



WTC's Upward Bound Program Nurtures Students with Support and Experiences

Course work, job shadowing, and community activities prepares students for university life and beyond.

"I have been with the Upward Bound program since 2006, and I can honestly say that this program works," says Rachael Menix, Upward Bound Director.

The Upward Bound grant program serves students for free based on their families' income and the desire to attend and graduate from college. Each student in the program must also be a potential first-generation college graduate (neither parent holds a Bachelor's degree).

Boasting alumni that include Oprah Winfrey, John Quiñones, and Patrick Ewing, Upward Bound is a nationwide federal grant program provided by the Department of Education. The goal of the grant is to help participants complete high school and successfully pursue postsecondary education.

"Our services include Saturday Academies during the school year, trips to college campuses, tutoring, a six-week summer program, and a college bridge component the summer after graduation," added Menix. "We provide academic advisement as well as academic instruction for students through high school in order to prepare them for college."

During the school year, Upward Bound hosts Saturday Academies at the high schools the program serves, providing resources, advising, and tutoring to help students succeed with their coursework.



Upward Bound students pose for a group photo in June.

Each June, Upward Bound hosts their incredible summer program on the Western Texas College campus. The summer program provides an opportunity for students to live on campus and attend classes—in other words, experience life as an actual college student. The staff designs special educational and cultural activities that widen students' perspectives and open doors to opportunities.

"We had thirty students attend this year's summer

program,” says Menix. “Twenty-four students are incoming sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Six students are our bridge students, who graduated this May and will be attending universities in the fall.”

At the grant’s expense, the six summer bridge students enroll in one WTC course that transfers to their respective universities in the fall. They also participate in a job shadowing program in local businesses that aligns with their career goals. This year, three students shadowed jobs at the Cogdell Memorial Hospital, one at Snyder Smiles, one at the West Texas Animal Clinic, and one on the campus with WTC’s Coordinator of International Student Services.

The other twenty-four students attend classes during the day in English, Spanish, Math, Art, Government, and Science. Their science instructor, Jarle Boe, allowed them to build rockets and launch them under his supervision! On Monday afternoons, students took part in boxing classes. On Tuesdays, they received an opportunity to earn community service hours. As part of that service, the students helped renovate the Snyder Nursery.

“We have also adopted a highway and clean it regularly,” added Menix.

In addition, students took a taekwondo self-defense class, experienced a horseback riding lesson, bowled, swam, and enjoyed movie nights. Most importantly, the students traveled out of town for two campus tours: South Plains College and Cisco College - Abilene campus.

The summer program finishes with two major events: a banquet and a trip.

The banquet celebrates the Upward Bound students, welcoming parents and teachers. The staff invites a former Upward Bound student to speak, and a champion of the games played over the course of the summer program is announced.

From July 8-12, students and staff traveled to Branson, Missouri. Students experienced a Duck Tour, the Titanic Museum, Branson Landing, Dolly Parton’s Stampede, Silver Dollar City, and a Dinner Cruise.

More importantly, Midwestern State and College of the Ozarks provided tours of their campuses.

“We make lifelong connections with students who have successful careers, get married, have children, and still keep in touch with us,” noted Menix.

“I have seen hundreds of students graduate high school and head to college with not only our [Upward Bound’s] help, but help from other administrators, friends and family supporting them. Students in the program just need at least one person behind them, and we are honored to fill that role.”



Upward Bound students in boxing class.



Upward Bound students meet the horses before taking a riding lesson.



Upward Bound students on a hayride.

Petition Scholarships Approved

Message from WTC Foundation and Event Coordinator

Scholarships provide students at Western Texas College far more than financial support. While factoring in how students are going to pay for their classes each semester, they also need to know someone believes they can be successful while they are on campus. As a Westerner myself, I attribute a large part of who I became to the support I received while on campus in the early 2000s.

The WTC Foundation holds numerous scholarship accounts entrusted to the college to support students in our care, and it is our duty to utilize those funds to support the students to the best of our ability. I can attest to the fact that this matter is handled with great care.

The scholarship cycle for the 2024-25 academic year began in January, and this year, additional efforts were made to meet the needs of students. I held open office hours to answer questions about the scholarship application, manned a table in the student center to reach students outside of my purview, and collaborated with departments like the Guided Pathways Center, which have direct contact with students in need.

These efforts proved worthwhile as

during the cycle, 62 applications were received, which is a 35% increase from the previous year. From the 62 applications received, \$61,500 was awarded to support students in their educational journey. Of this amount, only \$49,000 was accepted, but the story of impact does not end there.

New innovations have been approved by the WTC Foundation Board of Directors, and at the April meeting, a Petition Scholarship proposal was approved to provide a new pathway of support. The Petition Scholarship gives the WTC Foundation the opportunity to reallocate unaccepted scholarship funds to students who missed the original scholarship deadline. Many times, students have not decided to become a Westerner in April before they graduate. Making this decision later should not prevent the student from being supported at Western Texas College. By utilizing the new petition scholarship, we are able to build a bridge to meet the needs of all students on campus.

Petition scholarships are reviewed and approved by the WTC Administrative Staff according to the guidelines of each scholarship available. I am very excited to see



Sheila Hale

WTC Foundation and Event Coordinator

how the petition scholarship will change the dynamic relationship between students and the WTC Foundation.

In the words of Ms. Betty Burrow, Betty Burrow Memorial Scholarship, “Expect the best of students, and they will usually live up to your expectations.” Our donors expect for students to be supported through their contributions, and I am proud to help students live up to the legacy of Western Texas College!

Gifts to the Foundation

May 2024 through July 2024

Stacey James Browning Memorial Scholarship

In memory of Leon Huddleston
Pamela Browning

In memory of Modean Riley
Pamela Browning

Dr. Robert L. Clinton Memorial Scholarship

Wanda Clinton

Shawn Odom Memorial Scholarship

Scott and Sherry Odom

Western Texas College Memorial Scholarship

In memory of Diane Beard
Zelma Irons

In memory of Terrie Jo McWilliams
John and Christine Bane

In memory of Terrie Jo McWilliams
Donald and Kim Hagar

In memory of Terrie Jo McWilliams
Dorothy Smith

In memory of Kenneth Wayne Williams
Jeff Martin

Browning Legacy Lives on

Family Establishes Endowed Scholarship in Memory of Stacy James Browning

On the afternoon of February 5, 1985, the Browning family's lives changed forever.

Stacy James Browning, the son of Billy Ray and Pam Browning, waited for his mother to finish work at Pengo Oil Service. His parents believe he heard a hissing noise coming from a leaking plastic line and went to investigate, as was his nature.

An explosion rocked the building, and upon investigation, both parents and his brother-in-law Jim Kinney discovered Stacy unconscious behind the air compressor with serious injuries. At 14 years old, he suffered head and brain stem injuries, which would limit his mobility and require care for the rest of his life.

Stacy had been a compassionate, West Texas young gentleman who loved football, baseball, T-ball, and hunting.

"Stacy always fixed things on his own," said his father in a 1988 article in the *Snyder News*, written by Shirley Gorman. "He would ask me how to do something or to get him the parts he needed but never expected me to do it for him."

Born on April 16th, 1970, in Snyder, Texas, to Billy and Pam (Teague) Browning, he held a deep fondness for family, movies, music,

and the outdoors and harbored a particular admiration for Daisy Duke. Renowned for his infectious smile, he possessed an innate ability to infuse joy into others' lives.

After Stacy's death in 2021, the Browning family wanted to make sure his legacy lived on and thought a scholarship would be the best way to do that.

The family gifted Western Texas College \$10,000 at the close of 2023. The funds created a designated scholarship that addressed the immediate needs of WTC students who graduated from a Scurry County or Borden County school.

To ensure a lasting impact, the family made an additional \$10,000 contribution to transform the designated scholarship into an endowed scholarship. The endowed scholarship ensures that Stacy's legacy will continue to provide for WTC students far into the future.

"Stacy would be so pleased and honored to know that he had a role in supporting a deserving student to continue their education, whether it be tertiary or vocational, and notwithstanding their finances," said Shannon Grantham, Stacy's sister.

"Stacy was fiercely independent and was very much a 'hands on' kind of guy. He would usually work out



Stacy James Browning posing for his Snyder High School Football team photo.

small details even if it took him all day. If he asked for help, he would say, 'I don't want you to do it, just tell me how.'

"To know that the Stacy James Browning Endowed Scholarship will, for years to come, offer individuals as hardworking and goal-oriented as Stacy the opportunity for a successful future, would have made him very proud. Maybe even as proud and delighted as it makes his entire family!"

For community members who wish to give to the Stacy James Browning Memorial Scholarship, please contact Sheila Hale at 325-574-7943 or email foundation@wtc.edu.

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