

A quarterly magazine from Lewisville Independent School District

WINTER 2021







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Why LISD is home

DEAR READERS, this will be my final column for The Loop as Superintendent of Schools for Lewisville ISD. As you may have heard, in November I announced my retirement from education after 41 years of service. My last day in LISD will be Jan. 31. It is certainly a bittersweet decision to retire, but it is the right time for me personally and for our district.

As I reflect back on my career, there's no doubt I walk away with unforgettable memories, and a sense of pride for all the incredible things I've had the opportunity to be a part of. I've seen state championships won, state-of-the-art buildings constructed, and academics achieved at the highest levels. But more than anything, it has been the sense of family and community that I will never forget. Thank you to each and every one of you for being part of what makes LISD great - the people.

As educators, we often talk about what got us interested in this profession, and why we stay with it year after year. And reading through the pages of The Loop, you get a glimpse into my "why." It has always been about the kids and families we serve, and the incredible staff members who call LISD home.

In this issue, you'll read about the Hebron band program, who recently placed first in the UIL state competition, and their road to the Rose Parade this January. You'll read about

Katherine Omo-Osagie, a Collegiate Academy student who has overcome great tragedy and trauma as she sets her sights on a very bright future. And you'll see our community coming together to celebrate one another during our homecoming season. Time and time again I am amazed by the stories coming out of our schools, and it's all because LISD is home to some of the greatest students and staff in the state of Texas.

I want to thank you for continuing to support our schools, and for your interest in the successes of our 50,000 students and 6,500 staff members. We couldn't do it without you. I will always cherish the memories we have made together and look forward to seeing what's next for this remarkable district.

I am incredibly grateful for the last 36 years in LISD. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as your superintendent.

Take care and God bless,

Kevin Rogers, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Keum Roger

Lewisville Independent School District





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Back to Nature

New outdoor learning area opens doors to environmental exploration

By Ryan Cox

THERE'S NO DOUBT the way we learn and teach in schools has evolved quickly in the past few decades, but the need for environmental learning and education still remains.

Lewisville ISD's Outdoor Learning Area (LISDOLA) gives students the chance to learn about the great outdoors and nature with a unique hands-on learning experience.

LISDOLA hosts all elementary schools across the district for learning opportunities, ranging from first, second, fourth, fifth and seventh grade students. LISDOLA outdoor learning experts offer a wideranging list of activities and lessons for students to learn from.

"Our activities are aligned through their science curriculum, so we are basically an extension through the science learning, just in the context of outdoors with environmental learning," Environmental Learning Administrator Shelly Robinson said. "We'll learn about water quality, take hikes to look at human impact and talk about renewable energy. We also have new solar panels and a new wind turbine that got put up. We try to tie in the threads of what's happening out here in terms of conservation and restoration into the conversation so the kids have some context to build on for their next grade level."

Thanks to LISD voters passing a bond referendum in 2017, LISDOLA welcomed students back on-site for the 2021-22 school year to a new state-of-the-art outdoor learning center for students to enjoy that features advanced technology packages with plenty of desks and work spaces, both indoors and outdoors.



"The students get excited about everything when they come out here and they love learning outdoors. We're going to make it a fun and unique day of outdoor learning," Robinson said.

LISDOLA is made up of 84 acres, which was supplied by the U.S. Department of Education back in 1995, and has created over 20 walking trails for students to explore and learn. The longest trail is about a mile and a half, there and back.

In addition to the nature trails, LISDOLA offers water works, dissecting and plant growing, team building exercises, skull and teeth adaptations and dissections, lessons about solar panels, a time machine on the walking trail, fossils, recycling and food scrap stations to turn into compostable usage, and much more. LISDOLA welcomes more than 10,000 students per year.

The new outdoor learning center provides four classrooms, six total learning areas and three outdoor patios.

"The new building is a game-changer for what we can offer and how students will learn," Robinson said. "We've spent the last year creating new logistics, lessons, and resetting all the walking trails.

"Every grade level has their own program when they visit LISDOLA," Robinson added. "It's a completely



10,000 students expected each school year

84 acres of natural habitat 20 self-guided nature trails





Students receive hands-on learning at LISD's new outdoor learning center where they gain knowledge on water works, plant growing, team building exercises, and more.

different set of lessons with new trails and activities every time they come. We love that students get to come multiple years in their elementary experience because they remember it, they look forward to it and they get different learning opportunities."

As LISD continues to offer numerous career-path opportunities for students to pursue, Environmental Learning Coordinator Jeff Carver said having outdooring learning experiences like LISDOLA creates another avenue for them to explore.

"We hope with LISDOLA that our students can see and realize there's an academic or career avenue that can go through the outdoors with what we offer and teach."

LISDOLA relies heavily on volunteers to help make it what it is today. From building benches, tables, creating walking paths and more, everything surrounding the new Outdoor Learning Center was built by volunteers, including Eagle Scouts, Boys and Girls Scouts, community members and Texas master naturalists. In fact, a lot of the scouts that volunteer

are former LISDOLA students who returned to do their organizational projects on site.

"Other than the students we teach, our volunteers are the heartbeat of what makes LISDOLA run," Robinson said. "We survive with a lot of support from volunteers. Our goal is to provide an authentic learning experience for people to serve, give back and to enjoy. We really have a place for people to do that."

After not having students in person for the last year and a half, the students returned this fall and experienced the new building and all the enhanced learning opportunities created during the past year, which is something Robinson couldn't wait to be a part of.

"We were so excited to have the students here again, just seeing them and having this place alive again," Robinson said. "This facility was not built for us, it's for the students. We are happy to get them back out here, share the new facility and activities and really just enjoy the experience and have fun learning outdoors."

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Celebrating Our Vets

The LISD community, staff and students across the district celebrated our veterans on Nov. 11 with community events, ceremonies, drive-thru parades and more.











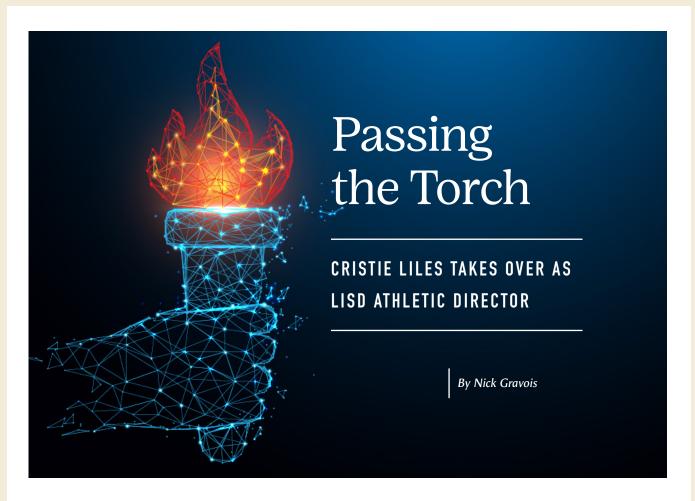












SINCE 2014, LEWISVILLE ISD ATHLETICS have been guided by the steady hand of Tim Ford. As athletic director, Ford has seen overwhelming successes both on and off the field. After seeing thousands of student-athletes receive diplomas, enter the workforce and stand on podiums, he is ready to call it a career.

And what a career it has been. A DFW journeyman, Ford has made stops at many districts in the area since beginning teaching and coaching in 1977. In his time in the LISD director's chair, district high schools have claimed 13 state titles and made over 150 playoff appearances across all sports – one of the most successful stretches in district history.

Ford, in good spirits, is ready for his next chapter.

"I'll play some golf, and I've got six years' worth of housework to do so I'll probably be doing that too," he joked.

Ford knows that LISD is in good hands. Longtime coach and administrator Cristie Liles was announced as the next athletic director on September 13, 2021.

"She's passionate, bright, knowledgeable," he said. "I think she's an obvious pick for it and should do a real good job."

Liles joined LISD in 2002 as a volleyball coach and teacher at Marcus High School. As head coach of the Marauders, Liles amassed over 250 wins and was named head coach of the year four times. In 2012, Liles transitioned into the associate



LISD Athletic Director Cristie Liles looks forward to her new leadership role in the district.

athletic director role, where she has served as an integral part of LISD's success since.

"I feel like it's an awesome opportunity to get this role," she said. "This is a good district. It's a multischool district. There are a lot of people that have the qualifications to be here. This is my 20th year [with LISD] — I think I have a good grasp of the district mission."

Liles already has big ideas on maintaining the success of LISD athletics and finding new ways to connect

past, present and future accomplishments. One of the first initiatives on her list is developing a district-wide hall of honor.

"I have some goals to honor what we've done historically. We've got so much great history, and so I want to honor coaches and teams from all of the schools and we're going to get a committee together and do a hall of honor. We just have



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too much to not do something with."

With tens of thousands of living alumni and over 40 state and national titles won since 1993, there is no shortage of LISD history to honor. Liles herself is making history as the district's first female athletic director.

"The chance to be the first female [athletic director] is obviously a huge honor and it's exciting. For our district to be open to hopefully thinking they found the best person -1 hope that's me. It's just like everything else with education - things change. The gender identity of an athletic director has changed."



LISD Athletic Director Tim Ford (center) was often seen on the sidelines supporting district schools. Ford announced his retirement effective December 2021.

But Liles remains focused on the task at hand.

"[LISD] is such a progressive place for education. Things are changing, the kids' attitudes are changing and I'm here to support our coaches with what they need to do to keep us being one of the more successful districts in the state."

Ford echoes this sentiment.

"This is probably the most successful multi-school district in the state. Not too many districts in the state that have this many schools achieve what we achieve."

As he continues to reflect on his time with LISD, he is content with the work that he has done, and looks forward to the work that Liles will do.

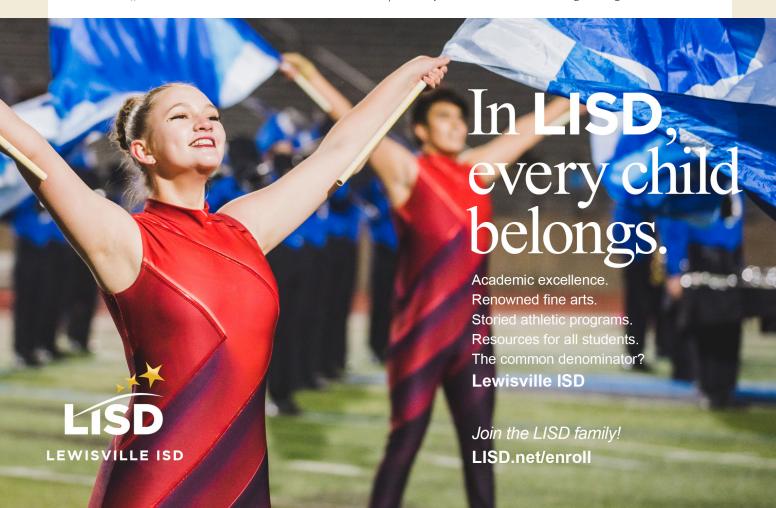
"I appreciate the eight years here," he said. "It's been really good. It's a good place to finish."

Knowing that she has the support of Ford and the district, Liles has full confidence that she will be able to build on LISD's accomplishments.

"We work for a school district that believes in extracurricular activities, so they're very supportive of knowing that we are wanting the best of the best. We get to recruit some really good coaches because of our schedule and because of all of the success we have in the classroom and out of the classroom."

Armed with the knowledge handed down to her from previous athletic directors Max Goldsmith, Buster Leaf, Neal Wilson, Ronnie Gage, Randy Mayes and now Tim Ford, she is ready to get started in January.

"I'm just excited. I'm excited to continue the traditions and the expectations that started a long time ago."



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notified of the prestigious invitation following their breathtaking performance at the 2019 Bands of America Grand National Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana where the band took third place.

For Hebron High School senior and saxophone player Gian Carlo Lay, the invitation was like a dream come true.

"I remember the moment like it was yesterday," Lay said. "I remember standing there on the field and hearing it announced over the speaker. I was in shock. I thought,

'Did they just say Hebron?' It is really hard to describe all the emotions that were running through me."

Parker Freeburg, who plays quads on the Hebron drumline said for the group it was the extra cherry on top.

"We put in all that work and received third place at state and the Outstanding Caption award in Music. We were already excited and then to be chosen for the Rose Bowl parade! It was an amazing feeling," Freeburg said. "I remember looking around at everyone on the field, some of us were smiling, others were crying. It was the type of moment where you know you will never forget it."

The Hawk marching band is no stranger to honors, the list of awards for the band is quite lengthy. A consistent finalist at Bands of America and top finisher at state, the band was also awarded the

international Sudler Shield from the Sousa Foundation recognizing their world-class excellence.

This year the marching band pulled out all the stops, as they took first-place at the 2021 6A UIL Marching Band Competition in San Antonio, Texas.

The theme for the parade this year is "Dream, Believe, Achieve." It is an important message that Sealy believes speaks to the heart of his students and fellow educators

"This resonates in everything we do as educators," Sealy said. "Instilling a willingness and courage to dream big, believe in the power of those dreams, and giving students the tools to pursue those dreams is maybe the most important thing we can bring to our students."

Drum Major Andie San Luis said her time in the band has taught her that discipline, fortitude and practice can make beautiful music, but it is the comradery and dedication of those around you that transcends it into something else.

"Everyone feels like they belong and I think that is unique, especially in a band this size," said San Luis. "It is an environment that was set up by those who came before us. We play with emotion and I think it is one of the

biggest parts of what makes the Hebron sound. You do it not only for you, but the person next to you. I think the audience feels that."

"You can play music and make it sound great, but it doesn't mean as much if you can't move people."

This isn't just a win for Hebron High School, but for the community as well. Joining in the excitement, the City of Carrollton congratulated the band during half-time at the Hebron vs. Plano East district football game by declaring Saturday, September 25 as "Hebron High School Marching Band Day."

Carrollton Mayor Kevin Falconer attended the game along with several other local and state dignitaries to announce the declaration and band's honors to the community.

"We at the City of

Carrollton and the Carrollton City Council are so proud of the Hebron High School Band and Director Sealy for the great honor they have received with their invitation to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade," Falconer said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that very few bands receive, but a well-deserved honor made possible by the hard work of the band members, the directors and the parents. Congratulations again to this fantastic band!"

Interested in joining them on the journey? You can follow the band on the road to the Rose Bowl on Facebook or on Twitter @TheHebronBand.



"You can play music and make it sound great but it doesn't mean as much if you can't move people."

– Hebron High School Drum Major Andie San Luis

@TheHebronBand





A survivor's story of strength

By Ryan Cox

KATHERINE OMO-OSAGIE'S STORY is as unique as the person she is. A story about overcoming grief and challenges while finding ways to create her own path to success. Omo-Osagie isn't afraid to tell her story either. In fact, she uses her past to help others along the way.

Omo-Osagie moved to The Colony and joined Lewisville ISD in 2012 with her mother, Stephanie Bond, and three older brothers as they began to rebuild their lives from what they left behind in Champagne, Illinois.

In 2010, Omo-Osagie witnessed a family tragedy centered around depression and domestic violence — an incident that changed her family's life forever. One cold, winter Saturday evening, a domestic dispute, triggered by her father's depression and mental illness, broke out in their home resulting in her father taking his own life after severely injuring her mother. At just six years old, Omo-Osagie grabbed her mothers cell phone to give to her to call for help. By doing so, she saved her life.

Omo-Osagie has spent her entire youth and young adult life telling her story and helping others who deal with domestic violence issues while also creating her own path for the future.

"I feel like I've been given so many different obstacles in my life and I used to wonder why these things keep happening but I've learned from it all," Omo-Osagie said. "That's what really motivates me is to keep talking and being open about my story because all I want to do is try to help other people go through the things I've already been through."

When the family settled into their new home in The Colony two years after the tragedy, Omo-Osagie started to excel in school and create an identity for herself. She enrolled in LISD and started her academic career at Tom Hicks Elementary and later Killian Middle School. As a mother of four children who have suffered through the unthinkable, Bond rarely had to worry about Katherine and at an early age she started to see some of the gifts that her daughter possessed begin to shine through.

"I think Katherine's drive came from the trauma," Bond said. "Her work ethic became her escape. When she focused on athletics and school, she didn't have to worry and became laser focused on her grades."

After the tragedy, the family initially faced financial struggles. Wanting to be able to help provide a stable future for her family, Omo-Osagie knew an excellent education would play a critical role in the dreams she had.

"When I was little, my mom and I would drive around Highland Park and look at the multi-million-dollar homes and we would talk about what these people do and about how they're highly educated people and I knew I wanted to be one of those people," Omo-Osagie said. "So that motivated me to really keep my head down and focus on school, get my work done and get straight A's.

"I've always been a studious kid. I've had a college spreadsheet list that has 50 colleges with the tuition, required GPA and SAT scores since I was in seventh grade. I've always been motivated to make sure I set myself up for what I want my future to look like."

In eighth grade, Omo-Osagie took the PSAT and TSI tests and scored well enough to be accepted into The Colony High School's Collegiate Academy, an opportunity for LISD students to earn an associate's degree or up to 60 hours of dual credit during their high school career. She began taking college courses during her freshman year and is now on track to graduate with an associate's degree and a 3.8 GPA by the time she finishes high school. Starting college courses early was important to Omo-Osagie because when her dad passed, one of the things she lost was her college fund and she wanted to take that burden of paying for college off of her mom.

"The Colony and LISD have been amazing," Omo-Osagie said. "When I say my life has been changed going here, that's an understatement. The Collegiate Academy is an amazing program. It's really nice to have professors that are caring and understanding and want you to succeed."

As a senior at The Colony High School, Omo-Osagie is gifted and smart with a personality that shines bigger than life itself. When she walks the halls of TCHS, she exudes kindness, compassion and charm. Not only is she varsity cheer captain and part of numerous extracurricular activities, including National Honor Society, but she is also a concurrent student on the Dean's List at Collin College. She's also a certified USA Gymnastics judge as a former competitive gymnast and two-time National Trampoline Champion.

With all the organizations Omo-Osagie is involved in, she excels at time management and maintaining her grades while still managing to be involved socially at school. Since she started college classes as a freshman through the Collegiate Academy, Omo-Osagie has already mastered a skill at an early age that new college students can often struggle with.

"Her time management skills are just amazing and I think the Collegiate Academy contributed to that greatly," Bond said.

Another on-campus organization Omo-Osagie is involved in at The Colony is PALs (Peer Assistant and Leadership), an organization that offers mentors for at-risk students.

"I was actually recommended to PALs and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, yes, this is what I want to do,'" Omo-Osagie said. "I have three elementary kids I mentor and they are so sweet. Hearing some of the things they've experienced, it melts my heart. Being a mentor to these kids is really special to me.

"I really believe that the way I grew up makes me want to help people so they don't have to feel alone like I did. If I would have had a PAL in elementary school, that would have been life-changing. Even if it's just one kid I can make an impact on, I've done my job."

Omo-Osagie's mentor and teacher through PALs, Jamie McCarty, has a close bond with Omo-Osagie and knows she's not only a blessing to the students in PALs but also her as a teacher.

"Katherine has become quite the leader in PALs," McCarty said. "She has natural leading abilities and steps up and leads while supporting her peers. She's exactly what a PAL should be.

"When you look at her, she's beautiful. But behind all the smiles is a very genuine heart and she cares about others. It's not about the glitz and the glamour and the attention that she gets, she honestly does want to do something special."

Omo-Osagie isn't afraid to step out of her comfort zone either. After a friend suggested she would fit perfectly into the pageant world, she tried out for Miss Texas' Outstanding Teen, something Omo-Osagie had never considered doing before. Miss Texas' Outstanding Teen is a preliminary to the Miss America Scholarship Competition. The competition provides young women with the opportunity to promote platforms of community service, share their talents, intelligence, and positive values while serving as role models in their communities, all with the support of dedicated volunteers assisting them in their pursuit of academic excellence, service and lifelong success.

In her first attempt at Miss Texas' Outstanding Teen, much to her surprise, Omo-Osagie won the Texas competition to advance to Miss America's Outstanding Teen where she was named second runner-up in Orlando, Florida. In total, Omo-Osagie earned more than \$12,000 in college scholarships through the competition.

"I never would've entered Miss Texas if I didn't go to The Colony," Omo-Osagie said. "A girl who used to go here was in the Miss Texas organization and she told me I should try it. I didn't think I would win because no one has ever come through and won on their first try, but I did! It's all been really cool because The Colony and the Collegiate Academy have definitely set my path on a different angle to succeed."

With college right around the corner, Omo-Osagie has set herself up for the future she has created with the help of the Collegiate Academy. She has full-ride scholarships to several universities, including Alabama and Auburn with hopes of getting into a pre-med program and going to medical school to become an Orthopedic Surgeon.

No matter what path she takes from here, Omo-Osaige's mother knows she will be successful because of how she has overcome all the obstacles thrown her direction.

"She's just an amazing young woman and I'm so incredibly proud of her and I know her brothers are proud of her," Bond said. "I can't wait to see where this girl ends up. I have no idea what her future is going to look like but it's going to be pretty amazing."



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