

OPPORTUNITY

NEWS



2 News From
Your College

3 Student Research
Gets Batty

4 Promise Parent
Shares Her Story

NEWS FROM YOUR COLLEGE

Ravens baseball celebrates fifth annual Challenger Day

The San Jacinto College Ravens baseball team partnered with the North Shore Little League Challenger Division to commemorate its fifth annual Challenger Day March 29.

The local Challenger Division started eight years ago as part of the national Little League Challenger Program. The division enables boys and girls with physical and mental challenges, ages 4-18 or up to 22 if still enrolled in high school, to enjoy playing baseball along with millions of other children who participate in the sport. More than 30,000 athletes participate in 950 Challenger programs worldwide.

During the game, the Ravens acted as buddies, helping the Challenger players on the field as needed. Whenever possible, players bat and make plays themselves.

“The Challenger game is meant to affect the lives of everyone involved,”

said Kory Koehler, Ravens assistant baseball coach. “This is bigger than baseball. This is humanity at its finest. Our players will remember this forever.”

Eric Kirchner, North Shore Little League president and Galena Park ISD program director of special education, says events like the Challenger Game build awareness for special needs, help Challenger players experience team camaraderie, and allow the buddies to see past players’ disabilities to their diverse, dynamic strengths.

“Seeing these big guys out there with our Challenger athletes, laughing and chasing them around the bases, makes us all smile,” Kirchner said. “We see our regular volunteer buddies from the high schools and other sports come in and make long-lasting connections and friendships with our athletes, and that’s what it’s all about.”

This year, San Jac culinary students — led by Chef Michael Schuster — catered the event, feeding the Ravens team and the Challenger players and families.

To follow Ravens baseball, scan the QR code. To view event photos, visit direc.to/ngu_.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

Hellyer named Citizen of the Year

The South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce named San Jacinto College Chancellor Dr. Brenda Hellyer as one of its citizens of the year during its annual gala.

“I am deeply honored,” said Hellyer. “This recognition reflects the incredible community that San Jac is fortunate to partner with and is dedicated to creating opportunities for our citizens. Together, we will continue to strengthen and grow our region and build a bright future for our students, their families, and our communities.”

Others recognized as part of the event included Dr. Deann Powell, Pasadena ISD superintendent, citizen

of the year; Lisa Holbrook, president and CEO, South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce, chairman’s award; and Bruce Summers, volunteer of the year.

Hellyer has led San Jac since 2009. Previously, she served as the College’s executive vice president for resource development, vice chancellor for fiscal affairs, and executive vice chancellor.

Cybersecurity program designated National Center of Academic Excellence

San Jacinto College has been designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense through the academic year 2030.

This designation, awarded by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security, recognizes the College for providing high-quality cybersecurity education and strengthening the national cybersecurity workforce.

San Jac offers a Bachelor of Applied Technology in information technology with an emphasis in cybersecurity. Launched in fall 2024, this program equips students with hands-on experience in threat hunting, security operations, and risk management to defend against cyberthreats. The curriculum also covers ethical hacking and cryptography, ensuring graduates can address evolving cyber challenges.

To learn more about San Jac’s cybersecurity programs and initiatives, scan the QR code.



Photo courtesy of South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce

PROJECT GOTHAM: STUDENT RESEARCH GETS BATTY

By Courtney Morris
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Darkness cloaks the city. Streetlights throw patchy light across the road. Ahead, a white van slows to 10 miles per hour at a bridge.

You brake just as your headlights illumine a yellow sign on the van's rear window: "WARNING."

Below, flanked by bat icons, are the words: "Slow Vehicle: Scientific Research in Progress."

You've just spotted San Jacinto College's Project Gotham team in the middle of some batty research.

Bat network

San Jac STEM department chair Dr. Tyler Olivier has championed hands-on learning since his student days trapping

bats and rodents.

Learning about Olivier's early fieldwork, a colleague connected him to Dr. Andrea Rummel, a Rice University assistant professor of biosciences who has studied bats for a decade.

Rummel and her doctoral student Alexandria Shockney are gathering acoustic data to study bat flight and biological factors that impact where bats appear in the urban landscape. Two of their mapped drives wind through Galena Park and Pasadena — San Jac's backyard.

Olivier jumped in.

"As a biologist, I don't find anything better than being in the field and collecting data," he said. "This gives students the opportunity to collaborate with other scientists — people who are active in the field."

Warning: Scientific research ahead

Launched in fall 2024, Project Gotham currently comprises seven San Jac students — three conducting the research for honors biology projects.

The team leaves 45 minutes after sunset, when bats begin foraging for insects. Olivier drives a San Jac van while students navigate and take notes. Suctioned to the roof is an ultrasonic microphone that picks up bat calls, or echolocation, at frequencies above 20 kilohertz, higher than human hearing.

"Bats are echolocating to situate themselves in space and identify prey that they can then move toward, and each bat has a characteristic echolocation call," Rummel said.

During the 1.5-hour drive,

students note the landscape at different times. Are they passing over creeks or ponds? Do any areas contain strong artificial light?

Later, students compare the calls, activity, and GPS data to their notes. One idea they're examining is the luxury effect. Do bats appear more in affluent areas with greenspace than in bright, noisy industrial spaces?

Project Gotham makes the same drive within a week to increase the sample size and power of the results.

Project reach

Project Gotham is important on many levels.

For one, it provides more data about Houston's natural pest control — from Mexican free-tailed to big brown bats. Each bat consumes more than half its bodyweight in insects nightly.

"Each of those bats is eating 50 insects, so that's hundreds of thousands of insects that these guys are taking out of the air on a given night," Rummel said.

For another, Project Gotham gives students like Rachel Abreo experience that many college juniors and seniors would envy. The dual credit student even presented her bat research at the 2025 National Conference for Undergraduate Research in April.

"This is kind of getting your feet in first," Abreo said. "You have great people who are in higher ranks than you who are able to speak wisdom into your learning."

Drives often double as tutoring or advising sessions.

"We don't just talk about



Project Gotham, but we start to talk about what's the next step as you transfer," Olivier said. "What are some of the things you should be looking to do? What are the expectations as you get to a university, or what are your career goals?"

Research to be continued?

San Jac is the only community college participating in Rice's bat research, though Houston Bat Team and Texas Master Naturalists also contribute.

Project Gotham will keep collecting data as long as it's needed, but Rummel hopes to expand the partnership.

As for Olivier?

Recalling the hoops to launch acoustic-only research, he grins. If Phase 2 includes capturing live bats in mist nets: "I'll be writing a grant for rabies vaccinations."

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac's STEM programs.



Photos courtesy of Tyler Olivier

Q&A: MAKING THE PROMISE @ SAN JAC SCHOLARSHIP WORK FOR YOUR FAMILY

By **Melissa Trevizo**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

Monique Davis Williams serves as one of the directors for San Jac Online, bringing nearly a decade of experience across San Jacinto College’s student services departments. Since joining the College in 2015, Williams has held various roles in educational planning, orientation, dual credit, and admissions.

Her unique perspective extends beyond her professional role — she’s also a parent whose son, Razzmon Williams, successfully navigated the Promise @ San Jac Scholarship.

This last-dollar scholarship covers

tuition, books, and supplies for up to three years at San Jac, bridging the financial gap for in-district high school graduates after all other financial aid is applied.

Williams offers valuable insights for other families considering Promise @ San Jac:

Q: How did you find out about the Promise @ San Jac Scholarship?

A: I learned about it through work since it developed while I was there. Once it became available, I knew it would be a great opportunity for my son.

Q: What did the scholarship mean for your family?

A: It was a huge financial relief. Even

though we lived out of the district, my son qualified because he attended a Pasadena ISD school. We only had to cover out-of-district fees, significantly less than paying for a four-year university. It made college much more affordable.

Q: What was the conversation about Promise @ San Jac like for your family?

A: Like many high schoolers, Razzmon wanted to go straight to a university. He had offers but not enough financial aid to make it feasible. As a family, we definitely looked at the numbers, and it made the most sense for us. Eventually, he decided on San Jac on his own, which was important. We didn’t force it on him, and now he’s grateful because he avoided major student debt.

Q: What was the Promise @ San Jac process like?

A: It’s a three-step process:

- Pledge and apply.
- Complete the FAFSA.
- Register for classes.

If students miss a deadline, they can appeal, but we always stayed on top of it. The process itself isn’t difficult, but keeping track of deadlines is crucial. If you need help, San Jac has resources for both students and parents. Parents should ask questions, attend workshops, and not hesitate to seek guidance.

Q: Did you run into any challenges with the process?

A: The FAFSA was over 100 questions long back when he applied, but now it’s much shorter. The biggest challenge for families is often understanding financial aid. That’s why San Jac offers FAFSA assistance days.

Q: What did your son do after finishing San Jac?

A: He transferred to Sam Houston State for a semester but ultimately moved to the University of Texas Permian Basin, allowing him to complete his degree online. He graduated with a psychology degree in December 2024. He’s currently working as an admissions advisor at the Central Campus. His long-term goal is to join the Air Force as an officer.

Q: Would you recommend the scholarship to other parents?

A: Absolutely. I always encourage students and parents to consider community college as a first option rather than a last resort. The cost savings and quality of education are unbeatable. Students can complete a certificate or degree with little to no debt, which is a huge advantage before entering the workforce or transferring to a university.

To learn more, scan the QR code.



Photo courtesy of Monique Davis Williams

SAN JAC HAPPENINGS

DATE	EVENT	TIME	SITE
June 2	Summer classes begin	Varies	All campuses and online
June 19	Juneteenth National Independence Day	Closed	All campuses and online
June 30	Promise @ San Jac deadline		Future Promise Scholars: Deadline to register and enroll full time for fall 2025. Learn more at sanjac.edu/promise .
July 4	Independence Day	Closed	All campuses and online
Aug. 18	Fall classes begin	Varies	All campuses and online

All times and event schedules listed are subject to change. For more information, visit sanjac.edu/calendar.

SALTER'S JOURNEY IN EMS AND NURSING

By **Melissa Trevizo**

SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

San Jacinto College nursing alumnus Shawn Salter has spent decades serving his community, saving lives, and mentoring future professionals.

Born and raised in Texas, Salter traces his passion for health care back to a family tragedy. While he was in high school, his mother was involved in a severe vehicle collision that left her with life-threatening injuries. Watching her recover and witnessing the care she received from medical professionals ignited his desire to help others.

"Seeing her try to rehab after that and receiving such dedicated care led me to want to help others," Salter said. "My passion now is helping people, no matter the circumstances."

In 1998, Salter enrolled in San Jac's nursing program, drawn to its affordability, high success rates, and flexible schedule. At the time, he was already working as a flight paramedic with Memorial Hermann Life Flight, providing critical care to high-risk patients. Salter credits the College's small class sizes and approachable faculty for helping him succeed.

"Our nursing faculty and science professors were second to none," he said. "The individual attention made all the difference."

Salter graduated in May 2000, marking the start of a rewarding career combining nursing and emergency medical services. While at San Jac, he was honored with the prestigious Fondren Award, which recognized his excellence as a nursing student. The award, accompanied by a scholarship, helped him complete his education and launch his career.

"I never found out which of the nursing faculty nominated me for that award, but I'd like to give them a big shout-out," Salter said. "I value it greatly."

After graduation, Salter transitioned from flight paramedic to flight nurse, eventually rising to leadership roles. He served as the chief flight nurse and later the chief operating officer of San Antonio AirLIFE, a nonprofit air medical service. His expertise led to his appointment as chief executive officer before the program transitioned to private ownership.

Today, Salter is the chief administrative officer for CHRISTUS EMS, overseeing operations for ground ambulances and the CHRISTUS Flight for Life air medical program. His work involves managing teams that deliver critical care to patients

across eight counties, providing state-of-the-art medical interventions in some of the most challenging scenarios.

Salter's contributions to emergency medicine extend beyond his professional roles. In 2024, he was appointed to the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council, where he uses his experience to help shape policies and improve care across Texas. He is a member of the Air and Surface Transport Nurses Association and the International College of Advanced Practice Paramedics.

Additionally, Salter is a former committee member of the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council and former Region 4 board member of the Association of Air Medical Services.

"The EMS and Trauma Advisory Council is made up of 17 individuals with varied expertise, from fire chiefs and stroke specialists to trauma program directors," he said. "Representing Texans

and sharing insights on air medical transport is a tremendous honor."

Throughout his career, Salter has never lost sight of the human element in medicine.

"Not every patient survives, but even in tragedy, we have the opportunity to bring light to families and provide compassion during their darkest moments," he said.

Looking back, Salter fondly remembers his time at San Jac. Whether it was grabbing a cheap lunch at Mr. Gatti's pizza buffet before studying for exams or learning in clinical rotations at Houston's top hospitals, he credits the College with laying the foundation for his career.

"San Jac was the perfect fit for me,"

Salter said. "It gave me the tools and confidence to succeed."

Scan the QR code to learn more about San Jac's nursing programs.



Photo courtesy of Shawn Salter



TRAINING FOR

CAREERS THAT PAY

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FROM NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS TO DIGITAL MEDIA: LOWERY BRINGS NEW LIFE TO SAN JACINTO TIMES

By **Melissa Trevizo**
SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

When San Jacinto College communication professor Dr. LaKeysha Lowery first fell in love with journalism in seventh grade, she was cutting and pasting newspaper layouts by hand in her English class.

Now, as faculty advisor for the San Jacinto Times, she's helping students navigate the digital landscape of modern journalism while maintaining the timeless principles of good reporting.

"This is my dream job," Lowery said. "I love working with the newspaper and exposing students to the opportunities that come through interviewing, meeting new people, and getting out of their bubble."

After graduating from Sam Houston State University with dual degrees in English and journalism and later earning a master's in mass communication from Norfolk State University, Lowery entered a job market where traditional newspapers were shutting down operations. She pivoted to public relations and then worked for a small Houston-based publication but ultimately found a calling in education.

Her teaching career began as an adjunct instructor at Lone Star College. She then spent nearly 10 years at Lamar University, where she served as faculty advisor for the radio and television programs.

The San Jac job opportunity represented a homecoming and a professional milestone. A self-described city girl with family ties to Houston, Lowery applied to the College three times before landing her current position.

"When I saw the job posting, I didn't think I was going to get it,"

she said. "During the first interview, they mentioned I could also run the newspaper, and I just fell in love."

Since taking the helm of the San Jacinto Times in 2023, Lowery has revitalized its appearance and content. She spent her first year mastering operating the publication's website and rebranding its visual identity before shifting attention to the editorial content.

She connected her media writing class directly to the Times, creating real-world experiences for students.

"They learn how to write for various media, not just newspaper, but also TV, radio, public relations, and even film writing," Lowery said. "This gives students the opportunity to create a professional portfolio and build a network by meeting campus administrators and local community leaders."

She lets her students decide what they write about, working to connect them with story opportunities that align with their passions.

"The San Jac Times is very student-inspired," she said. "If students are interested in something, they're going to want to get the story. They build relationships and find their niche."

Lowery notes that many of the publication's most popular stories originated from student ideas. One example involved an interview with Anthony Banda, a World Series champion and San Jac alum, which came from a lead provided by a former student.

Lowery has ambitious plans for expanding the Times' digital footprint. The publication has established a presence on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, and its readership is growing. She has also seen an increase in advertising

inquiries this semester, showing broader community engagement.

Her next major initiative involves developing a student-led podcast, potentially the College's first new media platform since 1990.

"I want the podcast to include students from all campuses and all majors, not just mass communication students or those at Central Campus," Lowery said. "I want it to unite students."

For Lowery, who recently completed her Doctor of Education in online learning and educational leadership at Trident University, these initiatives represent the connection between traditional

journalistic values with evolving media formats.

Through these efforts, Lowery ensures San Jac students receive practical experience in an ever-changing media landscape while preserving the fundamentals that first captivated her as a student with scissors and paste.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the San Jac's communications program. To keep up with the San Jacinto Times, visit sanjactimes.com.



Photo by Melissa Trevizo, San Jacinto College

Financial Aid 101: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW


 .. FAQ ..



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Financial Aid 101: What You Need to Know!

Got questions about financial aid? We've got answers! From refunds to FAFSA tips, we've rounded up the top questions you need to know.

Visit us in person or virtually to get all the info you need to make your financial aid process smooth and stress-free.



18 reactions | 1 comment | 2,195 impressions | 177 engagements



Instagram

Celebrating Women in Blue on International Women's Day

Today, we honor the inspiring women in law enforcement who lead with strength, courage, and dedication. Their stories remind us of the power of perseverance and the impact of breaking barriers.



248 likes | 3,289 impressions | 255 engagements



LinkedIn

Celebrating Women in Blue on International Women's Day

Today, we honor the inspiring women in law enforcement who lead with strength, courage, and dedication. Their stories remind us of the power of perseverance and the impact of breaking barriers.



103 reactions | 3 comments | 3,868 impressions | 653 engagements

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VISION & MISSION



Vision — San Jacinto College will advance the social and economic mobility of all members of our community. We will be known for our excellence in teaching and learning, our intentional student-centered support, and our commitment to every student. We will be the preferred workforce and economic development partner in the region and a champion for lifelong learning. San Jacinto College will inspire students to explore opportunities, define their educational and career paths, and achieve their goals and dreams.

Mission — San Jacinto College is focused on student success, academic progress, university transfer, and employment. We are committed to opportunities that enrich the quality of life in the communities we serve.

SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS



A gift to the San Jacinto College Foundation transforms lives, enriches our community, and provides tomorrow's community leaders. For more than 25 years, the Foundation has helped thousands of students reach their goals. Our former students and graduates have filled vital roles in hospitals, classrooms, executive offices, manufacturing plants, and laboratories across our region and beyond. They have also won the World Series and NBA championships, starred in major motion pictures, and created major theatrical productions. Help our students today with the gift of education. Contact the San Jacinto College Foundation at 281-998-6104 or visit sanjac.edu/foundation.

COMMUNITY IMPACT



Surrounded by monuments of history, evolving industries, maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has served the people of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. The College is ranked second in the nation among more than 1,100 community colleges, as designated by the Aspen Institute, and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction in 2020. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution that spans five campuses, plus an online college, San Jacinto College serves approximately 45,000 credit and non-credit students annually. It offers more than 200 degrees and certificates across eight major areas of study that put students on a path to transfer to four-year institutions or enter the workforce. The College is fiscally sound, holding bond ratings of AA+ by Standard & Poor's and Aa2 by Moody's. For more information about San Jacinto College, visit sanjac.edu.

