



# THE APACHE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE

FALL 2023

**DREAM BIG.  
ASPIRE TO  
EXCELLENCE.**



# DREAM BIG and ASPIRE TO EXCELLENCE.

*“If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.”*  
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Since 1926, TJC has been the “dreamcatcher” for untold families from throughout our beautiful East Texas region and continues to serve as a cornerstone for making dreams a reality. This is reflected in our amazing alumni base that includes some of the most beloved, caring, and philanthropic leaders anywhere. We live in the greatest community in the world, and this is attributed to its exceptional leaders — the majority of whom have a connection to our beloved institution.

As we look forward, TJC is proud to celebrate and recognize stellar students who have made us proud by clearly articulating their aspirations and meticulously working through every step of the way to see their respective dreams become a reality. As you move through the pages of this publication, you will witness firsthand powerful stories that inspire, motivate, and remind us that the work we do together truly matters and will make a difference for years to come.

I invite you to engage in all that TJC has to offer and to identify ways to be a part of the unstoppable synergy that has been created by our making real our core values of Unity, Caring, Integrity, Empowerment, and Excellence so that our Legacy will be one of Greatness.

It is truly my honor to serve our communities and our thousands of students who have made Apache Nation home. I am convinced wholeheartedly that if we work together for the greater good, we will continue to improve the lives of the citizens of our region and be the state and national model for collective excellence.

Sincerely



Juan E. Mejia  
TJC President and CEO



**PRESIDENT**  
Dr. Juan E. Mejia

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Peggy Smith, President  
David Hudson, First Vice President  
Lonny Uzzell, Second Vice President  
Rohn Boone  
Ann W. Brookshire  
Mike Coker  
John Hills  
Dr. Joe Prud'homme  
Clint Roxburgh

**VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR OPERATIONS,  
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER**  
Kimberly Lessner

**EDITOR**  
Whitney Mayfield

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Susie Bell

**WRITERS**  
Whitney Mayfield  
Elise Mullinix  
Ken Schneider

**STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
Whitney Mayfield  
Elise Mullinix

Feedback? Story ideas?  
Please let us know at:  
apache@tjc.edu  
or

The Apache Magazine  
Tyler Junior College  
P.O. Box 9020  
Tyler, TX 75711-9020

**ON THE COVER:**  
Jaymy Villalobos is working to make a better life for herself and her three kids through the TJC Industrial Maintenance Technology program. For more on Jaymy's story, see Page 4.  
Photograph by Elise Mullinix.

TJC.edu



In March, TJC unveiled a new bronze statue of an Apache warrior with a Harris's hawk taking flight. For more on the statue, see Page 21.

## CONTENT

- 4 | Making Her Own Way
- 6 | Innovative Partnerships  
Create Greater Opportunities
- 10 | Prescription for Success
- 12 | From the Military to Med School
- 14 | A Reason to Smile
- 16 | To Baylor and Beyond
- 18 | Rapid Response
- 20 | The Year in Review
- 22 | Cultivating Talent



# MAKING HER OWN WAY

*Single mom makes decision to go back to school and pursue career in male-dominated field*

By Whitney Mayfield

**A**t 32 and a single mother of three, Jaymy Villalobos admits that her life isn't easy.

Along with mom duties, she also carries a full-time job, a part-time internship, and she's learning how to use power tools.

Villalobos is a student in the TJC Industrial Maintenance Technology program. She decided last summer to start classes at TJC to support her children, ages 13, 5, and 2. Her middle child has hereditary spastic paraplegia, a neurological disorder.

"That's one of the main reasons I decided to go back to school," she said. "I want to spend more time at home with my son and be able to pay my bills without worrying. He's been one of my biggest motivations."

The decision to join TJC's Industrial Maintenance Technology program came after a visit to TJC West to meet Link Worthen, professor and coordinator of the program. She felt an instant connection to the program and wanted to pursue the degree.

"She came to me in the summer of 2022, and I assured her the Industrial Maintenance degree would change her life," said Worthen.

"I've always wanted to fix things. I've always wanted to play with tools," said Villalobos. "I was thinking about engineering at first, but I actually went and did a walk-through with Mr. Link and saw how they had the labs and everything, and it's a real hands-on program. I just fell in love with it and said I'm going to do this."

Through the TJC program, Villalobos also received an internship in Pittsburg, at Cal-Maine Foods, the largest producer and distributor of shell eggs in the country. The company produces, packages, grades, markets and distributes eggs.

Villalobos is learning how to process eggs in the factory, gaining hands-on experience in

industrial maintenance. The internship also provides a three-hour course credit in her curriculum.

She also works full time at the Target Distribution Center in Tyler.

Villalobos says she's enjoying every aspect of the TJC program and getting to work with her hands, but she admits it's not easy.

"Now that I'm a single mom ... I have to fix things around my house. It's one of the hardest things ever. I'm learning as I'm going," she laughed.

She's also paving the way and empowering women in a male-dominated field.

"It can be stressful when everyone else is looking at you because you're female; so yeah, there is a little bit more pressure," she said.

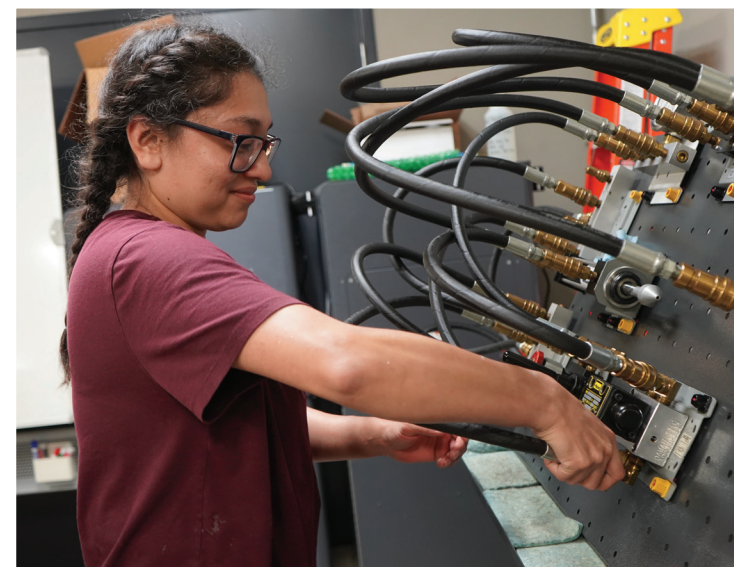
She has yet to meet another female in the industry, but vows that will not stop her.

Only two semesters away from her Associate of Applied Science degree, she hopes to continue working at Target, within their maintenance department, after graduation.

Worthen has no doubt she'll be successful.

"She's a fabulous student, woman and worker, with a very high standard of excellence," he said.

"Do I love it? Yes, I love it. I love what I'm doing," Villalobos said. "It's not typical, but I know if I push myself, I'll be able to do it. I'm not a quitter. I can do this."



“  
Do I love it? Yes, I love it.  
I love what I'm doing.  
It's not typical, but I know  
if I push myself, I'll be able  
to do it. I'm not a quitter.  
I can do this.  
”

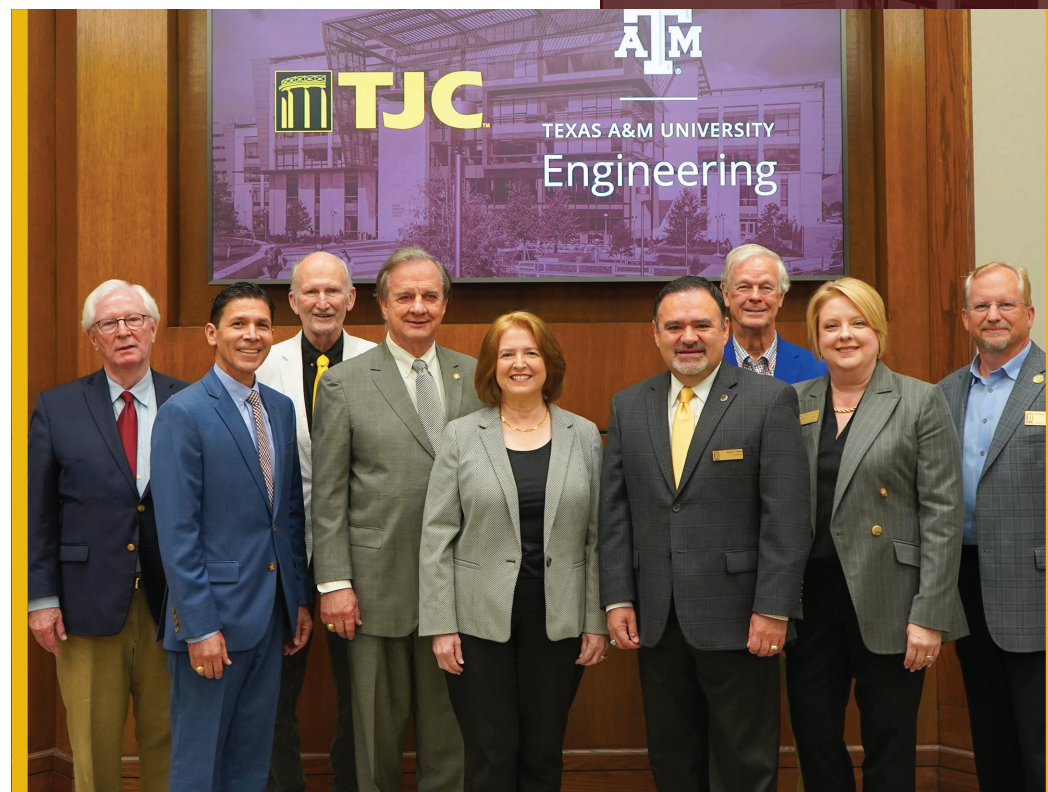
Jaymy Villalobos

**TJC. My pathway to a better life.**



As a key pillar of its strategic plan, TJC strives to create authentic partnerships that provide greater opportunities for students to achieve their academic and career aspirations.

TJC proudly adds Texas A&M University, Southern Methodist University and Texas Tech University to its ever-growing list of university partners from across the Lone Star State.



From left: David Hudson, TJC Board of Trustees first vice president; Dr. John E. Hurtado, interim vice chancellor and dean of the Texas A&M University College of Engineering; Jim Perkins, Citizens 1st Bank-Tyler president and recipient of the 2023 Texas Higher Education Distinguished Service Award; John Sharp, Texas A&M University System chancellor; Dr. M. Katherine Banks, Texas A&M University president; Dr. Juan E. Mejia, TJC president and CEO; John Hills, TJC Board of Trustees member; Dr. Deana Sheppard, TJC provost and vice president for academic and student affairs; and Dr. Cliff Boucher, dean of the TJC School of Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences.



TJC President and CEO Dr. Juan E. Mejia

# Collaborative Effort

*University partnerships create greater opportunities for TJC students*

By Elise Mullinix

**TJC** continues to create unique opportunities for students through innovative partnerships with universities across the state.

This summer, Texas A&M University and TJC launched the Texas A&M Engineering Academy at TJC and will enroll the first cohort of students in Fall 2023.

This co-enrollment partnership was developed to address the state's growing need for engineers. Qualified students will be admitted to the Texas A&M College of Engineering, complete their first two years of coursework at TJC and finish their degrees in College Station.

"As we continue to work with our outstanding community college partners across the state offering students a unique path to earn an engineering degree from Texas A&M University, we welcome Tyler Junior College to the Engineering Academy program,"

said Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp. "These students will have the opportunity to start their college career closer to home while being a part of one of the best engineering schools in the country."

In Texas, the projected need for engineers in the workforce is 51,000 by 2028. To meet this need, universities and two-year colleges must work together to bridge the gap and attract and retain students who are interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM) fields.

Texas A&M President Dr. M. Katherine Banks said, "Not only does this program provide invaluable educational opportunities, but it also offers substantial financial benefits, with students saving an estimated \$4,100 in tuition and fees each semester. The Texas A&M Engineering Academy program truly embodies innovation, affordability, and excellence in engineering education."

Students in the Engineering Academy have the unique opportunity to enroll in engineering courses taught by Texas A&M faculty on the TJC central campus.

"We believe wholeheartedly in authentic partnerships, as it is a key pillar of our strategic plan," said Dr. Juan E. Mejia, TJC president and CEO. "Texas A&M University approached the College and laid out an innovative approach to this seamless pathway between our institutions — and in a high-demand field. This partnership will create even more success stories for our hard-working, deserving students, right here at home."

Tyler native and former Aggie Yell Leader Nathan Drain



[tx.ag/TJCEngineeringAcademy](https://tx.ag/TJCEngineeringAcademy)





***"My hope is that it will open the door for more great students to have a great opportunity down the road."***

*— Ann Brookshire, TJC Board of Trustees*

When SMU launched its \$1.5 billion comprehensive fundraising campaign, "SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow," SMU alumna and TJC trustee Ann Warmack Brookshire and her husband, Brad Brookshire, an SMU alumnus and member of the SMU Board of Trustees, were inspired to develop a transfer scholarship for deserving TJC students.

One student will receive the Brookshire Scholarship each fall, and that student will carry the scholarship for five semesters (2.5 academic years) or until graduation, whichever comes first.

"When SMU announced the capital campaign, it was to address transfer students, first-generation and minority students — and we have all of those students at TJC," Ann Brookshire said. "The potential for someone to further their education at SMU and have the benefit of being in Dallas — it was a no-brainer. My hope is that it will open the door for more great students to have a great opportunity down the road."



From left: Brad Cheves, SMU vice president for development and external affairs; David B. Miller, chair, SMU Board of Regents; Ann and Brad Brookshire; Dr. R. Gerald Turner, SMU president; Dr. Juan E. Mejia, TJC president and CEO; and Mitch Andrews, TJC vice president for institutional advancement.



Leaders from Tyler Junior College and The University of Texas at Tyler recently signed an agreement to create the TJC & UT Tyler Promise Transfer Scholarship.

The agreement enables TJC graduates who have been successful in one of the College's Promise programs to further pursue their higher education at UT Tyler.

In support of this new partnership, the James I. Perkins Family Foundation funded an initial 50 scholarships at \$8,000 each, for a total gift of \$400,000.

Jim Perkins said, "We are so pleased to help establish this new scholarship, which recognizes the partnership of two fine institutions



FROM HERE,  
IT'S POSSIBLE



TJC

Texas Tech University and TJC have formed an agreement for Student Access and Success, which strengthens ties between the two Texas schools and promotes access, affordability, quality, success and cost efficiency for students.

The agreement provides a structure through which transfers on all levels can be supported by the institutions. Texas Tech will honor transferable courses taken at any TJC location and by any delivery method.

"Partnerships like these are one of the best ways to address the challenges we face in this state related to access for all students," said Texas Tech President Dr. Lawrence Schovanec. "Texas Tech and Tyler Junior College will work together to complement each other's strengths."



From left: Dr. Clay Taylor, Texas Tech associate vice provost for eLearning and academic partnerships; Dr. Deana Sheppard, TJC provost and vice president for academic and student affairs; Dr. Juan E. Mejia, TJC president and CEO; Dr. Lawrence Schovanec, Texas Tech University president; Dr. Lee Grimes, TJC associate vice provost for academic affairs; and Dr. Brian Still, Texas Tech vice provost for eLearning and academic partnerships.

***"Partnerships like these are one of the best ways to address the challenges we face in this state related to access for all students."***

*— Dr. Lawrence Schovanec, Texas Tech University President*

in support of student success: Tyler Junior College and The University of Texas at Tyler. With this gift, we honor the leadership of Dr. Juan Mejia and Dr. Kirk Calhoun. We believe that others will join us in giving to ensure that more of our students complete their higher education right here in the city of Tyler."

TJC President and CEO Dr. Juan E. Mejia said, "We are truly grateful to the Perkins family for their continuing generosity and vision. As they initiated a partnership with TJC to establish the first community Promise program in the state of Texas, they are again casting a vision and creating a pathway for TJC graduates to continue their higher education."



From left: Dr. Juan E. Mejia, TJC president and CEO; Margaret Perkins; Laura Perkins; Jim Perkins; and Dr. Kirk A. Calhoun, UT Tyler president.



# PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS

*Crowe describes journey from TJC to medical school*

By Elise Mullinix

**A**s a student at TJC, Justin Crowe knew he wanted to be a physician.

Now, the 2019 TJC graduate and Jacksonville native is one step closer to that goal, as part of the inaugural class of the UT Tyler School of Medicine.

Crowe credits TJC with equipping him for a successful future — both academically and personally.

"I initially chose TJC because it was close to home," he said. "Plus, the TJC Presidential Honors program offered me a scholarship, which sealed the deal."

At TJC, Crowe flourished.

"The smaller class sizes and passion of the professors to help you grow, not just as a scholar but also as a person, contributed significantly to my academic success," he said. "I remember at least one interesting thing about every professor I had at TJC, outside of their educational expertise, because they were interesting people — not just repositories of information."

He was an Apache Chief student leader, a Student Ambassador, a member of TJC Student Senate and a resident assistant. He was named 2018 Homecoming King.

He did all of this while making excellent grades. In 2019, Crowe graduated summa cum laude from TJC, with an associate degree in chemistry.

After TJC, he continued his education at UT Tyler, where he double majored in chemistry and biochemistry.

"TJC was plenty rigorous to prepare me for my four-year degree, as I had no trouble keeping up with other classmates using the skills I had previously learned," he said.

Getting into medical school involved an intensive process that began with about 6,000 applicants, which were whittled down to 600 interviewees, with Crowe finally named to the inaugural class of 40 students.

"Competing with that many people for a spot was terrifying, at times," he said. "But you have to trust that it will put you where you belong. Luckily for me, that means I got into my dream school and get to stay right here and serve my community for a bit longer."

After medical school, Crowe hopes to remain in East Texas and practice family or emergency medicine or oncology.

He also hopes to help future East Texas students.

"I hope to help fortify the pathway for students like me from TJC or my high

school, encouraging them that they can live their dreams if they put in the work required," he said.

"I would also love the chance to financially contribute to TJC, so I can give back to the institution that gave so much to me. I can't wait to call the TJC Alumni Association someday with good news!"

“  
**TJC was plenty rigorous to prepare me for my four-year degree, as I had no trouble keeping up with other classmates using the skills I had previously learned.**  
”

**Justin Crowe**

**TJC. My pathway to med school.**



# FROM THE MILITARY TO MED SCHOOL

By Whitney Mayfield

**L**uke Schwartz knows all about passion and achieving dreams.

After graduating summa cum laude with a biology degree from TJC in 2021, Schwartz earned his bachelor's degree from Texas A&M.

Then came the phone call that he had been accepted into the inaugural class of The University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine.

"Getting accepted was one of the greatest joys and biggest reliefs of my life," he said. "Anyone who has even contemplated applying for medical school knows how stressful the process can be."

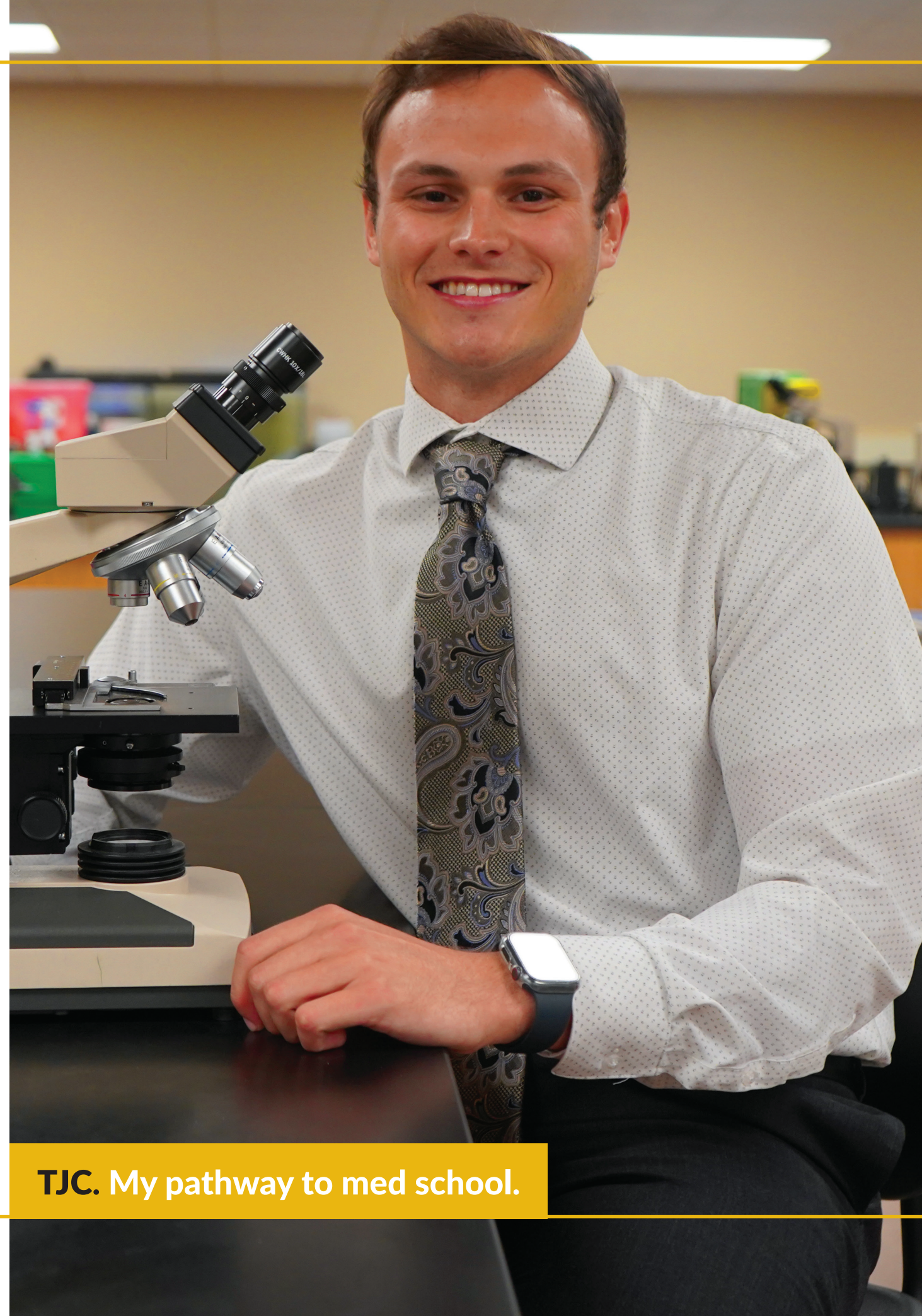
A Tyler native, Schwartz knew from a young age that he would go into the medical field.

At 17, he joined the United States Air Force as a medic. Following active duty, he returned to the National Guard, where he was kept busy on assignments ranging from hurricane responses to working mobile testing sites in response to the pandemic.

During that time, he also enrolled at TJC.

"I am incredibly grateful that my life worked out the way it did, and I ended up at TJC. I quickly realized how fortunate I was to be here," said Schwartz.

TJC not only met his expectations in the classroom, but the College exceeded them beyond his wildest dreams.



**TJC. My pathway to med school.**

“

*I feel like people who grew up in Tyler really take TJC for granted and don't fully understand the phenomenal opportunities it has to offer.*

”

**Luke Schwartz**

"Having small class sizes and professors who truly cared about their students' success made for a learning environment unlike anywhere else I have taken college courses thus far," he said. "In fact, I felt significantly more prepared for my upper-level courses than my friends who went straight into large universities."

Schwartz said TJC was also an affordable option and one that allowed him to get back into the routine of going to school after the military.

He added that he truly felt like the staff at TJC were dedicated to ensuring he succeeded, not only in his current classes but in his coursework down the road as well.

"Luckily for me, the staff here had set me up with such a strong, comprehensive chemistry background, that I felt incredibly comfortable going in and ended up excelling in my upper-level courses."

Schwartz plans on practicing emergency medicine but is open to change depending on the experiences he has over the next four years of his training.

No matter where life takes him, Schwartz says East Texas will always be home and he intends to stay connected to it one way or another.

"This community raised my brother and me, and it gave us everything we could've possibly needed to succeed in life. So, being

able to give back to the people who gave so much to us is something I am truly looking forward to," he said.

Schwartz's brother, Marc, is starting nurse practitioner school this year. He hopes that one day they'll be able to work together once they've completed school.

"Ideally, I would like to establish a series of clinics to help meet the needs of our area and have him run them alongside me," he said.

Schwartz has learned to take things as they come, and he is always open to new challenges.

As for advice he'd give to a student thinking of attending TJC, his answer is simple: Relax and enjoy the ride.

"If you are truly determined to reach a goal, you will get there eventually," he said. "It may not be how, or even when, you thought you would, but I can guarantee if you put in the work, you will get there eventually."

Schwartz added that TJC is a hidden gem and one that will forever hold a special place in his heart.

"I feel like people who grew up in Tyler really take TJC for granted and don't fully understand the phenomenal opportunities it has to offer," he said. "I will forever be thankful for my time at TJC, and I can honestly say that I don't think I would be where I am today without it."





TJC. My pathway to dentistry.

# A REASON TO SMILE

Former Apache Belle’s path to dentistry

By Whitney Mayfield

Dr. Uche Nwasuruba is a first-generation Nigerian American. Born and raised in Tyler, her parents moved from Nigeria to America more than 25 years ago. TJC became a family tradition.

“TJC has kind of become a family thing for us. My mom went to TJC and my brother also graduated from TJC as well,” Nwasuruba said.

There was one thing in particular that captivated her attention at TJC: the Apache Belles.

“When I was a sophomore in high school, I went to the Pow Wow Camp for the Apache Belles and fell in love with the team,” she said. “I knew I wanted to try out and become an Internationally Famous Apache Belle.”

Nwasuruba later achieved her dream, becoming a member and chaplain on the Belles’ 69th line.

At TJC, she was also highly involved in the Honors program. In 2017, she received the TJC Honors Program Top Scholar award at the annual Undergraduate Research Conference at Stephen F. Austin State University. The award was presented

for her Capstone project, which focused on dental anxiety.

“I 100% believe TJC helped shaped me into the person I am today. Looking back, being involved in Apache Belles and Honors program, and taking all those courses taught me endurance — not only for myself but for the betterment of my team and classmates,” she said.

After graduating from TJC with her Associate of Science in biology in 2017, Nwasuruba went on to pursue dentistry at UT Health San Antonio. She graduated this past May with her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree.

Dr. Nwasuruba plans on practicing in Tyler and eventually hopes to open her own dental practice in Dallas. Wherever she ends up, she says she will look back on her time at TJC as a period of growth.

“I prayed and wished to be where I am, and I remind myself to enjoy each moment even when I meet adversity because I look back on my days at TJC and remember all the wonderful people I met and the memories I made.”

“  
TJC has kind of  
become a family  
thing for us. My  
mom went to TJC  
and my brother also  
graduated from  
TJC as well  
”

Dr. Uche Nwasuruba





**TJC. My pathway to Baylor.**

# TO BAYLOR AND BEYOND

*Full-ride transfer scholarship lands LoCicero on her path to a promising future*

By Elise Mullinix

**G**rowing up in Paris, Texas, Isabella LoCicero couldn't imagine the bright future that now awaits her.

In May, LoCicero earned Associate of Arts in government from TJC.

This fall, she will transfer to Baylor University, where she has earned the Glenn R. Capp Fellows Scholarship for speech and debate — worth more than \$200,000 — which will cover her remaining two years toward her bachelor's degree and eventually, law school.

"I'm actually still processing the fact that I'm going to Baylor," she said. "I am not the girl who gets things like this."

Two years ago, LoCicero arrived at TJC as a first-generation college student without a plan.

"I was successful in speech and debate in high school, so my high school instructor Mrs. Kristi Hodgkiss encouraged me to come here," she said. "She said, '[TJC Speech and Debate team coaches] M'Liss Hindman and Joan Andrews will take care of you, and you will do whatever they tell you to do.'"

LoCicero took her mentor's advice. As a member of the TJC Speech and Debate

team, she wasn't just successful — she became a national champion.

At the spring Phi Rho Pi Community College National Tournament in Bethesda, Maryland, LoCicero earned top honors and was named fourth overall speaker out of 450 competitors.

Soon after her national success, she was offered the scholarship to continue her studies at Baylor and compete on their speech and debate team.

*"I'm actually still processing the fact that I'm going to Baylor. I am not the girl who gets things like this."*

**Isabella LoCicero**

She credits TJC with helping her find her way and spread her wings.

"There's an openness here, and the people are helpful," she said. "I discovered this ability to choose my own path. Initially, going to a junior college instead of a university seemed like a step back; but, in reality, TJC was the best thing that could have happened to me."



## Baylor Bound Julia Boucher earns full-ride scholarship

A Whitehouse native, Julia Boucher graduated from TJC in May, with an Associate of Science in biology. She will continue as a biology major at Baylor, with eventual plans to be a veterinarian.

"I had never considered Baylor before," she said. "It seemed like an out-of-reach thing, it was expensive, and going from Whitehouse to Baylor seemed unattainable. I had already decided that I would attend a university near here and then go to vet school. Baylor came in and wrecked all of that — but in a very good way."

Since 1989, TJC and Baylor have had an agreement in which one TJC Presidential Honors graduate per year can transfer to Baylor on a full, two-year scholarship.

"Actually, the Presidential Honors program brought me to TJC in the first place," she said. "I was in the top 25 percent of my high school class and looking for something academically challenging but close to home. The transition from high school to college can be difficult, and I didn't feel ready to go off to school. TJC was the only school I applied to."

During her time at TJC, Boucher flourished academically as well as socially.

In addition to taking all honors coursework, she worked on campus as a biology lab assistant and earned an officer position in the Alpha Omicron Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Asked if she has any advice for future TJC students contemplating the Baylor Bound route, Boucher said, "I think the first thing is awareness of Baylor Bound and other transfer scholarships. It's such a great thing, I think more students should push themselves to do what I did and get out of their comfort zones, become more involved and apply for things like this. There are multiple transfer scholarships out there that might go unnoticed."





## *TJC rolls out Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Emergency Management*

**TJC** now offers an all-online Bachelor of Applied Science in Emergency Management program to provide students with opportunities for professional growth in the field of crisis and disaster response.

The program provides students with the skills and knowledge to manage and assume positions of leadership within the field of emergency management. Students will learn to prepare for direct disaster response or crisis management activities, oversee disaster preparedness and establish emergency plans and procedures for natural disasters, wartime or technological disasters. They will also learn in-demand skills including communication, decision-making, organization and planning, critical thinking and risk assessment.

They will receive personalized attention from professors with real-life experience, and the online format allows more flexibility and convenience for students who are already working in public agencies.

“Our online program is designed to incorporate the benefits of a collaborative, one-on-one educational experience,” said Paul Findley, TJC Emergency Management department chair/professor.

# RAPID RESPONSE

By Whitney Mayfield

“As students progress through the program as part of a cohort, they will have flexibility in completing coursework each week. This cohort model provides an additional built-in support system as participants will foster professional relationships during their studies. Teamwork is a vital component of the emergency management profession, and we believe that students will benefit from a team-oriented approach to learning.”

Obtaining a BAS in Emergency Management also provides an opportunity for students to advance in their current careers. Tuition reimbursement is also possible through some employers.

Careers within the emergency management field are expected to grow by 4 percent over the next decade. Employment opportunities include federal, state, and local governments, such as FEMA, hospital systems, nonprofits that work in a response planning capacity, such as Red Cross, among others.

“In addition to municipal and county governments, private industries and businesses, there are numerous opportunities to enter and advance in this field at the state and national level,” said Findley. “This program will introduce concepts related to prevention, mitigation, management, and recovery from the many challenges facing each of our communities.”

Selective admission applies to enter the BAS Emergency Management program. Applicants are eligible for admission if

they have earned an associate degree in one of the following: fire protection technology, criminal justice, law enforcement investigations, emergency medical service professions, paralegal or public administration.

For more information, visit [TJC.edu/EMBAS](https://www.tjc.edu/EMBAS).





# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

AUGUST 2022—2023

By Ken Schneider

It was a year to remember. A year of national titles and awards for excellence and exciting new opportunities for our students. It was a year that promises even greater years ahead — a year all Apaches can be proud of. A year we can all be **Proud to Be TJC.**



**Congratulations, Harry for making  
ALL AMERICAN MASCOT  
at 2023 NCA collegiate camp!**

**HARRY THE HAWK INTRODUCED AS  
TJC'S NEW OFFICIAL MASCOT DURING  
THE HOMECOMING PEP RALLY.**

Harry will serve as a complement to TJC's longstanding nickname, the Apaches, with the hawk embodying the Apache spirit and traditions.

## **JIM AND MARGARET PERKINS RECOGNIZED WITH TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD.**

The prestigious award recognizes the Perkins' establishment of the James I. Perkins Family Foundation in 2006 supporting students, institutions of higher education and East Texas communities. Long committed to all students' educational needs, the Perkins family has generously supported the TJC Foundation, SFA's College of Education, The University of Texas at Tyler, UT Austin's Law School and East Texas Baptist University. Jan. 25, 2023

## **TJC CHAPTER OF PHI THETA KAPPA INDUCTS RECORD NUMBER FROM TYLER ISD EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL.**

34 students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher join the national honor society through a TJC program in which they earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree or up to two years of college credit. March 10, 2023

## **APACHE BELLES PERFORM IN DUBLIN'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE.**

Performing in Galway and Dublin, the Apache Belles continue the celebration of their 75th year entertaining crowds, learning about Irish history and cultural and sharing TJC spirit abroad. March 12-19, 2023



## **TJC DEBUTS NEW APACHE STATUE ON CENTRAL CAMPUS.**

TJC unveiled a new beautifully sculpted, bronze statue of an Apache warrior with a Harris's Hawk taking flight. This symbolizes the College releasing our students into the world, once they are fully educated and prepared to do what they have been taught to do here at TJC.

TJC leaders, along with an advisory committee, partnered with the State of Texas Lipan Apache Council to learn more about the Apache tribe and its history.

Created by Dallas sculptor and former TJC student Hobbes Vincent, the statue stands proudly in Hartley Plaza on the TJC Central Campus. March 29, 2023

## **SPEECH AND DEBATE EARNS NATIONAL AWARDS IN TWO TOURNAMENTS.**

Isabella LoCicero earns gold in impromptu speaking, silver in IPDA\* debate and bronze in parliamentary debate, while Kraig Coulter earns silver in IPDA debate and bronze in parliamentary debate, extemporaneous and impromptu speaking. April 1-3, 2023

## **SIX TJC STUDENTS SELECTED TO THE COCA-COLA ALL-TEXAS ACADEMIC TEAM.**

Receiving medallions were TJC All-Texas Scholars Dane Adams, Julia Boucher, Kaylee Marcil, Ivan Mendez, Hailey Robinette and Kyla Shook, who was also selected as a 2023 Bronze Scholar and received a \$1,000 scholarship. April 19, 2023

## **BELL TOWER ARTS JOURNAL EARNS FIRST PLACE FOR OVERALL EXCELLENCE.**

TJC's literary magazine is recognized by the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association while Lyla Rodriguez, a TJC Visual Communications major, wins third place in Cover Design. April 28, 2023

## **TJC APACHE CHEER EARNS FIRST-EVER NATIONAL CHEERLEADING TITLE.**

Apache Cheer wins its first National Championship in its 76-year history at the National Cheerleaders Association College Nationals competition. April 12, 2023



TJC's performing and visual arts programs help students discover their inner superstar

# CULTIVATING TALENT

By Ken Schneider

## Living Your Faith

– Chris Tomlin, Speech and Debate graduate

What started in 1991 as a presentation on country music for a TJC Speech and Debate competition blossomed into a 30-plus-year career as a Christian singer-songwriter. Grand Saline, Texas native Chris Tomlin isn't timid about identifying the driving force behind his passionate creativity: "I just want to lead people to God." Today the Grammy-winning recording artist, husband and father of three still draws sell-out crowds and releases highly anticipated albums – 17 so far – yet humbly admits, "Helping people encounter God in worship – that's what it's always been about for me." A 2017 recipient of the Legends of TJC award, Chris reflects, "It was here that people really believed in me and saw something in me that I didn't even see myself. I'm proud of this school and the teachers that really shaped me here."



CHRIS TOMLIN



MAYA HUFFMAN

## Hitting All the Right Notes

– Maya Huffman, Music graduate

Growing up in foster care around Gladewater, Texas, Maya Huffman began playing the French horn in sixth grade. After her adoptive parents passed away, she was on her own at 18. With a scholarship to Texas Tech, her life appeared to be coming together. But a visit to TJC changed everything. Maya found the home she never had. Deciding to switch from Tech to TJC, she used scholarships, financial aid, and a 30-hour-a-week job to get her music degree last spring. She credits TJC with giving her direction and a solid moral compass, as well as integrity, responsibility and humility. "TJC gave me a deeper passion and a greater understanding of music, thanks to my talented professors and supportive peers who made every moment worthwhile!" After transferring to TCU on a full scholarship this fall, Maya hopes to someday earn master's and doctoral degrees and dreams of playing for a large symphony orchestra. She also hopes to one day teach college-level music.



JAMIE BLACK

Awarded the inaugural SMU Brookshire Scholarship

## Against All Odds

– Jamie Black, Theatre graduate

Not long ago, Jamie Black was in high school, homeless, and living out of his car in Ferris, Texas. Having taken a few theater classes, Jamie was told he had talent. After graduation and, at the suggestion of his theatre teacher, a TJC alumna, Jamie enrolled in the TJC Theatre program. When a new SMU scholarship became available, he pursued it like a man on a mission – desperate to fulfill his dream of becoming an accomplished actor. Jamie became the first student to be awarded that scholarship, just recently established by TJC Board of Trustees member Ann Brookshire and her husband Brad. Jamie's drive and determination had paid off. "I worked hard in high school despite everything, and I worked even harder at TJC. I did the best I could in every class, trained my acting every chance I got – and I have no plans for stopping."



CURLIYAH JEFFERSON

## Self Expression, Selfless Service

– Curliyah Jefferson, Dance major

To some, she's TJC sophomore dance major Curliyah Jefferson. To others, she's U.S. Army Specialist Jefferson. "I made the decision to join the Army Reserves prior to choosing dance. During my junior year of high school, I decided that serving people and devoting my life to the hope of tomorrow would be a perfect fit for me." At the same time, "I am drawn to dance because it is the expression of self. I can perform my emotions in front of an audience without having to say a word." Curliyah blends her military training with her dancing through the discipline and concentration each demand. "The Army gives me a life based on honor, loyalty and selfless service. Yet without TJC and dance, I would not be the confident person I am." Curliyah's dream? To become a military psychiatrist. "I would like to ease the discomfort and provide resources for every soldier to thrive."



JACLYN WALKER

## Natural Talent on the Rise

– Jaclyn Walker, Art student

If you attended TJC's Arts Fest this spring, you saw Jaclyn Walker's artwork on Arts Fest posters and T-shirts, and you're likely to see more of her work on display for many years to come. After all, Jaclyn's just getting started! Her first formal training began last year at TJC, but, the Chandler, Texas native says, "I was always creative. I have always felt the need to create things." Her motivation? "I love the way creating art makes me feel and even helps me through complicated feelings. That's why I always have multiple projects going on – somewhere between too many and not enough." Her advice to artists who have a fear of blank canvases: "Don't be afraid to make bad art. If you're afraid you'll make something bad, you'll end up making nothing. Bad art is better than no art." Jaclyn plans to transfer to UT Tyler after graduating from TJC next spring.





P.O. BOX 9020  
TYLER, TX 75711

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TYLER, TEXAS  
PERMIT NO. 797



**ETSO**  
EAST TEXAS  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA PRESENTS  
**TOTALITY  
OF THE SUN**

A concert celebrating  
the historic total eclipse  
of the sun featuring  
celestial favorites.

SATURDAY | 2024  
**APRIL 6**  
4 & 7:30 PM

**TJC CENTRAL CAMPUS**  
Rogers Palmer Performing  
Arts Center

**TICKETS**  
On sale beginning  
Oct. 16, 2023 at  
ETSO.ORG

CONCERT HOSTED  
THROUGH A COLLABORATION OF:



**ETSO**  
EAST TEXAS  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

**TJC**  
*Homecoming*  
2023

**TJC FOOTBALL  
VS.  
BLINN COLLEGE**

Saturday, Oct. 14  
3 p.m. | Rose Stadium

Apache Band & Belles  
Rim Walk and Homecoming  
pregame show at 2 p.m.



**TJC POWERFUL VOICES**  
SPEAKER SERIES  
a dynamic speaker series on contemporary issues



**Dr. Vin Gupta**

**THURS., NOV. 2, 2023**

Renowned medical and health policy expert:  
currently Chief Medical Officer  
for Amazon Pharmacy



**Hakeem Oluseyi**

**THURS., APRIL 4, 2024**

Astrophysicist, former Space Science Education  
Lead for NASA