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## **Educator to be Awarded Prestigious Harvard Book Award**

In recognition of his outstanding work utilizing online distance learning technologies to bring the world to his students, Father Jose Losoya of the Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation will receive the Harvard Book Award, an honor bestowed by Harvard University, through a member of the Harvard alumnae community to ***"a teacher who has the attributes of a great secondary-school educator."***

Due in great part to the vision of Father Jose Losoya at the Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation, 13 students from the Pharr school participated in an Advanced Placement Psychology class and even shared a virtual classroom with 11 students from *Roskilde Handelsskole* in Denmark and 1 student from Brownwood, Texas, last semester. The students participate in the Texas Virtual School network, a web-based learning initiative that allows students to access courses from their classrooms and homes in Pharr, Texas, while their instructor is hundreds of miles away. Father Losoya not only organizes these online classes for his students but is also a Spanish language instructor, via video conferencing, for students in Miami ISD located in the panhandle of Texas.

The award ceremony will take place via video conference, with Losoya and his students present at the Region One Education Service Center, and will include members of the San Antonio area Harvard Alumni Association, Linda Gillis, TVS Director; Losoya's students from Miami ISD, Father Losoya, and students from the Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation.

### **This award honors teachers that exemplify the following criteria:**

First, the teacher has the ability to kindle love of learning. Secondly, the teacher also fosters discernment, critical thinking, independence of thought, and precision of ideas.

The teacher is able to connect a particular discipline to other disciplines, to our civilization, and to the natural world in which we live, and, thereby, to increase a student's sphere of enjoyment and effectiveness as a human being.

The teacher demonstrates the ability to cultivate goodness and a student's ability to use his or her abilities to foster the well-being of others and the planet on which we live.

Finally, Students never forget such teachers. They are always there in the students' memories to spur them to greatness.

***"Father Losoya, through Texas Virtual Schools, has created learning opportunities for many students that might not otherwise have had access to some of the advanced courses offered at their schools,"*** says Elaine Sellhorn, Region One ESC Technology Integration Specialist, and Region One's TVS Coordinator. ***"By utilizing the Texas Virtual Schools network Father Losoya has truly opened the door to the learning for his students."***

Texas Virtual School is administered by the Region 4 Education Service Center and is a consortium of twelve Education Service Centers throughout Texas, including Region One, where Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation is located.

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The TVS online teacher who made this opportunity possible Courtney is Alicia Rackers. For her extraordinary ability to teach online students and enable their academic success, Ms. Rackers was honored as a recipient of the Harvard Prize Book Award. This is an honor bestowed by Harvard University through a member of the Harvard alumnae community to **“a teacher who has the attributes of a great secondary-school educator.”** Through Ms. Rackers’ online course, Courtney excelled not only in her coursework but, was able to participate in an international collaborative project which included students from the Roskilde Business School in Denmark and Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation in Pharr, Texas. During the ceremony, Ms. Rackers praised Ms. Mann. She declared that **“Courtney showed a remarkable ability to communicate and work effectively with students who she never met in a face-to-face setting”**. She further added that **“Courtney was an extraordinary student who was a delight to teach and a credit to her school, family, and community.”**

Ms. Rackers received this honor on May 11, 2007; the award was given through a video conferencing ceremony. In attendance from Brownwood ISD, located in Region 15, was Ms. Mann, Mr. Bill Faircloth, Principal, Dr. Susan Jones, Superintendent, and Jeana Moss, Assistant Superintendent.

During the ceremony, Brownwood ISD was praised for striving to bring excellence to its students by offering online Advanced Placement coursework. Mr. Faircloth stated that **“The Texas Virtual School project has been a great addition to our course offerings. Students are able to go beyond the classrooms of a mid-sized community in Texas and interact and compete with students in a global world.”**

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