



*college forward*

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## **COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS "PAY IT FORWARD" WITH MENTORSHIP PROJECT**

DEL VALLE, TX – Thirty-five low-income Del Valle High School seniors have launched a mentorship project as part of their participation in after-school college preparatory program College Forward. Students in the College Forward program attend two years of after-school classes in which they receive help with every step of the college application process, from ACT preparation to financial aid forms. In return for this free college application help, each College Forward class develops a service project as a way to "pay it forward" to their community.

"Many of our students have never had the opportunity to get involved in organized community service," said Lisa Fielder, Executive Director of College Forward. "But with just a little boost from us, they discover that they love it! By becoming role models for their younger peers, these students are encouraging a college-going culture in the Del Valle community."

After two years of the College Forward program, the Del Valle seniors are now making their final college selections. Colleges they will be attending include St. Edward's University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Cornell College in Iowa.

Mentors meet with their mentees every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 7:15 am to 8:15 am in the art room at Del Valle Elementary (except during TAKS testing between April 29 and May 1). **The culmination of the mentorship project will be Saturday, May 2, when mentors and mentees will work together to beautify the courtyard at Del Valle Elementary from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.** All members of the Del Valle community, including teachers, parents, high school students, and elementary school students, are invited to participate in the beautification day.

The students worked with Del Valle Elementary School counselors to initiate the mentorship project. On February 25, high school mentors were trained by Del Valle Elementary counselors on building meaningful connections, confidentiality, and effective mentorship. The counselors used questionnaire results to match each high school student with a mentee from grades 1-6.

**ABOUT COLLEGE FORWARD:** College Forward is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides college preparatory and college retention services to motivated, economically-disadvantaged students in order to facilitate their transition to college and make the process exciting and rewarding. We believe that access to higher education is the right of every young Texan.

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