Leadership Pearland attends The Future is in Their Hands

By Participant:  Seth Thompson, AG|CM, Inc.

Pearland – On Tuesday, December 9th, 2014 the Leadership Pearland Class of 2014-2015 participated in the fourth event that is part of the Pearland Chamber of Commerce nine-month program designed to enhance and motivate their potential for civic leadership and commitment to the Pearland community. The title of this event was "The Future is in Their Hands," and focused on the importance of education in our community. Throughout the day, the Leadership Class would visit campuses around Pearland and learn about the different educational innovations being implemented to better prepare our students for the ever-changing work environment.
The day began at the Pearland ISD Administration Building where the class was met by PISD Director of Communication and Leadership Pearland Alum, Kim Hocott. Ms. Hocott offered information about the District and then took them to Glenda Dawson High School for their first stop of the day.

At Dawson, the Leadership Class was treated to a delicious gourmet lunch prepared and served by the students of the Culinary Arts program. Joining the class for lunch was Associate Principal Kelly Holt and Assistant Principal Erin Hamann. Ms. Holt described the program and how Chef Sean Dunn trains the students in both front of the house and back of the house restaurant operations. When the students have completed the program, they will have the certifications and experience needed to pursue a career in the culinary arts.

After lunch, Asst. Principal Erin Hamann lead the class on a tour of the campus and described the diversity of the campus and the different programs available to the students. Mark Smith commented, "I was really impressed with the culture that the administration has instilled at Dawson High School. The attention to detail and incorporating so many values into the school was nice to see." For the final stop of the tour, the class walked in on the tail-end of choir practice, and was pleasantly surprised when they were greeted with an impromptu Holiday Concert. The students performed two songs complete with singing and dancing!

After being fed and entertained at Dawson High School, the Leadership class ventured over to Alvin ISD's Nolan Ryan Junior High where they were met by AISD Director of Communications, Daniel Combs, and Principal Christina Lovette. Principal Lovette explained to the Leadership Class the challenges experienced in preparing students for a work environment that is constantly changing. She expressed how important it was to receive feedback from different industries about what skills will be needed in the future so that educators can make sure the students are prepared.

The class was then led on a campus tour and was able to visit two classrooms. The first class they visited was Mr. Ryan Heffernan's Intro to Technology class. Here, the students were designing online quizzes and games focused on teaching proper online behavior and security guidelines. Each student was working on a laptop and had the freedom to choose the type of program he/she would create. The Leadership Class walked around and chatted with some of the students about their projects and was instantly jealous they did not get to play with technology like this when they were in school.

The next class visited was Ms. Cynthia Duke's 7th grade science class. There, the students were also engaged in a technology-driven project. They worked in groups to research 2-3 natural catastrophes and how each affected the environment. Then, the students were tasked with using Google's WeVideo to create their own Public Service Announcement videos to discuss the issues. The following day, the students would be viewing all of the PSAs and voting on their favorite. Preston Phillips stated "It is impressive how much technology is playing a role in the classroom and how much the students are able to do. Creating a PSA in 7th grade?! I'm not sure I can do that now."
From there, the Leadership Class followed Mr. Daniel Combs over to Alvin ISD’s newest school, Dr. James "Red" Duke Elementary. The class was greeted by Principal Fulvia Shaw who showed them a video about Dr. Red Duke and about how they try to inspire students from an early age. Next, the class was introduced to Academic Design Coach, Ms. Amber Bennett. Ms. Bennett described the Alvin ISD Learner Profile and Engage! Learning model. The goal of the model is to create future-ready learners who can communicate, initiate, innovate, problem solve, adapt, empathize, value ethics, and think globally. Before the class left, they were treated to another holiday choir performance by the elementary school choir.

The next stop of the day was Robert Turner College and Career High School, a unique campus where students can choose a college and career path for their major coursework and earn up to 60 college credits while in high school. The Leadership Class met Principal Jennifer Morrow and were taken on a campus tour by Assistant Principal Marcette Kilgore.

On the tour, the class saw the Health Sciences Lab where students receive training in various medical areas and can earn certifications such as Certified Nursing Aide (CNA), Dental Assistant (RDA), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-Basic) and Pharmacy Technician (PT). Similarly, there was a Veterinary Clinic down the hall where students receive training in veterinary medicine and animal handling. Those students can earn certifications in Canine Care & Handling and become Certified Veterinary Assistants (CVA).

Another program the Leadership Class was able to tour was the Audio/Visual (AV) Technology department. The classrooms dedicated to this program included a production studio with cameras, microphones, green screen, and video editing equipment. Here, the students are able to learn about television production and are even able to work on the production team during football games at "The Rig."

"I was very impressed with the numerous opportunities to receive training and certifications at Turner. These students can graduate with employable skills that can provide good paying jobs right out of high school." said Donna Coneley.

The last campus visit of the day was at the University of Houston, Clear Lake (UHCL) - Pearland campus where the Leadership Class met UHCL President, Dr. William Staples, Alvin Community College (ACC) President, Dr. Christal Albrecht, and San Jacinto College (SJC) Vice Chancellor, Ms. Teri Crawford. The class learned about each institution, programs offered, current growth, and future plans. As was the common theme with every campus visited, the class learned how each college was innovating and working with businesses to ensure they are offering the training and skills needed for their students to be successful in the changing workforce. For instance, to keep up with the demand from the medical field, UHCL and SJC have recently partnered to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. Likewise, ACC offers a one-year Vocational Nursing (VN) certificate as well as a 2-year Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program. Each institution relies on support from the community and feedback from the various industries to provide an affordable pathway to education for the community.
After the class completed all campus visits, they went back to the Pearland ISD Administration building where they had dinner and were able to meet the Pearland ISD Board of Trustees for dessert before heading into the School Board meeting. During the meeting, the Leadership Class was recognized and thanked the district for the educational tour of the District.

It was a great event and the Leadership Pearland class learned quite a bit about the innovations being made in our local education system. Jim Johnson summed up his experience by saying "Touring the fantastic facilities and speaking with educators and administrators was a great experience and helped to reiterate how important education is to the economy and workforce development." The challenges with keeping our students prepared for the future workforce needs can be difficult, but educators, administrators and businesses are working together to ensure success because... the future is in their hands.

The Leadership Pearland Class of 2014-2015 consists of: Brian Castille (Cobb, Fendley & Associates, Inc.), Donna Coneley (Memorial Hermann), Fay Watson (Keep Pearland Beautiful), Jacob Williamson (Frost Bank), Jim Johnson (Pearland Chamber of Commerce), Kevin Murphy (Triad Retail Construction), Mark Smith (The Law Office of Mark Smith, PLLC), Marylyn Harris (Harrland Healthcare), Preston Phillips (Amegy Bank), Rodney Porter (Kelsey Seybold Clinic), Seth Thompson (AG|CM, Inc.), Wendy Del Bello (Alvin Community College) and Clay Herndon (Freese and Nichols, Inc.).

PICTURE:
L-R
Preston Phillips; Rodney Porter; Clay Hernden; Brian Castille; Keith Ordeneaux, Leadership Alumni; Kevin Murphy; Kim Hocott, Leadership Alumni; Jacob Williamson; Fay Watson; Wendy Del Bello; Jim Johnson; Seth Thompson; and Mark Smith