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A Lesson in Service: GHS Students Refresh Leonard Park Playground

Gainesville, Texas — Students from Gainesville High School's National Honor Society (NHS) and National Art Honor Society (NAHS) joined forces this fall to give one of the community's most beloved spaces a fresh new look. Nearly 130 GISD students volunteered their time to clean, repaint, and re-stain the children's playground at Leonard Park, many returning to a place they fondly remember from their own childhoods.

Both NHS and NAHS are invitation-only organizations that recognize students for excellence in scholarship, leadership, character, service, and (for NAHS) artistic skill. NHS currently includes 96 junior and senior members; NAHS includes 30 sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Each chapter elects its own student leadership and is guided by faculty advisors: Christopher Glover (Social Studies) and Michael Hill (Law Enforcement) for NHS, and Robin Perkins (Art) for NAHS. As part of their annual expectation to complete both group and individual service projects, members voted earlier this semester to dedicate their fall project to revitalizing the Leonard Park playground. The structure, well-used by families across the region, was in need of fresh paint and wood stain after years of sun and weather exposure. The city's Parks and Recreation crew collaborated with the groups to prepare for the work. Staff sanded and repaired the playground to help the students be more efficient and effective in their project.

Local business PPG Paints generously donated much of the paint and stain used for the project. Additional supplies were purchased using funds the students raised themselves; no district money was used.

While NHS students led the cleaning and staining efforts, NAHS members took the lead on the more intricate painting and detail work. Under the guidance of Art teacher and NAHS advisor Mrs. Perkins, student artists also refreshed and enhanced the playground's murals.

Membership in both honor societies includes a strong commitment to service. Students earn individual community service hours throughout the year by volunteering with organizations such as VISTO, Meals on Wheels, and local nonprofits. Graduating seniors who complete at least 80 service hours earn the right to wear an NHS stole at commencement, and those reaching 150



hours receive an additional medallion. For NAHS, service and artistic contribution remain key to continued membership.

Advisors say projects like the Leonard Park renovation provide more than a beautified space—they help students build a lifelong understanding of community responsibility.

“The goal is for students to learn what it truly means to give back,” said NHS advisor Michael Hill. “No matter where they live as adults, we want them to know the value of supporting and uplifting the community around them.”

“When [Michael Hill] approached me about the groups working to restore the finish on our city's biggest playground, I was inspired by these students,” said Mayor Tommy Moore. “I learned how they raised their own funding and reached out to PPG and Home Depot for supplies, and it really reflects the heart of our community. Our citizens are extremely philanthropic, and it is evident that this characteristic is alive and well among our community’s youth. I had the privilege of spending part of Saturday at Leonard Park with them, and it was amazing to see their dedication to serving our community. Thank you, GISD staff and students, for being people of action.”

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