

# Banquet

everyday in our lives.

He also teaches soil and water conservation to his students as exemplified by several of them participating in the local District essay contest. The students have received awards for their efforts. He also is the 4-H Wood Shop Project Leader.

During his time off from teaching he participates in a work study program at the Plant Materials Center. He has been doing this for three years and two summers. For motivating his students to learn the importance of natural resource conservation through teaching and participation, the Kleberg-Kenedy SWCD #356 was honored to present Mr. Edgar Ortega with the Outstanding Conservation Teacher for 2010.

The Outstanding Conservation Partner Award for 2010 is South Texas Natives. The STN's staff consists of: Coordinator-Forrest Smith; Production Manager- Keith Pawelek; Research Associate- Roberto Obregon; and Office Coordinator- Annette Peterson.

South Texas Natives was initiated in 2000 and formalized in 2001 due to concerns from landowners who realized the possibility of non-native plant species spreading from the proposed I-69 corridor, and because of concerns regarding habitat degradation, and lack of ability to restore native habitats for wildlife.

South Texas Natives have collected 1,751 seed collections throughout the region. These collections will be used for evaluation, selection, and eventually the release of seeds for native plantings. These seeds are then planted to produce an increase and to undergo selection.

Eventually the seed bank is large enough for these grasses to produce seed for commercial production and will be released. Pink Pappusgrass is a good example of one which will be released in 2010. Grasses are not the only natives produced. Rio Grande Clammy Weed is in production which provides food and cover for wildlife.

South Texas Natives in cooperation with the USDA-NRCS Kika De LaGarza PMC, and Texas Agrilife Research-Beeville have released 12 different native plant varieties. These releases are then used in rangeland seeding, restoration, and habitat restoration. One native planting was done just outside of Kingsville with great results. They currently have 12 research and demonstration sites spread throughout the region.

Restoration of degraded farmlands has proven to be effective. The end result is a pasture that is more conservation friendly, has increased biodiversity, and is aesthetically pleasing. Other uses include the ever increasing interest in native landscaping and xeriscaping.

South Texas Natives also provides many other resources to the public, professional and private sectors through outreach programs such as the Tangle Head Research project.

South Texas Natives had a field laser leveled to prepare



**Robert Schmidt accepts an award for Selfless Service from the Kenedy/Kleberg Soil and Water Conservation District.**



**OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION RANCHER ...Cindy and Joe Flores**



**OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION TEACHER ...Egar Ortega (Presbyterian Pan American School)**

it for planting of their next native plantings that will be evaluated for specific uses in South Texas.

Much of this new plot space will be used to produce seed of native forbs for landowners to use to improve wildlife habitat in exotic grass dominated areas.

The South Texas Natives have a facility at the Tio and Janell Kleberg Wildlife Research Park where they plant natives and conduct evaluations to meet the goals and objectives of farmers and ranchers in South Texas. All of this is done with conservation and protection of our natural resources in mind.

For the outstanding efforts and dedication in native plant development, evaluation, and production, the Kleberg-Kenedy SWCD #356 was pleased to present the Outstanding Conservation Partner award to the South Texas Natives, Forrest S. Smith - coordinator.

There were 122 Posters and 71 Essays submitted by students from Sarita Elementary, Santa Gertrudis school, Riviera De La Paz Middle School, Riviera Nanny Elementary, and Presbyterian Pan American school.

The Posters were based on the 2010 theme of "Conservation Habits = Healthy Habits". The NACD is using this theme to help people understand what conservation truly means.

It could also be based on the 2009 theme of "Dig it! The Secrets of Soil." The NACD used this theme in

partnership with Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and the Soil Science Society of America. This collaboration will complement the Smithsonian "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" exhibit which ran July 19, 2008 through January 3, 2010 at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C, and travel to museums across the United States from May 2010 to September 2013.

The essays were based on the theme of "What Soil and Water Conservation Means to Me". The contest is designed to express to students the importance of soil and water resources and how they are linked to providing abundant food, clean water and air, improved soils, and abundant wildlife habitat.

This is especially important with increasing world as well as American population. Food and fiber is basically being produced on the same amount of land with about 1.5 percent of our population being involved in production agriculture.

It was open to students 18 years and under. The State Board divided this contest into a Junior Division (13 years and below) and a Senior Division (14 to 18 years old). Tania Rodriguez from Presbyterian Pan American School read her award-winning essay to the attendees.

The top five junior and senior poster and essay recipients were awarded beautiful plaques by Directors Vern Crocker and Trey



**Forrest Smith, Keith Pawelek, Roberto Obregon - South Texas Natives - Outstanding Conservation Partner.**



**John Prukop, David Schubert, Robert Schmidt, Vern Crocker, Trey Quackenbush.**



**Frank Baca, John Prukop, David Schubert, Becky Cunningham, Robert Schmidt, Trey Quackenbush, Julian Vela, Mollie Stevens.**

Quackenbush, respectively. The top three over-all posters and top three essays in each division from the District were submitted to the Area III Contest. Area III covers 50 Counties and 46 Districts south of line from Laredo through San Antonio to Houston.

Then, Audrey L. Pena was recognized with a plaque for her assistance to the Board of Directors as a District employee from 2007 through 2009. Robert W. Schmidt was surprised with a beautiful plaque for his assistance to the Kleberg-Kenedy Soil and Water Conservation District #356 since their formation in August of 1997.

In closing, Chairman Prukop thanked all who took part in the Banquet including those that served the delicious meal and desserts. The Board

would like to congratulate all the award recipients, judges, and thank everyone else for their part in making the 11th annual banquet a success. He also recognized the teachers, students, and parents for motivating the students to participate and learn from the poster and essay contest.

The Chairman also thanked the contributors who make it possible for the District to hold the Annual Awards Banquet every year.

The Board looks forward to assisting the producers in Kleberg and Kenedy Counties in the future and everyone needs to do their part in making a difference in the conservation of our natural resources.

We need to continue to support our agricultural community. The Board looks forward to seeing everyone

again next year.

Prukop closed with a quote from Mr. V. C. Marshall known as the father of the Soil and Water Conservation District Program in Texas. "The soil conservation district is the workshop through which those who love the land pool their efforts and information in making land more stable and productive and our country more prosperous, more attractive and better land in which to live. The fact that landowners themselves have the responsibility for petitioning for and voting in a district, formulating its program and work plan, administering its business and entering into cooperative agreements with their fellow landowners and operators, makes soil conservation districts a democracy in action."

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## Free performance from A&M-Kingsville Trombone Choir March 9

**By Jason Marton  
Texas A&M-Kingsville**

Free admission and the premiere of an original composition highlight a public performance from the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Trombone Choir at 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, at the Frank C. Smith Recital Hall in the Bellamah Music Building.

The choir will be premiering a new work entitled "Bright Spirit" by Dr. Greg Sanders, professor of music at Texas A&M-Kingsville.

Sanders is an award-winning composer who has been commissioned by a host of groups and organizations, and was a 1992 nominee for the Pulitzer Prize for his work,

"Prairie Dreams: The River's Echo."

Other pieces performed will be "Trombone Octet" by Gordon Jacob; "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber; "American Overture" by Joseph Willcox Jenkins; "Prelude in Eb Minor" by Dmitri Shostakovich; "March from 1941" by John Williams; "Match" by Rainer Lischka; and "South of the Border Medley," arranged for the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Trombone Choir by Gary Slechta.

The March 9 performance is the first in a five-performance concert series from the A&M-Kingsville Trombone Choir. Their next performances

will be at H.M. King High School, Robstown High School and Tuloso-Midway High School. The fifth and final show in the choir's series will take place at the Eastern Trombone Workshop in Fort Myer, Va., March 17-20. The workshop is the only professionally organized and staffed trombone workshop or conference in the United States, and the A&M-Kingsville Trombone Choir was one of only five university choirs in the nation asked to perform at the noted event.

For more information, call assistant professor of music Dr. Oscar Diaz Jr., director of the TAMUK Trombone Choir, at 593-2817.