

Band students strike the right note to make school history

By Anthony Ruiz
Reporter

For the first time in its history, Academy High School's band will have students at state.

The school will be represented at the 2020 Texas Music Educators Association's Clinic and Convention in San Antonio after three of its band students were selected to perform with the Association of Texas Small Schools All-State Band.

"Most schools are proud when they have one (student) make All-State," AHS Band Director Raymond Mendez said. "So for us to have three make it is a big accomplishment. It's a tremendous feat."

AHS seniors Aidan Cardona and Jordan Sanchez, along with junior Sergio Soto, were selected for All-State honors this year, which is the highest accolade a Texas music student can receive in the TMEA system.

According to the TMEA website, nearly 1,800 students are selected through a process that begins with more than 68,000 students from around the state competing to perform in one of 15 All-State band, orchestra and choir ensembles.

Aidan, who was selected as first chair at area tryouts, said he was excited to have finally made the All-State Band. "I just feel relieved that all of my hard work finally paid off," he said.

Aidan said making the all-state band was a personal goal

See **Band**, Page 12A



AHS junior Sergio Soto received first chair honors with his bassoon at area tryouts earlier this month and will be performing, along with two of his classmates, at the 2020 TMEA Clinic and Convention in San Antonio on Saturday, Feb. 15. (Photo by Anthony Ruiz)



More than 40 local Vietnam veterans received commemorative lapel pins honoring their military service during a special ceremony held Monday at the American Legion Post 99 in Kingsville. (Photos by Anthony Ruiz)

Honoring the heroes of Vietnam

By Anthony Ruiz
Reporter

When Elias Cuevas was 21 years old, he was drafted into the U.S. Army.

He served in Vietnam for two years, from 1965-66, where he said he "went through some hard times."

"But if I had to do it over, I would do it all over again," he said.

Coming back home to South Texas in 1966 was a lonely experience, Cuevas said, because at that time "the country didn't appreciate us."

"We couldn't even talk about it," he said. "Nobody wanted to hear about it or appreciated what we did. It was a war that nobody liked. Even we didn't know what we were doing over there."

More than half a century has passed since Cuevas returned from Vietnam, and in that time attitudes towards Vietnam veterans have changed.

"It feels great," he said. "I'm no longer alone."

Cuevas was just one of more than 40 area Vietnam-era military veterans and surviving spouses honored with a

special pinning ceremony Monday afternoon by U.S. Rep. Filemon Vela and local officials at the American Legion Post 99 in Kingsville.

The pinning ceremony was open to military veterans who served between Nov. 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975 during the time of the Vietnam War. It is part of an ongoing national effort that started in 2012 to thank and honor veterans of the war, highlight their service and pay tribute to their contributions.

The gold-colored lapel pins are embossed with a depiction of an eagle in front of a U.S. flag surrounded by a blue circle bearing the words "Vietnam War Veteran." On the back is the message, "A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You."

Monday's pinning ceremony was Vela's second that day, having previously participated in a similar event in Alice just hours prior.

"And I have four more this week," he said. "Harlingen tomorrow,

See **Pinning**, Page 7A



Above, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jerry Martinez presents a Quilt of Honor to Domingo Perez in recognition for his military service.

New royalty crowned during KKJLS Queen's Contest

By Frank Cardenas
Reporter

Elegance and beauty were center-stage at the 2020 Queen's Contest for the 69th annual Kleberg-Kenedy County Junior Livestock Show, as three new queens were crowned on Saturday night.

Christopher Lee, Kleberg County Pct. 3 Justice of the Peace served as the master of ceremonies for the evening and was joined by the 2019 Queen's Contest winners, junior queen Tatianna Galvan, intermediate queen Sarah Dupont and senior queen Sidney Zimmerman.

Kicking off the night were 14 participants from

the junior division, as girls between grades three through five walked the stage of the Jones Auditorium at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

Each contestant was given an opportunity to talk about their involvement in the KKJLS, and explained what they did in each show they decided to enter.

10-year-old Gabriella Garcia represented the Country Wranglers 4-H Club and is competing in a number of events for the KKJLS, including showing her market goat named "Maverick," and entering five different homemaking projects.

The fifth grader from

See **Queens**, Page 10A



The 2020 Queen's Contest winner in the Junior division was Country Wranglers 4-H Club member Gabriella Garcia (right). Cambell Radford (left) also in the Country Wranglers 4-H Club, was crowned in the Intermediate division and South Texas Junior Leaders 4-H Club member Reagan Wright (middle) was crowned in the Senior division. (Photo by Frank Cardenas)



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