P.A.T. Welcomes New Members

The Mu Chi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, initiated its newest members on April 16, 2015, at the History Department’s annual banquet. Phi Alpha Theta was created in 1921 at the University of Arkansas to promote “the study of History through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication, and the exchange of learning among historians in a variety of ways. It seeks to bring students and faculty together both intellectually and socially for mutual understanding and encouragement in their common interest in the study of History.”

Currently, Phi Alpha Theta has more than 750 chapters nationwide.

The evening’s festivities included a dinner, the initiation ceremony for new members, and a presentation by Theresa Story Hefner-Babb, associate professor of library services at Lamar University. Theresa’s presentation was titled, “From Missouri Barn-stormer to MacArthur’s Pilot: The Air Adventures of Lt. Col. Anthony Story,” and featured her relative’s experience as a pilot in World War II and after.

Lamar University’s newest Phi Alpha Theta members are: Joseph T. Arechiga, Ednesha Cook, Candyce M. Crouch, Katherine Elizabeth Daniel, Zachary J. Defrancis, David Ferris, Jacob Gorton, Monica Lambert Gossett, Adrian G. Morgan, Judith A. Nelams, Emma O. Nelson, Alecia M. Ross, Cheree Noelle Simon, Robyn Gale Summers, and Morgan B. Williams.

Everyone welcomed the opportunity to honor our bright history students. Congratulations on their accomplishments.
History Students of the Month Selected for Spring

The History Department would like to recognize the latest recipients of the coveted History Student of the Month award.

February’s award went to Jacob Gorton. In 2009, Mr. Gorton graduated from Deweyville High School. He attended Lamar State College-Orange where he led the NAQT Quiz Bowl team during 2012-2013, the most successful season of the program’s tenure at LSCO, placing 3rd at Nationals on the junior college level. At Lamar, Gorton is a history major with a minor in political science. His main interest is the cultural and political history of modern East Asia. He is also a member of the Webb Society and Phi Alpha Theta.

Suzanne Williamson is a returning student to Lamar University and earned the award for March. She graduated from Hardin-Jefferson High School in 1997. She recently changed her major to History with a minor in English. Her primary interest is in ancient history, especially Greece and Rome, but her love of history spans many cultures throughout the world. After completing her BA, Ms. Williamson looks forward to teaching at middle school or high school level while pursuing her Master’s and perhaps seeking a Doctorate. She is an active member of Gateway Church in Kountze. She enjoys watching her children’s involvement in sports and dance as well as spending time with family and friends at BBQs and crawfish boils.

April’s award went Morgan B. Williams, who graduated from Orangefield High School in 2012. She confesses to a longtime enthusiasm for learning about the past. She admits, “I’ve always known that I wanted to teach history.” Ms. Williams describes her interest in British, U.S., and Texas history as a “love for the subject.” Earlier this month, she became a member of the history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta.

Ednesha Cook graduated in 2010 from Memorial High School. In 2014, Lamar Study Abroad accepted her for their language program at the Universidad de Salamanca in Spain. Ms. Cook is a member of the International Deans List Society, Alpha Lambda Delta-Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, and an inductee into Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society. She is working toward mastering three languages and plans on a career in law so that she can help abused, misused, or exploited people. Ms. Cook feels that citizens informed of their rights will be able to stand up for themselves.

—Jimmy Bryan Jr.

Sixth Annual Lamar History Day Scores Big

The Lamar University History Department hosted the Sixth Annual Lamar History Day, Thursday, February 12th, setting records in attendance, entries, and number of participating schools.

One hundred forty junior high and high school students submitted a record number eighty three entries built around the National History Day theme of Leadership and Legacy in History. The schools represented were West Brook High School of Beaumont, Port-Neches Groves High School of Port Neches, Livingston High School of Livingston, Harmony Science Academy of Beaumont, Twin Creeks Middle School and Dawson Middle School of the Spring ISD in Houston, and Livingston Junior High of Livingston. Thirty of those entries qualified for the State National History Day competition, which will be held in Austin in May. The students and their teachers, as well as parents of students who accompanied them to the event, were treated to a display of the Spindletop gusher at the Gladys City museum and a tour of that facility conducted by the Gladys City staff and members of the department’s Webb Society chapter.

Ken Poston, coordinator for the event stated that the turnout and the quality of the exhibits were remarkable. “It was evident that all of the students put a lot of time and research effort into their submissions. The overall quality compared to years past was tremendous”.

Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Joseph Nordgren, presented the awards to the winners in the thirteen categories. Junior Division winners in the Individual Paper category included Honorable Mention to Destiny Glaze of Dueitt Junior High for her paper on Abraham Lincoln; Third Place to Jackson Alexander of Livingston Junior High for his paper on George Patton; Second Place to Zachary McDaniel of Livingston Junior High for his paper on Jesus Christ; and First Place to Azucena Mosqueda of Livingston Junior High for her paper on Rosa Parks.

Zane Hill of Livingston Junior High captured First Place in the Individual Performance category with his presentation entitled A Diamond Among the Pebbles, while in the Junior Division Group Exhibit category Elizabeth Pruitt and Meia Lockett of Dueitt Junior High received Honorable Mention for Malcolm X, Tamia Henry and Tajah Skinner of Twin Creeks Middle School received Third Place honors for their exhibit on Harriet Tubman, Caleigh Douth and Sidney Hinz of Twin Creek Middle School took Second Place for their project on Walt Disney and First Place honors went to Halle Ohm and Madelyn Reiilly of Livingston Junior High for The Life of Ronald Reagan.

The Individual Exhibit category in the Junior Division saw Mitchell Laughbaum of Twin Creeks Middle School take Honorable Mention for his William T. Sherman exhibit, while Livingston Junior High swept the top three awards with Christian Hopson and her exhibit on Margaret Sanger capturing Third Place, Warrior in the White House by Coral Leitzell taking Second Place

(Cont’d. on page 3)
Lamar Student Uses Spring Break to Explore State Museum

Kathryn Prince, a senior student at Lamar currently enrolled in History 3303 Colonial America, took advantage of the recent spring break to take her family to Austin, Texas and view the latest exhibit at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Kathryn reports that a monumental task—reconstruction of a ship that sank in the Gulf waters of Matagorda Bay on the Texas coast over three hundred years ago—is now underway in the atrium of the museum, within full view of the public. The restoration of the LaBelle, which was recovered along with thousands of artifacts in 1997 after a twenty-year search for her remains, began in October, 2014 and is not expected to be completed until sometime in 2016. It will then be a permanent exhibit in the museum.

She explains that the ship was one of four that made up a colonization expedition led by Sieur Robert de LaSalle in 1684. Two years previously, LaSalle sailed the length of the Mississippi River to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico. At that time, he claimed all of the land drained by the Mississippi for the nation of France, calling it Louisiana in honor of the reigning monarch at the time, Louis XIV.

After his discovery, LaSalle returned to France and convinced the king to finance another voyage to the new land, which sailed in 1684. Bad weather and bad luck talked the effort from the start. Uncertain navigation caused LaSalle to overshoot the mouth of the Mississippi by nearly four hundred miles to the west. He landed at Matagorda Bay and attempted to set up a colony along Garcitas Creek, not far from Victoria, Texas on land then claimed by Spain.

The settlers suffered greatly from starvation, attacks by unfriendly Karankawa Indians, and the unhealthful location of the fort that they constructed. LaSalle himself, attempting to return to New France (Canada) on foot to seek help, was killed by disgruntled members of his own crew. The LaBelle—his last surviving ship, foundered in a storm in the shallow waters of the bay and sank in 1686. The settlement, named Ft. St. Louis, was overrun by hostiles and the few survivors—approximately four men—taken captive by the Indians. Spanish forces in 1687, coming to the location in order to drive the French from Spanish territory, discovered the fort and burned it after securing several cannon that remained.

“I was astounded, as was my family, at the number of artifacts recovered from the shipwreck,” Prince said. “And to be able to actually see the restorers put the ship back together piece by piece is like getting in a time machine and going back to when this ship was being built for the first time.” She went on to say that persons interested can visit the Bob Bullock Museum website and see the work being done on a livestream.

—Ken Poston

History Day Scores Big (cont’d.)

and Taylor Ross’s highly impressive Temple Grandin exhibit recognized as the First Place winner.

The Junior Division Group awards included Joan of Arc, Herione of French History by Avery Evans and Ailcyn Stelfey of Livingston Junior High receiving Honorable Mention, Third Place going to Destiny Gentry and Zavalla Huggins of Livingston Junior High for Crossing The Lines: Elvis Presley’s Legacy, Second Place being awarded to The Legacy of Elizabeth Carly Stanton by Kenna Burke and Kayla Green of Twin Creeks Middle School and the First Place medals were presented to Melanie Patranella and Jack Pedigo of Livingston Junior High for The Man Behind the Mouse. The Individual Documentary awards went to Maisie Cherry of Livingston Junior High, Third Place for 215 Million, Second Place to Caitlin Barron of Livingston Junior High for her documentary on Juliette Gordon Low, and the First Place winner was competition veteran Katherine Lester for From Independence to Statehood.

There were a record number of websites submitted in this year’s competition in both divisions. The Junior Division Group Interpretive Websites winners were Charles Castille, Kaitlyn Sevalla, and Lockey Young of Twin Creeks Middle School who took Third Place with The Leadership of Harriet Tubman. Second Place went to Believing in America: Teddy Roosevelt by Kallie Kelms and Emily Burris of Livingston Junior High, and First Place, The Legend of Ulysses S. Grant, went to Robert Stoetaert, Ryan Dimara, and Austin Gurgos of Twin Creeks Middle School. Dueitt Middle School dominated the Individual Interpretive Website category as Miriam Pereira-Martinez garnered Third Place with the Seneca Falls Convention, Kaylie Barreda placed Second with The Underground Railroad, and First Place went to a recent Texas convert from California, Livingston Junior High’s Ben Bratton who profiled John Muir: Father of the Parks.

(cont’d. on page 4)
History Day Scores Big (cont’d.)

Port Neches-Groves High School did well in the Individual Paper Senior Division category. Jenna Sanders’s paper on Reagan/Gorbachev received Honorable Mention, Rachel Tassin’s treatise on Alice Paul got Third Place, Emma Scarfield of West Brook High School, granddaughter of Lamar History Department instructor Robert Robertson (yes, he judged another category) wrote about George Washington and received Second Place honors and Lauren Dumesnil of PN-G was the First Place winner with her submission about Clara Barton. In the Senior Division Group Performance category Kaitlyn Bearden and Madeleine Sink’s interpretation of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: Rise of Feminist Literature was the First Place recipient, and Anthony Cole’s depiction of Vladimir Lenin: A Revolutionary Among Men also captured first place. All three students are from PN-G.

The Group Exhibit category saw Honorable Mention honors go to Morgan Hamby and Miranda Lopez of Port Neches High School for Charlie Chaplin: Comedic Leader and Legacy, and Third Place to Kayla Soileau and Alexia Watler, also of PN-G, for The World Health Organization. West Brook High School gained the category’s top two places, Second Place going to Chloe Caballero, Madelyne Goodeaux, Katy Kolp and Emily Werner for The British Invasion, and First Place to Ferdinand and Isabella’s Reconquista by Caroleine Bridges, Marissa Luna, Sonali Singh and Jolinn Threlkeld. The top Individual Exhibit winners were Richard Drodly of PN-G, Honorable Mention for Stephen F. Austin: A Texas Legend, Third Place to Melco Rodrigues of Livingston High School for Si Se Puede: Yes We Can, and the top two places in the category going to PN-G, Second Place to Payton Jordan for Ann Richards: Leading The Way, and First Place to China’s Terracotta Army by Sandy Jiang.

PN-G swept the Group Documentary category as Victoria Lafleur, Lanee Tesch, Kathryn Lee and Sephora Sakambi gained Third Place honors with Walt Disney, Noah Holtman, Nolan Ford and Prem Gelivi getting Second Place for Globalization of McDonalds, and Courtney Marsh and Jenny Brown were First Place winners with Anthony and Stanton. Winners in the Individual Documentary competition were Tala Abushami of Port Neches Groves High School, a Third Place award to Oprah Winfrey, first-time participant Kelton Ansel of Harmony Science Academy getting Second Place for Transcendentalism, and the First Place medal went to John Dubois of PN-G for James Naismith.

Nelson Mandela: A Man For Change was the Third Place winner in the Group Interpretive Website, submitted by Omar Hamza and Ram Polavarapu of PN-G, while Tianna Woodard and Kaenie Merbach of West Brook High School received Second Place honors for Steve Jobs and the iPhone, and Nelson Mandela and the Fight For Equality by West Brook’s Chris Montes, Jordan Snowden, Bassam Syed, Antonio Ponce-Mezza and Mahad Reman garnered the First Place Award. PN-G swept another category, that of Individual Interpretive Website, with Dana Lopez’s entry on Eva and Juan Peron getting Third Place, Rebecca Vollene taking Second Place for Elizabeth Bislond and Nelly Bly, and Aaron Desmond capturing First Place with The Truman Doctrine.

The annual Best Individual Exhibit went to first-time participant Melco Rodriguez of Livingston High School for his rendering of the life of Cesar Chavez, entitled Si Se Puede: Yes We Can. First and second-place winners in all categories qualified for the state competition in Austin. The Lamar History Day Regional Event is in cooperation with the Texas State Historical Association, which is affiliated with the National History Day program.

“Everyone in the department pitched in and helped to make this event a great success,” coordinator Ken Poston commented, “but I would be remiss in not acknowledging the Website judges, Dr. Jimmy Bryan, Dr. Yasuko Sato and Ms. Christina Wilbur. They were inundated with websites more than we have ever had and did a fantastic job. Dr. Scheer provided the leadership needed to fit all the pieces together. And once again, Beverly Williams, Cassandra Durso, and Patty Renfro are the ones that deserve the most credit...”

— Ken Poston, History Day Coordinator

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— Ken Poston

Dr. Nordgren with two first-place winners. Photo courtesy of Dr. Forret.

A third-place winner receives her History Day award from Dr. Nordgren, as Ken Poston looks on. Photo courtesy of Dr. Forret.
Webb Society Honored

At the March Texas State Historical Association meeting, the Lamar Webb Society won an award for best chapter project. The members produced a rack card to bring more attention to the original Spindletop Lucas-Gusher site off Ft. Arthur Road. They then placed these cards at the Beaumont Visitors Center, Energy Museum, and the Gladys City Boomtown museum. The award came with $600, which the chapter will use for their field trip activities.

Defrancis Honored as Student of Year

The History Department selected Zachary Defrancis as the 2014-2015 History Student of the Year.

Zachary has the distinction of being the only two-time History Student of the Month, with his selection in December 2013 and October 2014.

A member of Phi Alpha Theta and other campus organizations, Zachary will intern this summer at the MacFaddin-Ward House and plans a 2016 graduation.

Faculty News

“Our faculty continue to distinguish themselves on campus, through publishing, and in service to various professional organizations.”

Webb Society officers and representatives receive the award for best chapter project. Photo courtesy of Dr. Mary Scheer.

Our faculty continue to distinguish themselves on campus, through publishing, and in service to various professional organizations. Here’s an update:

At the Fall meeting of the East Texas Historical Association, Dr. Mary L. Scheer was inducted as president of the 500 member association. She will serve a one-year term and give a presidential talk at the October 2015 meeting in Nacogdoches.

As a member of the university Sustainability Committee and Academic Lecture Series Committee, Dr. Jeff Forret planted a river birch tree dedicated to guest speaker Ed Begley, Jr., near the lake at the John Grey Center.

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As a member of the university Sustainability Committee and Academic Lecture Series Committee, Dr. Jeff Forret planted a river birch tree dedicated to guest speaker Ed Begley, Jr., near the lake at the John Grey Center.

Dr. Forret also gave a talk, titled "From the Bottom Up: Meanings of the American Revolution for Poor Whites, Women, and Blacks," for the Paul Revere Chapter of the Texas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution meeting in March 2015.

He also served as commentator for the panel “Corporal Punishment, Capital Punishment, and Performance in the 19th-Century South,” at the 108th Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) in St. Louis, Missouri, April 2015.

Dr. Mark Mengerink presented his paper, "Are You Well? When Studying the Holocaust Becomes a Problem," at the annual Southwestern Social Science Association conference in April in Denver. He also served as panel chair and commentator for a Phi Alpha Theta student panel on “Diversity in History” at the same conference.

Dr. Mengerink has been appointed to the Southwestern Social Science Association’s Nominations Committee for a term of two years as well as Lamar University’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Assessment Committee.

Jimmy Bryan Jr. recently gave two scholarly presentations. He participated in “Gallery Conversations” at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange, TX, on January 10, 2015, where he discussed his paper, “Exploring ‘Manifest Destiny’ 170 Years Later.” At the Annual Meeting of the Texas Gulf Historical Society, on April 28, 2015 in Beaumont, TX, he presented “The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record at 50.”

Faculty and grad students participated in two Brown Bag Discussions this semester. The first occurred on February 26, 2015. Participants read and commented on Dr. Jeff Forret’s National Endowment for the Humanities grant proposal for his book project titled Williams’ Gang: A Slave Trader, His Cargo, and Justice in the Old South.

The second Brown Bag Discussion focused on Dr. Mengerink’s paper, “Are You Well? When Studying the Holocaust Becomes a Problem” and occurred in April.

Graduate Student News

M.A. students Chris Pirnie and Kevin Broussard successfully defended their theses during spring semester. Chris Pirnie’s, “Lumberton, Texas: Sundown Suburb,” examined race relations from the post-Civil War period to the present and included an interesting discussion of the creation of the Lumberton Independent School District.

Kevin Broussard researched warfare in early modern Italy with his thesis, “Reconsidering the Military Revolution in the Italian Wars, 1494-1512.” Kevin’s research explored the link between the rise of gunpowder weapons and the decline of chivalry.

Both students benefited from a peer review process implemented in the summer of 2014. Known as Herodotus, the graduate student group consisted of students at the thesis-writing stage of their studies and met bi-weekly under the direction of Dr. Forret to read drafts, provide feedback, and sharpen their research and writing skills. The group took its name from the ancient Greek historian, considered by many as the “father of history.”

Graduating History Majors

The following senior history majors are graduating at Spring Commencement on Friday evening, May 22, 2015, at the Montagne Center.

Mallory Horton
Morgan Jiminez
Tyler Linder
Adrian Morgan
Treyvon Trahan

They leave Lamar University with a deeper understanding and awareness of the world and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, as well as important critical thinking skills.

Congratulations!

Phi Alpha Theta Update

Phi Alpha Theta members remained busy this semester, especially on the fundraising front. Students held two fundraisers for field and conference trips. The Valentine’s Day fundraiser occurred in the Setzer Center and offered the Lamar Community the opportunity to buy flowers for their loved ones. The second fundraiser occurred in Archer Hall and provided students, faculty, and staff a sugar rush during the end-of-semester chaos. Both the flower sale and candy sale proved successful.

Capstone Milestone

Senior history major Tyler Linder presented the first Capstone project for the department on May 7, 2015, under the direction of Dr. Jimmy Bryan. Titled, “Out of the Shadows: The Oral History of AIDS in Beaumont,” his presentation was well attended by faculty, students, and members of the Beaumont community. Congratulations to Tyler for an outstanding project!
Mr. Kody lives with his humans, Jeff, Sharon, and Gabe Forret. A native of North Carolina, Kody is a Maine coon mix. A family in the Greensboro, North Carolina, area had moved away, leaving behind a Maine coon mama cat. Animal control got her and all of Kody’s siblings, but Kody slipped away into the protective custody of the Greensboro SPCA. Jeff and Sharon found him on petfinder.com, where he was going by the alias Mullins. Jeff and Sharon adopted him in June 2003 when he was only six weeks old, renamed him Kody, and spent several weeks and hundreds of dollars nursing him to full health. Like all Maine coons, Kody has a furry letter M over his eyes, a big fluffy tail, and tufts of fur on his paws and loves to drink fresh running water from the faucet, but he is far smaller than a pure-bred male. Kody is a Daddy’s boy who enjoys licking Jeff’s face, sitting on him, and blocking the computer screen. His companion of eleven years, Miss Katie, passed away in April 2014. Kody lives with another rescue cat, a calico named Kiwi.