

# THE ALIRIAN

June/July 2025

## Newly Elected ALIR Council Members



Don Gadberry



Estela Royal



Paul Cavazos



Bernard Rauch



Anna Hoelting

## ALIR Scholarship Winners

We are pleased and amazed at the outstanding achievements of the 33 applicants for the 2025 ALIR scholarships. These students are a few of the wonderful young people coming forth to lead the future. Our ALIR members have generously donated personal funds to make these scholarships possible. This year, **FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE ARE AWARDING FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS** to NEISD high school college-bound seniors. A big THANK YOU to our scholarship committee: Estela Royal, Steve Rutledge, Don Gadberry, and Anna Hoelting.

All five of our winners are in the National Honor Society with impressive academic achievements and all five are tremendous “givers”...they give back to their communities with service hours to help others in many organizations. And in addition, all five are dedicated athletes: football, tennis, swimming, and basketball. In short, these students are successful in every aspect of their young lives. It was tough competition for the scholarships, and we are honored to have such great students in NEISD.

Here are our 2025 scholarship winners in alphabetical order by first name.



Chelsea Huber

Chelsea is from Reagan High School: UT, Austin is her plan with a major in Government/Political Science and Law/Public Policy. She will graduate with a 107.2 GPA and a ranking of #12 of 804 graduates. She is Senior Class President as well as a class officer throughout her high school years. As a Latin scholar, she has tutored fellow students. She loves the classics and how the ancient world influences our lives today.

Chelsea is determined to earn her doctorate in jurisprudence and to bring new ideas built on opportunities. As Chelsea says: “...allow me to engage in constructive dialogue and give power to others in my community as a bridge between a system of intricate detail and difficult processes.”

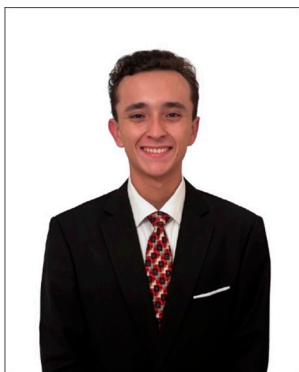


Diana Espinol

Are you worried about infectious diseases? Let's help an attendee and SPEAKER at the Global Health Symposium, discussing biomedical research, sustainability, business and policy — and did I mention that she is also a varsity swimmer? I'm talking about Diana Espinol.

Diana will graduate from Roosevelt High School with a GPA of 98.6, ranking #55 of 562 graduates. She plans to attend UT, San Antonio, majoring in Microbiology and Immunology.

Diana was chosen to participate in the 2024 Valero Young Scientist Program hosted by the Texas Biomedical Research Institute. Besides biomedical research and swimming, she runs marathons and is a news and features journalist.



Franco Uribe

Franco Uribe attends Churchill High School and will graduate with a 107.8 GPA, ranking #2 of 558 graduates.

He plans to attend Rice University, majoring in Biochemistry. He will then move on to graduate work at Baylor College of Medicine. Franco is now planning his residency work. He has “shadowed” surgeons — observing numerous surgical procedures; including total knee arthroscopy, open heart surgery, laparoscopic hysterectomy, and anterior cervical discectomy. His goal, however, is to be an orthopedic surgeon.

With all of this hard work and serious science, it's playing tennis that brings Franco peace.



Seoyeon Katie Kim

Seoyeon Katie Kim is a varsity swimmer and a Latin scholar. Her dream is to study Neuroscience at Vanderbilt University. She will graduate from Reagan High School with a 106.7 GPA, ranking #18 of 804 graduates.

Her goals are to uncover the brain's mysteries and improve lives through neuroscience's integration of biology, chemistry, and physics. ...Imagine finding “joy” in the transformation, in the gateway of curiosity, in the opening of science as a source of wonder.

Just as Seoyeon can *feel the water* when she swims, she has a deep sense of her gift to embrace cultural heritage and enrich the health and lives of others.



Vance Hawkins

Vance Hawkins will graduate from Churchill High School with a GPA of 105.6, ranking #13 of 558 graduates. He plans to attend UT, Austin, majoring in Chemical Engineering — particularly its role in medical advancement and the development of prosthetics.

If you ask Vance to describe himself in one word, it would be GRIT. Vance has the grit to overcome physical obstacles and challenges, and to create solutions. He has a sense of purpose based on his grit and motivation. He also realizes that his grit gives him the gift to be a role model for others in his service work and in his future plan to alleviate physical pain through medical advancement.

# Summer & Fall 2025 Calendar Dates

May 5 Summer catalog released  
 May 5- 12 Summer fees paid  
 May 12 Summer registration  
 May 28 Instructor/new student orientation

June 2 Summer classes begin  
 June 30 NEISD holiday- July 4

July 7 Fall applications available  
 July 28 Fall instructor apps due

August 8 Summer semester ends  
 August 11 Fall catalog released  
 August 18 Fall Registration

September 3 Instructor/new student orientation  
 September 8 Fall classes begin

October 7 1st Luncheon  
 October 8 Spring applications available

November 4 2nd Luncheon  
 November 7 Spring instructor apps due  
 November 24-28 Thanksgiving break

December 2 3rd Luncheon  
 December 3 Art Show/Performance setup  
 December 4 Art Show/Performance  
 December 5 Fall classes end

## Semester Beginning & Ending Dates

### Fall 2025 12-week classes

September 8<sup>th</sup> - December 5<sup>th</sup>

### Fall 2025 six-week classes

1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> - Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>

### Fall 2025 three-week classes

1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> - Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 29<sup>th</sup> - Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> - Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>  
 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> - Dec 5<sup>th</sup>



Again this year —

ALIR, in collaboration with the San Antonio Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. and “Latched Support” has provided diapers to needy moms and cute little babies in the San Antonio area.

THANK YOU ALIRIANS.

### PLEASE HELP ALIR GROW

There is so much more we want to do for our ALIRian community, but that takes funding.

### **Please Consider ALIR.**

We are a 501.c.3 non-profit educational service for seniors, providing lifelong learning in a social setting, intellectual stimulation and scholarships.

Please donate to the **Bill Howland Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Donations can be left with Willson or checks mailed to Tom Colbourn, Council Treasurer.

# Art & Entertainment



## MY CROSSING LINES TWICE, FROM WEST TO EAST AND BACK AGAIN

It was 1966, and I'd decided to finally visit East Berlin. It was probably summer, since I decided to buy an ice cream from a vendor in Treptow Park. I paid with West Deutsche Marks and the vendor gave me my change in East Deutsche Marks. A BIG MISTAKE, BUT NOBODY HAD WARNED ME.

Leaving the East Zone, I was told by the East German border guards to declare any monetary transactions during my brief visit. They searched me, so there was no point in hiding my few East German Marks, so I fessed up, hoping I was not getting that poor vendor into trouble. The mood got ugly, but not as ugly as the photo of Walther Ulbricht posted prominently on the guardhouse wall. I did not endear myself by saying in my best German, "His face looks like a pickle!" They then frisked me again, just for fun, and photocopied my entire address book, which, among other papers had the APO address of my brother-in-law, much to his later chagrin.

Back in the West again, I met up with a fellow traveler who insisted I accompany her once more over the border. Being still a naive, foolish young woman, I complied, and off we waltzed, a second time for me, into East Berlin. We'd only walked for about five minutes, when the "Viking" woman, or so I remember all six, muscular feet of her, said, "Don't look now, but I believe a "Volkspo", aka a Volkspolicist, is following us, probably because of your last session with the East German guards." I was a bit worried, but she was not. Instead, she told me to wait with her so that he could catch up with us. When our unsuspecting victim was within range, we each linked arms with him and commanded him to take us to the nearest night club to go dancing with us. And so he did, and we were able to somewhat ease some of the *coldness* of the 1960's Cold War by doing a red-hot "polka". — Joanna McKinnis



For the first time ever, NEISD's ALIRians have awarded **five** \$2,500 scholarships to some very deserving NEISD seniors. The students were from Churchill High School, Roosevelt High School, and Reagan High School.

ALIR (Academy of Learning in Retirement) is an all-volunteer organization that fosters lifelong learning for seniors over 50. Members contribute to the Bill Howland Scholarship Fund through their donations throughout the year. This year, ALIR collected \$12,500 for our NEISD students.

The Bill Howland Scholarship Award is named after a beloved member who had a passion for education and lifelong learning.

—Even Henson, NEISD Contributor

## ALIR MISSION STATEMENT

Academy of Learning in Retirement (ALIR) is an all-volunteer organization which provides opportunities for lifelong learning with social and community engagement.

Your stories, poems and ideas can be published in upcoming newsletters.



**Please send your submissions to:**

Rodney Brown -- rrbrown67@147thhillclimbers.org  
Barbara Maphet -- bmaphet@luxurypresentations.com



Scan the QR code  
for  
the ALIR website

If you know someone in our ALIR community who needs a card of sympathy, a get-well wish or other words of encouragement (please be specific), notify Paul Cavazos at [cavazos.paul@icloud.com](mailto:cavazos.paul@icloud.com) or Willson Donovan at [ALIR@neisd.net](mailto:ALIR@neisd.net).

*ALIR Remembers*

**Karl Springer**

## THE STORY OF ALIR

### (School for Seniors)

Where did ALIR come from? How did it get here? Who started it? The Academy was started in 1989 by Marci and John Lane. Dr. Lane, a retired sociology professor at the University of Texas, San Antonio, envisioned an all-volunteer learning academy for retirees, patterned after one he knew about at the University of Delaware. He recognized that retirees needed an outlet for their love of intellectual pursuits and the need for continuing social contacts instead of settling into a life of inactivity. Before I go further, I will insert some words from Esther Vexler's Memoirs. She also was involved in the beginnings of ALIR. Esther knew Marci and John Lane. They often talked about having continuing education classes for retirees. Just as he was asked to visit the Delaware campus to learn how it operated, Esther visited UCLA and UC-Berkeley where there was a similar program for age 55+ adults.

UTSA was interested in sponsoring such a group. Esther was already involved in a group called Lifetime Learning, though it was loosely organized and floundering. As ALIR was being organized, Esther wanted it to be called Lifetime Learning, but she was out-voted by the others on the organizing committee. So, John and Marci Lane were the dominant force behind the beginnings of ALIR, the main ones who "got the ball rolling" on the idea of a school for retirees of 55+ (the age requirement is now 50+). John presented the idea to UTSA and the administration liked it.

They gave their complete support and suggested that the classes be held at the Institute of Texas Cultures, downtown. The classes would go from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. These hours avoided the usual rush hour drive time. It would be an all-volunteer learning academy, offering a variety of classes, including volunteer teachers who would offer their various subjects.

The school schedule was divided into two semesters, each approximately 12 weeks long. Labor Day and New Year's Day were the guidelines for the beginnings of each semester. A variety of classes was offered, chosen by each teacher, including languages, art, math, writing, literature, and history. The art classes proved to be very popular, and an art show became an important feature of the end-of-semester luncheon. Student art was displayed in the hallways, and in any available space nearby. Some students even sold their work.

In keeping with the idea of the importance of social interaction and communication, lunch time in the large ALIR gathering room was an important time for ALIRians to visit and get to know one another. The class schedule included an hour-and-a-half lunch break, and since there were no lunch spots nearby, students brought their own lunches. The coffee pot was always perking at ten cents a cup. At the end of each month, there was a get-together during the noon hour with free coffee and drinks, plus any goodies that students brought. This was a time for important announcements and for ideas and suggestions to be shared and maybe acted on. Also, a special lunch was planned at the end of each semester. A main dish or sandwiches were brought in and the rest was a potluck of salads, vegetables, and desserts.

ALIR was started without a penny, but with the generosity of the Institute, it got off on a good footing. Once it got started, any expenses, aside from secretarial help, were covered by the registration fees of the students. ALIR was a success, readily accepted by the retiree community, and by 2005 it was offering up to 50 classes. The attendance soon grew to almost 200. And then, all this success caused a problem. ALIR had outgrown its rooms at the Institute, and the Institute had its own space problems. Also, some students did not like to drive downtown.

The ALIR Council appointed a committee to search for a new space in San Antonio where the ALIR classes could meet; one easily accessible with adequate parking. The committee checked shopping centers, churches, recently-closed spaces, and any reasonable possibility for classrooms. They realized that it would be virtually impossible to find a replacement for the ALIR that had outgrown any possible venues.

An ALIR member, Sara Harris, was a recent retiree from the Communications Department of the Northeast Independent School District (NEISD). She had kept in touch with her friends from work, lunching together each month or so.

At one of those lunches, she learned that NEISD had recently purchased a building just down the street from their central office building. The Fox Photo building. It would be used for their Continuing Education Programs and evening school classes. (Remember when photos were mailed to be developed and then returned to you by mail? The building had been the national headquarters for Fox Photo.)

The timing was perfect. The use of the building was perfect. NEISD classes were in the evenings and on Saturdays, and ALIR classes were on Mondays through Thursdays, clearing out at about 3:00 p.m. Agreements were made, the move from the Institute was accomplished and classes started in 2005. Financial agreements were taken care of fairly for both sides. ALIR would have full use of the facility and NEISD would have use of the class registration fees. Some of the hallways and rooms were ill-defined and furnishings were scarce. However, many old district desks, tables, and chairs found their way to the new digs, and some ALIR members even lent personal wall decorations to temporarily create some attractiveness for the new school.

Though the first year in the new place seemed quite primitive; by the time classes began again the following fall, the district had done a remarkable overhaul of the building. There were many classrooms, wide hallways, bright lighting, new desks, and audio-visual equipment — in other words, most of the amenities that make a building a school. ALIR had a new home.

So, ALIR has come a long way and with astonishing success. We certainly have our excellent leadership, fantastic students and an extraordinary school district to thank for this. ALIR has also extended its footprint in the community with a excellent website. There are presently about 400 students and over 80 instructors with presentations via Zoom and in the classroom. The free parking is good, the classes are great, and the monthly luncheons are fantastic. And one more thing. Every year, along with other community projects, ALIR offers college scholarships to deserving NEISD graduating students. This past spring, **five** students were each awarded a \$2,500 scholarship. This money comes from the Bill Howland Scholarship Fund and generous contributions by our ALIR members.

—Jean Kanninen (one of the old timers), Miriam Ellison & Estela Royal (fellow ALIRians)

