



## PRAIRIE LEA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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District Contact: Jesus Lopez III, Superintendent  
Prairie Lea I.S.D.

#### January 2010 is School Board Recognition Month

~Governor Rick Perry has proclaimed January as School Board Recognition Month to help highlight the contributions of dedicated men and women who take the time to care about our local schools. The Prairie Lea Independent School District will join districts across the state to thank board members for voluntarily tackling the enormous job of governing local school districts.~

“As advocates for our children, school board members face difficult challenges. These local citizens, our neighbors, are elected by the community to make critical decisions, balancing the need for local control with directives coming down from larger governmental bodies that directly affect the future of our youth. Complicating matters further, are issues such as the rapidly expanding role of technology in the classroom, the challenge to keep our children both educated and physically active, and as always, the difficulties inherent in dealing with budgetary priorities. They work tirelessly, devoting countless hours to help ensure a quality education that will lead our students to success,” said Jesus Lopez III, Prairie Lea Independent School District’s Superintendent.

“Our school board members are a vital link between the community and the classroom. They bear responsibility for an annual budget of \$2,000,000.00; 247 students and 44 employees. Their job is not an easy one, but they have a commitment to serve their community and ensure that all students are given every opportunity to excel through education. Help us show appreciation to these board members for giving of themselves and caring so much about every child enrolled in our school” Lopez said.

The men and women serving Prairie Lea Independent School District are:

**Margarito Zapata, Jr.**, Board President, is the longest serving board member with thirty-two years of service. Both of his children, as well as his wife, are Prairie Lea graduates. Mr. Zapata owns and operates Zapata’s Upholstery in Fentress, and is Constable of Precinct 1 in Caldwell County.

**Tyson Meneley**, Vice-President, has served the Board for ten years, and is a Prairie Lea graduate. Mr. Meneley is a retired engineer.

**Wesley Plant**, Parliamentarian, has served the Board for seven years. Two of his three children are Prairie Lea graduates, one is currently attending school here and will graduate in 2011. Mr. Plant is employed at Davis Gas as Plant Operator.

**Margarito “Mickey” Zapata III**, has served nine years as Board Member alongside his father Margarito Zapata, Jr., and is also a Prairie Lea graduate. Both his children are students at Prairie Lea. Mr. Zapata is a member of the Austin Fire Department.

**Rudy Gonzales**, has been a Board Member for six years, and is a Prairie Lea graduate. Mr. Gonzales has one child who has graduated from Prairie Lea, and three more children and one grandchild who are currently students. Mr. Gonzales is employed with Texas State University.

**Rita Hall**, a former long term employee of Prairie Lea, has served on the Board for four years, bringing a wealth of district experience and knowledge to the Board table. Her husband and their children attended Prairie Lea, and six of their grandchildren have attended Prairie Lea. Mrs. Hall is employed at Community Action Headstart.

**Rhonda Shahan** has been a Board Member for one year, and her child graduated from Prairie Lea in 2009. Ms. Shahan is an office manager for a global bowling magazine, a proprietor of a small home business in custom sewing, and co-owner of a bicycle shop in New Braunfels.

School Board members serve without pay and meet regularly to make important decisions affecting the success of Prairie Lea Independent School District. These people volunteer their time because they care about the students enrolled in our District. They are elected for a term of three years which is staggered so that members of varied experience are serving.

A *Thank You* message to the Board flashed all month on the District's marquee sign; the Boardroom was decorated by Prairie Lea's art classes under the instruction of Ms. Sharon Cozad, with festive handmade artwork.