

Jack Jenkins Debate Opportunity Fund First Year Successes

The Jack Jenkins Debate Opportunity Fund has successfully enabled economically disadvantaged high school students to participate in competitive debate in its' first year. The fund was established to preserve and further the ideals of Jack Jenkins, an accomplished debater who thought debate should be fair and open, affording everyone an equal opportunity to participate.

Last summer ten students attended debate camp through partnerships with the University of Texas National Institute for Forensics (UTNIF) and Baylor University. A Lanier student related this about camp, "It was a wonderful experience. Debate camp truly opened my eyes as to what debate is all about. It's not only writing a good case and presenting it but also understanding and being able to interact with those around the debate community."

The fund also granted money to three area high schools, Lanier, Travis, and Akins, for tournament fees, travel, computer and other expenses. This has allowed their deserving students to compete at all levels, and many qualified to attend the National Forensic League district tournament. For Lanier High, it was the first time the school had qualified since 1968.

Lynn Robitalle, a lawyer and debate team mentor at Travis High, observed, "Over the last year, our students overcame their initial feelings of intimidation and grew into confident and talented debaters. They attended tournaments, won rounds, qualified for advanced competition, and one team even participated in a tournament at Harvard University." A Travis High student described his trip to the Harvard tournament, "At first I didn't believe we were going to Harvard; it was truly a dream come true! Debating there was great and the university itself is amazing."

For more information about the Jack Jenkins Debate Opportunity Fund or to make a tax-deductible contribution, please visit the Austin Community Foundation at www.austincommunityfoundation.org. Donations may also be mailed to The Austin Community Foundation at P.O. Box 5159, Austin TX, 78763.