



In honor of Nelson Mandela

Proudly Serving District 109

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Representative Helen Giddings and Zindzi Mandela (daughter of Nelson Mandela)



Statue Unveiling of Former President Nelson Mandela at the South African Embassy Washington, D.C. September 21, 2013

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Giddings' Annual Mayors Dinner: Conversation starts with Richard Fisher, Texas Federal Reserve Bank President and CEO

Dear Friends & Neighbors

It is an honor and privilege having the opportunity to serve as your State Representative for District 109. As always, I enjoy hearing from constituents and I encourage you to stay involved and connected. Hopefully, this newsletter will give you a glimpse of how our office continues to work on your behalf in and out of Austin. Thank you for continuing to allow me to represent you in the Texas House.

Reflections On the Life of Nelson Mandela

As we look back upon the year; many of our thoughts will be about things we could have done better and how in the future we will make the most difference either in the lives of those we love or for others who have impacted our lives greatly in some way.

As I think back upon the year, my thoughts are of loved ones and in some way keeping their spirits with me like "guiding lights" as I continue on in this world. This month, we lost a great leader and friend to the world.

Nelson Mandela showed the world a sermon stressing that only love can conquer hate. Mr. Mandela's refusal to hate and his lack of bitterness in the face of bigotry and hatred continue to stand as an example for the world to follow. Mr. Mandela committed his life to the fierce struggle to eliminate the notion of better or lessor and superior and inferior human beings. He gave everything to the struggle and he would have given his life if need be for the liberation of South Africa.

"As I reflect upon the Life of Nelson Mandela, I will forever treasure the privilege of spending time with him. My first meeting with Mr. Mandela in 1995 was a unique experience that was an absolute realization that I was standing in the presence of greatness. Later meetings were just as inspirational and I continued to be in awe of both his charisma and his humility."

Mr. Mandela has inspired so many individuals and organizations all over the world; as such I encourage you be an example of inspiration for others, as your impact in the world is currently being written and may someday be someone's "Guiding Light."

Spirit of the Community Spotlight

Each day we encounter an inspiring spirit whose creativity and dedication to the goodwill of others often enhance a community. Often these spirited individuals go unrecognized for their extraordinary contributions to our community and beyond. We are pleased to recognize and celebrate those who inspire us all to imagine, create and work towards enhancing the communities in which we live. If you would like to nominate a "Spirit in your Community", please submit a one (1) page summary of how this person inspires your community. The selected nominee will be featured in next month's Community Connection E-Newsletter. Please send nominations to District109giddings@house.state.tx.us by January 15, 2013.

UT Dallas Academic Bridge Program

Since the year 2000, under the leadership of Dean George Fair, the University of Texas - Dallas has implemented the Academic Bridge Program (ABP) through the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, which helps students transition from high school to college. Typically, the type of students accepted into the ABP are students that



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District 109 Home Page

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have a high class ranking, but may not have received a university-track curriculum at their local high school. The ABP boasts a graduation rate of 70% over the past ten years, higher than state and national averages. Dr. Fair stated, "Representative Giddings has been a champion of the Academic Bridge Program since day one...Her tireless efforts to make a college education a reality for all have reaped benefits for many, many young Texans."

The ABP enrolls approximately 140 students each year, statewide. The students are mostly from urban neighborhoods in the Dallas area, and are usually first generation college students. In fall 2013, UT-Dallas enrolled approximately 36 students, 20 of which came from the DISD (56%). The ABP at UT-Dallas is able to provide all freshmen ABP students with on-campus housing, allowing these students to become more involved with their university, and pave the way to become campus leaders. Dean Fair also emphasized that the ABP freshman students "tend to have a better opportunity to continue in school and stay in school" through this opportunity. Additionally Interested students should speak with their counselors, submit a written application, and prepare for a personal interview. For more information about the Academic Bridge Program (ABP), please call 972-833-2655, or visit utdallas.edu/academicbridge/apply.

In our January 2014 Newsletter, we will begin a four part college series. This series will focus on helping your family, friends, and neighbors to become more informed on getting the young person in your life properly prepared for college. This will include standardized testing dates, college fairs, scholarship opportunities, and resources to help you and your child understand everything that goes into obtaining higher education.

Texas Federal Reserve Bank President and CEO starts conversation at Giddings' Annual Mayors Dinner

The Mayors Dinner, an annual event initiated by Representative Helen Giddings to encourage Dallas mayor and Best Southwest mayors to collaborate and work toward a common agenda. Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, Best Southwest Cities Mayors, Mayor Carl Sherman of Desoto, Mayor Leon Tate of Glenn Heights, Mayor Hector Casarez of Wilmer, Mayor Rob Franke of Cedar Hill, Mayor Artis Johnson of Hutchins, and their respective guests, along with Texas Federal Reserve Bank President and CEO of Dallas, Mr. Richard Fisher, were present at this year's dinner.

Ambassador Fisher began the group conversation with an overview of current economic conditions and indicators. Major emphasis was given to job growth and financial literacy. Ambassador Fisher also indicated that the Dallas Federal Reserve continues to expand its financial literacy program and urged cities to inquire. Giddings said, "Many of the issues faced within District 109 require a regional approach. Knowing how to identify economic opportunities is vital in regard to future job growth."

The enthusiasm and positive spirits of the guests helped make this highly anticipated annual event both productive and enjoyable. Giddings is looking forward to continuing the dialogue on financial literacy and job growth within Texas.

Happy Holidays,

Helen Giddings