson**, Keith ES; **Donna R. Wylie**, Holmsley ES; and **Deb Yerby**, Farney ES;

#### **Lifelong Learner**

**Nicole Becker**, Hamilton ES; **Teresa Bontempo**, Cook MS; **Rebecca Demski**, Labay MS; **Lauren Fritz**, Andre' ES; **Rhoda Goldberg**, Reed ES; **Dorys Beatriz Gonzalez**, Lee ES; **Patti Hill**, Warner ES; **Don Kessler**, Cy-Fair HS; **Amy Krueger**, Hemmenway ES; **Samuel J. Loomis**, Bleyl MS; **Deenie Ricke**, Bang ES; **Elaine Riggs**, Holbrook ES; **Anabel M. Segovia**, Owens ES; **Lisa Stumpf**, Moore ES; and **Jan Tidwell**, Francone ES;

#### **Team Player**

**Hope Boyd**, Adam ES; **Stacy Brock**, Frazier ES; **Meredith Burg**, Cypress Lakes HS; **Latrice Caldwell**, Willbern ES; **Tabitha Glass**, Goodson MS; **Toni Seegar**, Windfern HS; and **Amanda Stavinoha**, Carlton Center.