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East Texas Educators Honored

By **Becky Bell**
Staff Writer

KILGORE — Teachers from 27 East Texas school districts were honored at a Thursday luncheon for participating in Region VII's Collaborative for Excellence in Science Teaching project. The Region VII Collaborative for Excellence in Science Teaching, a project of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Cooperative, Stephen F. Austin State University and the University of Texas at Austin honored 39 teachers who teach kindergarten through eighth grade. These teachers have participated in a 105-hour program of science staff development over a one-year period. The Region VII mission for the project is to offer an intensive long-term, integrated science and staff development program that will produce campus leaders. The program is made possible by many business partners on local, state and federal levels. Area teachers honored include Nola Manis and Rhonda Reed of Carthage Independent School District, Sandra Spencer of Harleton Independent School District, Barbara Bennett of Henderson Independent School District, Sylvia Richardson of Longview Independent School District, Kassy Paris and Rita Wilhite of Marshall Independent School District, Peggy Mayfield of Spring Hill Independent School District, Susan Wells of St. Mary's Catholic School and Ronnie Humphries of Tatum Independent School. **Nita Beth Camp, Region VII collaborative director, said in the past five years Region VII has trained about 107 teachers.** "Industry has stolen a few teachers, and some teachers have moved into larger district after receiving this training," Camp said. Richardson, a fifth-grade teacher at Pinewood Park Elementary School in Longview, said participating in the program enabled her to teach science in new ways, which is one of the goals of the program.

"Before, we just gave the assignments, and the students did them," Richardson said. "I never knew students could actually get excited about learning science." Mayfield, a first-grade teacher at Spring Hill Primary School, said going through the program was a wonderful experience and has helped her become a more well rounded instructor. "I now have a wider scope of view on what is available in science," Mayfield said. "The program has opened my eyes to a lot of other possibilities." Sandra Spencer, director of curriculum for Harleton Independent School District, said her involvement with the collaborative program has helped her even though she is no longer a teacher. Spencer, who has been in education 25 years said Region VII has provided needed information about classroom curriculum in the past. "I may have to pay my own phone bill because I call them so much," Spencer said. "They have someone who specializes in everything. They really go above and beyond to meet our academic needs." State Sen. Bill Ratliff, Mt. Pleasant, was the keynote speaker at the luncheon. Ratliff, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, told about math and science teachers who had influenced him to become an engineer. "I know teachers do not receive the accolades, but I want to thank you for what you do. Your influence never ends," he said. Ratliff also told the group about the importance of keeping teachers up to date with the latest in science and told them he was sorry that sometimes they do not have the materials they need to do that. "I know that it can be hard to teach with the 8-year-old science books we give you," Ratliff said. "We are trying to do something about that." **Kamil A. Jbeily, director of the Texas Regional Collaboratives for Excellence in Science Teaching, said it's important to continually allow teachers the opportunity to refresh their own knowledge. A good education only happens when a committed, enthusiastic and passionate teacher comes into the classroom," Jbeily said. "When that teacher closes the classroom door, it's what they know that will make the difference."**

Texas Regional Collaboratives for Excellence in Science Teaching

The University of Texas at Austin, Science Education Center SZB340, Austin, Texas 78712-1294

Phone: 512-471-9460 Fax: 512-471-9244