

Trio plans to cross Atlantic

Students, educators ask American Oarsmen about possible challenges, food shortages

BY RUTH CAMPBELL

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Students and **educators** throughout Ector County Independent School District got a chance Monday to talk to the American Oarsmen, a trio from **Texas** that plans to cross the **Atlantic** Ocean **in** a high-tech row boat. Brian Krauskopf of Houston, Mike Matson of Missouri City, **Texas**, and David Alviar of Houston spoke to **about** 90 students at Austin Montessori Magnet alone and anyone who wanted to log on throughout the district could.

The three will leave Wednesday and students will be able to follow them. Alviar answered the students' questions Monday on everything from what happens if they run out of food to preparation and what the hardest part of their trip will be. Alviar said the group will carry 65 days worth of food and the crossing should take 40 to 50 days. If needed, they will reduce their intake, but they would need **about** 5,000 a day to get by. **ECISD** Chief Innovation Officer Jason Osborne said he found out **about** the American Oarsmen and their pending participation **in** the **2016** Talisker **Whisky Atlantic Challenge** when he talked to Alviar while attending a recent conference. "I thought this would be a fantastic opportunity for kids **in** our district," Osborne said. "... David was really welcome to the idea of doing the Skype sessions and Twitter feeds and sharing information so our kids can **learn about** their expedition. It's more personal. They're Texans and the first Texans to cross (the **Atlantic**). There's a lot of really interesting ties. A couple of them are from Houston and another is from Missouri City." The project falls under PICK Education, meant to bring curriculum to life for **students**, Osborne said. He said the venture also will give teachers a resource for lesson planning.

Alviar said the race is primarily run by the British. There will be 12 crews, mainly from England, but also from Ukraine, South Africa and other parts of the United Kingdom.

Crew numbers will vary and there will be an overall winner **in** each class, the **Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge** website said.

The boat mates will have GPS on board, redundant radios and flares. Alviar said there shouldn't be too many sharks **in** the **Atlantic**, partly because of overfishing and the boat won't be offering any shark food.

Alviar said the hardest aspects of the trip will be not being able to rest, sleep or eat on a normal schedule. There also are unknowns such as huge waves and complete darkness with no moon. He added that the men will sleep **in** shifts inside the cabin for **about** an hour and a half at a time because someone has to be available to row at all times.

If someone goes overboard, they have a tether and life jacket that inflates and a locator beacon that sounds an alarm, for example. There are supposed to be two people on deck at all times and always someone rowing.

He added that the **crew** must be of sound mind so they can deal with emergency situations. Alviar said they don't need extraordinary strength.

"It's **about** durability of the body. A lot of what we've done to prepare is a lot of indoor rowing and CrossFit," Alviar said.

He said each of the rowers has their own motivation and causes for making the journey. Alviar said the journey will probably force him to become more patient and be a better friend and teammate. He added that he'll have more time with his thoughts, not being hooked up to a personal device. Krauskopf's cause is Alzheimer's disease prevention and seeking a cure; Matson's is the Anne Mc-Cormick Sullivan Foundation; and Alviar's is Teach for America, Houston.

The nonprofit Anne McCormick Sullivan Foundation was founded **in** 2014 after the Southwest Inn fire where four Houston Firefighters, including Anne McCormick Sullivan, died. The foundation was started **in** her name with the purpose of assisting women **in** pursuit of a career **in** professional firefighting, its Facebook page said. Alviar said Matson was a firefighter with Sullivan.

When they aren't rowing, Krauskopf, is the

If they are successful, Alviar said he, Krauskopf and Matson would be the first Texans to complete the 3,000-mile journey, which departs from the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa and ends **in** Antigua.

Their boat is called the Anne and has sleeping quarters **in** the front. It is self-righting.

The Anne will have two support yachts, but they are there as a last resort for rescue **in** case of severe sea sickness or damage to the boat.

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Crew members of the Anne pictured are David Alviar of Houston, left, Brian Krauskopf of Houston, center, and Michael Matson of Missouri City, **Texas**. **ECISD** students were able to talk via Skype to members of the **crew** who are planning to compete **in** the **2016** Taliksker **Whisky Atlantic Challenge**.

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Oarsmen

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manager of ROW Studios and a former college football player.

Matson, the American Oarsmen's skipper, is a chemistry PhD, volunteer firefighter, professor, collegiate rowing coach and CrossFit coach. He is an equipment expert and navigator and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Alviar, who spoke to the students **in** Odessa, is a former collegiate rower and master's racer. Once a fifth-grade teacher he is now a creative marketer for STEMscopes, whose vision is to help teachers adopt effective STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math) instructional practices, improve student performance and increase the engagement of parents through customized, standards- aligned, hands-on digital STEM curricula and resources, its website said.

Fifth-graders Eddie Almance and Emma Slaughter said they didn't think they would be able to make the journey themselves, but they both look forward to keeping track of the American Oarsmen.

