

Ector County Independent School District
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Mike Adkins
Public Information Officer
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Red Ribbon Week, Zombees at OHS, & community rallies to Ector MS

Next week all of our ECISD schools will be celebrating Red Ribbon Week with all sorts of activities that reinforce the message of just saying ‘no’ to drugs! Monday morning district and community officials will gather in the ECISD Administration parking lot, 802 N. Sam Houston, for the annual kickoff rally that includes student performances. Red Ribbon Week began in 1988 as a visible way to make a united stand against drug use and to remember the life of murdered DEA agent Enrique Camarena who was killed by drug traffickers. This ceremony begins at 10:00 a.m.

On Tuesday morning our ECISD Innovation Department brings another PICK Education experience when Dr. John Hafernik, emeritus professor of biology at San Francisco State University, gives a presentation, “Bees, ZomBees and Citizen Science” in the Odessa High School Performing Arts Center, 1301 N. Dotsy. By bringing in researchers and scientists to ECISD students, PICK Education aims to expose students to discovery—whether it’s a new career path or becoming a part of something big, like a university research project.

A few years ago, Dr. Hafernik discovered honey bees on the SF State campus leaving their hive at night, flying to nearby lights and showing zombie-like behavior. Further work by John and his students revealed that the disoriented bees were being parasitized by the zombie fly *Apocephalus borealis*, a native fly that also parasitizes bumble bees and yellow jacket wasps. Along with other colleagues from SF State and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County he founded the ZomBee Watch citizen science project to find out where in the United States and Canada the zombie fly is parasitizing honey bees and whether it contributes to hive losses.

PICK Education will be partnering with Dr. Hafernik on the citizen science project, ZomBee Watch, which will provide ECISD students with a research opportunity. ZomBee Watch has been featured in Scientific American, the Discovery Channel, Science Friday, the New York Times and many other media outlets, worldwide. In January 2016, SciStarter and Discover Magazine ranked ZomBee Watch among the top 10 Citizen Science projects for 2015.

Then on October 25 & 26 Dr. Hafernik and a group of ECISD educators will head to Big Bend National Park to explore the diversity of insects as part of a two-day professional development extravaganza!

“Bees, ZomBees and Citizen Science” will be streamed via @PICKeducation on Twitter Live from 9:30AM-10:45AM. For more information about this presentation, please contact Jason Osborne at 432-456-9507 or Gabriela Granado at 456-4951.

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Tuesday evening a parent involvement event at Ector Middle School, 809 W. Clements, will showcase the community's commitment to the students and parents at the school. With Ector MS finding itself on the state's Improvement Required list for the past five years, a group of citizens has adopted the school and is rallying support to improve Ector's results. Tuesday's Block Party from 6:00-8:00 p.m. will serve as the kickoff to a parent involvement push. Some 70 booths with activities and information are planned. Odessa College and the University of Texas of the Permian Basin will be present to talk about the programs they offer and each will give away a scholarship to an Ector student. Food, music, and other prizes will be part of the festivities. We invite you to visit Ector on Monday to see the work going into this "Soaring to Success" block party and then cover the event on Tuesday night.

For more information about this press release contact ECISD Communications at 432-456-9019.

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