

Zavala gets infusion from Fuel Your School

Students to use funds for Shark Finder, an archeology program to search for marine fossils

NEW SCIENCE PROJECT

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Fifth-graders at Zavala Engineering Magnet were presented with supplies to become citizen scientists Monday, through funding from Fuel Your School, DonorsChoose.org, Kent Kwik Convenience Stores and community donations.

Students will be involved in Shark Finder where students will dig through 19-million-year old marine sediment in search of fossils.

Students could find a significant fossil and have their find published in the research project being headed up by the University of Maryland.

Shark Finder falls under the umbrella of **PICK Education**, an initiative launched earlier this fall, aimed at bringing school to life for students and connecting them with realworld problems.

Superintendent Tom Crowe said previously that **PICK Education** exemplifies the choice each of us makes to prioritize learning. **Pick** a problem to solve, **pick** a project to design, **pick education**.

Zavala Principal Amanda Warber said about 100 fifthgraders will be taking part in the venture.

Juan Fuentes, a fifthgrade teacher, submitted an application to DonorsChoose.org. It was approved and supplies ranging soil sieves to wireless microscopes were sent to his classroom where eager students opened the boxes Monday.

>> See **DONATION** Page **6A**



Students in Juan Fuentes' fifth-grade class at Zavala Elementary open one of the boxes of supplies Monday for the Shark Finder Citizen Science Project that Fuentes received from the Chevron Donors Choose program. The program is one of two supporting local classroom projects by Kent Kwik stores.

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>> From Page 1A

Fuentes said the administration asked him about offering a program and writing a grant. With the Shark Finder program in mind, he wrote the request and said he knew it would be great for the students and the community.

"With a majority of our students being low socioeconomic status, most of our students have not had the opportunity to venture and explore outside of our geographic area and expand their life experience," Fuentes said.

Fuentes added that he thought the program would be a wonderful opportunity for students to explore things outside their world.

"I think it's really cool because we get to see new materials and mix new materials and science and you get to have more materials than you had before and find out what new things are in the world," Akin said.

Valerie Herrera, 10, hopes she gets to discover dinosaur bones.

"It blew my mind that we going to try and discover dinosaur bones. But what if I find one ... what am I going to do? That's like so cool. If you look and don't find anything, it's still going to be cool that you looked," Herrera said.

Sarah Hughes, public affairs representative for Chevron North America, said science, technology, engineering and math curriculum is important to Chevron's education initiatives.

"We believe that's really the core to these students moving on to higher education and then going on to get good jobs and creating

“... With this project, our students will be citizen scientists and will be able **to** search for shark fossil remains from the Atlantic coastal plain. With the aid of the materials so generously donated **to** us, our students will be able **to** search through ancient ocean sediments that have never been searched through before. Any finding will be submitted for further analysis by professional paleontologists at the University of Maryland,” Fuentes said.

ECISD Chief Innovation Officer Jason Osborne said he collected the sediment, which has not yet been searched, and brought it **to** Odessa. Osborne said the sand is from the Calvert formation, prominent in the Atlantic coastal plain south of Washington, D.C., and is 19 million years old.

If the students find something of significance, they could be recognized in a scientific publication, he added.

“The students will not only learn about science, but mathematics and history ... as well as crosscurricular academics and they will be able **to** apply their experience **to** the real world,” Fuentes said.

Warber said Shark Finder is a chance for students **to** “knock down the barriers of **education**.” Warber said **education** is no longer sitting in a classroom with desks and chairs in rows.

“Those days are gone, especially with the technology,” Warber said. “You’re able **to** log in and be in France and explore how the world is. ... Our goal at Zavala is **to** provide students with multiple opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. All these areas are important in being prepared for the competitive global marketplace, so we begin with the end in mind. We are looking at the students in the future and we know engineering and technology is going **to** pave that road for them.”

Every day, Warber said she tells students that the school is preparing them for the future.

“Our mission at Zavala is **to** provide a unified, motivating environment that generates passionate, engaged lifelong learners through the implementation of technology and engineering. The Shark Find program will help transform our students and their **education**,” Warber said.

Leslie Akin and Valerie Herrera, both 10-year-old fifth-graders, love the idea of being able **to** dig through sediment and use scientific tools.

stronger communities,” Hughes said.

“They’re our next engineers, our next scientists, our next geologists,” Hughes added.

Bill Kent, president and owner of Kent Kwik, said 27 convenience stores in Odessa and Midland are participating in Fuel Your School. Through the program, educators at public schools in West Texas have a chance **to** submit eligible project requests on DonorsChoose.org for new materials **to** enhance learning in their **classrooms** for possible funding as part of the Fuel Your School Program, a news release said.

Throughout October, people can help their local schools by filling up at participating chevron and Texaco locations in Ector and Midland counties. Chevron will donate \$1 per 8-gallon or more fill-up **to** \$200,000 **to** help support public **education** at schools in West Texas.

“It just gets better every year. It’s a fantastic way **to** give back **to** the community. When Chevron approached us and told us they had this program and wanted **to** know if we wanted **to** participate, we jumped on the chance because it aligns with what our beliefs are and that’s always giving back **to** the community and **education** is the key,” Kent said.



Bill Kent, owner of Kent Kwik, announces the company’s participation in the Fuel Your School program in collaboration with Chevron. The program helps provide funds for **classrooms** in Midland and Odessa schools.

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