



Sarah Beal photo

Recipients of Bluebonnet's Scholarships of Excellence include, from left, front row: Jacob Fryrear, Caylee Rocka, Jake Namken, Tanna Furry, Brandon Gigout, Sydney Nicholson, Grace Oliver, Briana Silva, Adam Edmiston, Raymond Multer, Britan Council, Trenton Schneider, Gabriel Blue and Skyler Ivey. Middle row: Minnie Jordan, Roxanne Espinoza, Addison Turner, Allen Batdorf, Jason Winkler, Brittany Helford, Toye Walther, Lauren Kwiatkowski, Zachary Markizer, Karsen Ross, Morgan

Shepperson, Linda Torres, Heriberto Santos, Erik Castillo, Deacon Manning, Jose Torres, Micaela Schimank, Joel Benoit, Angel Jaramillo and Loren Chmelar. Back row: Isabel Werlien, Erin Bittner, Hunter Dernehl, Raynie Bentke, Johnson Mueller, Sierra Long, Kylie Johnson, Ty Iselt, Matthew Welch, David Patterson and Chance Fritsche. Not pictured: TyEryka Preston, Leighton Abell, Brandon Sikora, Alejandro Gonzales, Jr., Mindy Rodriguez, Hedit Galvan, Nathan Cunningham and Dauson Wittner.

53 students receive Bluebonnet scholarships

By Lisa Ogle

Micaela Schimank's aunt was diagnosed with cancer about a year ago. Schimank, who graduated from Giddings High School in June, stayed with her aunt in the hospital and went with her to numerous doctor appointments during cancer treatment.

"I realized that I wanted to work with cancer patients and be the one who makes a difference in their lives, while being with them through this hard journey," said Schimank, who plans to attend Blinn College in Brenham later this month to earn an associate's degree in nursing.

She is one of 53 recipients of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's Scholarships of Excellence. Each winner receives \$2,500. This year, 216 students applied for the 28 trade and technical school scholarships and 25 academic scholarships to attend a college or university.

The students were honored in April during a reception at Bluebonnet's Bastrop Headquarters. About 130 people attended the event, during which scholarship recipients announced their post-secondary school choice, topic of study and career choice. Their interests ranged from cosmetology to small business management and from biomedical science to English literature. Many students aspire to own a business or become a veterinarian or medical doctor.

Jake Namken, who graduated from Bastrop High School in June, energized the room as he sought Red Raider support and announced that he will attend Texas Tech University in Lubbock to study agricultural business. After college, he'd like to get a job at First National Bank in Bastrop, where his father, Wally Namken, is vice president of lending. Or, he might work as a boot salesman for South Texas-based Anderson Bean Boot Co.

"I am very appreciative of this scholar-

ship, and it will help greatly," Namken said. "I think it is wonderful that Bluebonnet gives back to their communities."

Minnie Jordan, who is homeschooled and lives about 10 miles north of Elgin, spoke passionately about her plans to study violin performance at Berklee College of Music in Boston to become a professional musician. She has played violin for 13 years and plays more than 50 gigs a year with her younger sister, Ella. She hopes to test out of her first year of Berklee classes to save tuition cost and appreciates the scholarship to help her attend one of the top-ranked music conservatories in the country.

Since 2006, the co-op has awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships to high school graduates in the co-op's service area. If you know a student who wants to apply for a Scholarship of Excellence next year, applications will be available in the fall at bluebonnet.coop and from area high school counselors.



ABOVE: Bluebonnet Board Chairman Ben Flencher, left, and former Bluebonnet General Manager Mark Rose, right, congratulate Board member Roderick Emanuel for achieving Director Gold status from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. **LEFT:** Rose and Flencher present Board member Suanna Tumlinson her Director Gold certificate. Tumlinson and Emanuel are among 59 Texas electric co-op directors who have achieved the NRECA's highest educational credential certification.

Board members earn top credential from NRECA

Two Bluebonnet directors have earned Director Gold status from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, which represents more than 900 of the nation's electric cooperatives.

Roderick Emanuel and Suanna Tumlinson, Bluebonnet directors since 2011, achieved Director Gold by completing NRECA's highest educational credential certification. Of the 509 electric cooperative directors in Texas, only 59 have received this credential.

"Congratulations to Roderick and Suanna for this great achievement," said Matt Bentke, Bluebonnet's general manager. "In earning Director Gold status, Roderick and Suanna have demonstrated their commitment to our industry and organization, and most importantly, to the members they represent."

Today's ever-changing electric utility market imposes new demands on electric cooperative directors, who must keep up with complex changes in the electric utility industry, learn new governance skills and maintain a keen working knowledge of cooperative principles.

To achieve Director Gold, Emanuel and Tumlinson first completed five courses on governance and energy in-

dustry basics and earned the NRECA's Credentialed Cooperative Certification. They also earned 10 hours of credit for a variety of governance courses and were awarded the Board Leadership Certification. Director Gold requires completion of an additional three courses and a commitment to complete three continuing education courses every two years.

Emanuel said it is his "responsibility as a Bluebonnet Board member to study the latest topics and innovative practices and know the market industry standards so I can make informed decisions when it comes to our members and my work for the company."

Tumlinson agreed. "My first priority is serving our members," Tumlinson said. "The best way to do that is to be educated about emerging technologies, to learn what members want and what we can do to enhance the cooperative. That's why it's important to continue learning about cooperative hot topics."

Four Bluebonnet directors — Russell Jurk, Robert Mikeska, Kenneth Mutscher and Milton Shaw — have also earned Credentialed Cooperative Certification. Mutscher and Shaw have earned Board Leadership Certification as well.



Bastrop River Rally seeks volunteers

Keep Bastrop County Beautiful is hosting its third annual river cleanup on Sunday, Sept. 25. The Bastrop River Rally cleanup's goal is to remove trash and bring attention to and revitalize the Lost Pines Nature Trail, a series of hike-and-bike trails along the Colorado River in the Bastrop area.

Cleanup organizers are providing canoes and kayaks, paddles and life jackets for participants interested in paddling the river and collecting and removing trash and other materials. Participants can also bring their own watercraft and gear. A team leader in a separate boat will guide the group. Children must be at least 10 years old to participate in a boat. Children ages 10 through 17 years old must be accompanied by an adult in the watercraft. Last year's cleanup gathered more than 1,000 pounds of trash. The river needs to be cleaned again, especially because spring floods washed in trash and debris. The river rally includes a fun run/walk, environmental expo, live music, kids' corner and food. To learn more about the cleanup and other ways to volunteer, visit KeepBastropCountyBeautiful.org.

Lost Pines Master Naturalists Wesley Smith and Kim Iberg take part in the Bastrop River Rally in 2015. Photo by Andy Wier