

Agonist

Official Newsletter for the
 Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences
 Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
 Amarillo, Texas



Spring 2017
 Issue 19

UPDATE FROM DR. AHSAN

This fall, our program underwent an internal review as a part of our program accreditation. Internal reviewers comprising faculty and students from GSBS, along with two external reviewers from the University of Arizona and Colorado, visited our campus, reviewed our accomplishments over the past seven years, and assessed our program curriculum and infrastructures. Our program received very high scores in various elements of the program review criteria: accomplishments, curriculum, faculty, students, and infrastructures. Both internal and external reviewers spoke very highly of our faculty accomplishments, students' success, and the program leadership's commitment to offering a superior graduate education. The review committee felt that our program has been very productive and successful, which placed us as one of the nationally recognized graduate programs in pharmaceutical sciences. Congratulations to our students, faculty, staff and leadership who made this success possible. We are encouraged by the review outcome; we will continue to better our program.



We have also seen two students graduate and successfully launch into new careers. Let's congratulate Drs. Debasish Basak and Tanvirul Hye for starting their new careers at MD Cancer Center and TTUSHC School of Pharmacy in Abilene, respectively. Alok Ranjan successfully defended his dissertation in December and has also started his new career at the National Institute of Health (NIH)/National Cancer Institute (NCI) - he will officially graduate in May. In spring, we welcomed three new students, Ms. Kumari Kaushik from India, and Ms. Behnaz Lahooti and Mr. Behnam Noorani from Iran. They each bring unique knowledge and training in areas we are currently introducing to our research endeavors. We anticipate new and exciting things this year with different and varied talents being added to our research team.

Last fall, our program was enlightened to have a highly qualified guest speaker. We were privileged to have Lee Anna Cunningham, PhD, Professor in the Department of Neurosciences at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNMHSC). She gave a presentation on "HIF Regulation of Neural Stem Cell Function," as a part of our GPPS Seminar Series. Also, one of our very own alumni, Jiukuan Hao, PhD, Associate Professor at the James L. Winkle College of Pharmacy at the University of Cincinnati (Ohio), is also scheduled to visit our campus and give a talk on career development. Overall, our GPPS office has been very busy in preparing program review documents, organizing visits of both internal and external reviewers, welcoming new students, and hosting seminar speakers.

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Agonist is published every fall and spring semester by the Graduate Program of Pharmaceutical Sciences (GPPS). For updates and new information, e-mail Susan at susan.king@ttuhsc.edu.

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FALL 2016 GRADUATES



Debasish Basak, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Kalkunte S. Srivenugopal

Dissertation Presented
July 16, 2016

"Redox-induced Modifications of Mutant p53 and MGMT Proteins Mediate Improved Anticancer Drug Responses in Brain and Colon Cancers"



Tanvirul Hye, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Xinli Liu

Dissertation Presented
August 5, 2016

"Apolipoprotein-Mediated Transport of Nanoemulsions to Target Brain Tumor and Brain Metastases"

Spring 2017 Graduate

Alok Ranjan, Ph.D.
Lab of Dr. Sanjay Srivastava

Dissertation Presented
December 7, 2016

"Penfluridol, an antipsychotic drug for cancer therapy"



Spring 2017 DISSERTATIONS

Shikha (fnu), Lab of Dr. Luca Cucullo
Friday, January 27, 2017 at 1:00pm
AMA PAC 1120 / LUB HSC 2B480 / DAL SW 514

Jee Hyun Park, Lab of Dr. Ulrich Bickel
Friday, March 24, 2017 at 1:00pm
AMA SOP 335 / LUB HSC 1C124 / DAL SW 450

Benard Ogola, Lab of Dr. Thomas Thekkumkara
Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 1:00pm
AMA SOP 335 / LUB HSC 1C124 / DAL SW 450

NEW STUDENTS for Spring 2017



(L-to-R: Behnam Noorani, Behnaz Lahooti, Kumari 'Iti' Kaushik)

Kumari 'Iti' Kaushik, B.S. Biotechnology
Amity University
India
Lab: Dr. Sanjay Srivastava

Behnaz Lahooti, B.S. Chemical Engineering
Persian Gulf University
Iran
Lab: Dr. Fakhru Ahsan

Behnam Noorani, B. Material Engineering
Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman
Iran
Lab: Dr. Ulrich Bickel



Amarillo's frosted campus, photos by Yoon Jung Lee, Graduate Student/Research Assistant in Dr. James Stoll lab

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**Graduate Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences
Class of 2016-2017**

WiSE - Women in Science Endeavors

by Shyanne Page

Women in Science Endeavors (WiSE) hosts a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) conference every year for middle-school girls from the Amarillo area. The girls participate in hands-on activities and experiments involving various scientific concepts to motivate them to pursue careers in science-related fields. This year, the event's theme was "STEMtastic," and took place at Amarillo College on November 19, 2016. Graduate students Shyanne Page and Heidi Villalba, with School of Pharmacy alumna, Amanda (Mandy) Whiteside (class of 2015), conducted a workshop on endothermic/exothermic reactions, where the girls made elephant toothpaste (exothermic) and bath bombs (endothermic).



STEMTASTIC

adj. | \stem- 'tas- tik\ | ability to conquer the world through **science, technology engineering and math**; extremely smart; very determined; possessing a bright future



GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR PROGRAM - FALL 2016

08/24/16 - Faculty Speaker: Abraham Al-Ahmad, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pharmaceutical Sciences, TTUHSC School of Pharmacy in Amarillo - Seminar course overview.

08/31/16 - Jee Hyun Park - "TCR mimic Ab (TCRm) Brain Uptake Studies on Brain Metastases in HLA-A2 Transgenic Mice"

09/07/16 - Alok Ranjan - "Antipsychotic Drug for Glioblastoma Therapy"

09/14/16 - Ahasanul Hasan, *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Fabrication of a multi-layered microfluidic device (μ FD) to mimic in vivo renal function — a platform to screen new drugs & to test drug toxicity"

09/21/16 - Nihar Kinarivala - "Optimization and Employment of Flupirtine-Derived Chemical Probes for Neuroprotective Target Identification"

09/21/16 - Faleh Alqahtani, *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Targeted Delivery of NF- κ B Decoy by Using TCR Mimics Antibody in Cerebral Ischemic Stroke"

09/28/16 - Kshitij Verma - "Development of AKR1C3 Inhibitors for the Treatment of Castration Resistant Prostate Cancer (CRPC) and Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)"

09/28/16 - Laxmi Iyer, *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Metformin: Repurposing Opportunities in Dyslipidemia"

10/05/16 - Benard Ogola - "PKC- δ Dependent Transactivation of EGFR in 2ME2 Mediated AT1R Down-Regulation"

10/05/16 - Ronak Patel, *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "The Generation of Patient-Specific Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSCs)-Based Blood-Brain Barrier Model of Alzheimer's Disease to Study Amyloid- β Clearance"

10/12/16 - Srinidhi Jayaraman - *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Studying the Secretory Mechanism of Neurolysin"

10/14/16 - Guest Speaker: Lee Anna Cunningham, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Neurosciences, University of New Mexico Health Sciences, Center; New Mexico Alcohol Research Center 9NMARC) at UNMHSC - "HIF Regulation of Neural Stem Cell Function"

10/19/16 - Hanumantha Rao Madala - *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Turning the Tide: Exploiting the Oncometabolite D-2 Hydroxyglutarate for Glioblastoma Therapy"

10/26/16 - Nehal Gupta - *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Atovaquone: An anti-protozoal drug for management of breast cancer"

11/02/16 - Heidi Villalba - *Oral Qualifying Exam* - "Possible Mechanism of Protection Against Stroke Using Cannabinoids"

11/09/16 - Ekram Chowdhury - "LC-MS/MS based validation and analysis of three stable isotope labeled sucrose variants in different biological matrices"

11/23/16 - Md. Abul Kaiser - "To Vape or not to Vape: Investigating Cerebrovascular Risks and Unresolved Safety Concerns"

11/30/16 - A.G.M. Mostofa - "The S-phase checkpoint function of MGMT provides an unexpected rational route to profoundly increase the efficacy of anticancer antimetabolites in cell culture and xenograft models"

12/07/16 - Alok Ranjan - *Doctoral Dissertation Defense* - "Penfluridol, an antipsychotic drug for cancer therapy"

PUBLICATIONS

≈**Kinarivala N**, Shah K, Abbruscato TJ, Trippier PC. Passage Variation of PC12 Cells Results in Inconsistent Susceptibility to Externally Induced Apoptosis. *ACS Chem. Neurosci.* 2016 Oct 10. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 27718545. DOI: 10.1021/acschemneuro.6b00208.

≈**Paranjpe A**, Bailey NI, Konduri S, Bobustuc GC, Ali-Osman F, Yusuf MA, Punganuru SR, **Madala HR**, **Basak D**, **Mostofa A**, Srivenugopal KS. New insights into estrogenic regulation of O6-methylguanine DNA-methyltransferase (MGMT)

in human breast cancer cells: Co-degradation of ER- α and MGMT proteins by fulvestrant or O6-benzylguanine indicates fresh avenues for therapy. *J Biomed Res.* 2016 Sep;30(5):393-410. doi: 10.7555/JBR.30.20160040. Epub 2016 Jun 10.

≈**Page S**, Munsell A, Al-Ahmad AJ. Cerebral hypoxia/ischemia selectively disrupts tight junctions complexes in stem cell-derived human brain microvascular endothelial cells. *Fluids and Barriers of the CNS.* 2016 Oct 11, 13(1):16.

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Nehal Gupta: Best Podium Presentation Award, Lone Star Regional Chapter of Society of Toxicology (LSSOT), Waco, Texas; October 2016.

Nehal Gupta: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Endowed Scholarship, October 2016.

Nehal Gupta: Graduate Student Travel Support Award, Society of Toxicology, to attend SOT 56th Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, March 2017. [rec'd Dec'16]

Md. Abul Kaiser: Graduate Student Travel Support Award, Society of Toxicology, to attend SOT 56th Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, March 2017. [rec'd Dec'16]

Hanumantha Rao Madala: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Scholarship, TTUHSC GSBS, October 2016.

Hanumantha Rao Madala: Graduate Student Travel Support Award, Society of Toxicology, to attend SOT 56th Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, March 2017 [rec'd Dec'16]

A.G.M. Mostofa: Graduate Student Travel Award, American Association of Bangladeshi Pharmaceutical Scientists, 10th AABPS Annual Meeting, during AAPS in Denver, CO; November 2016.

Benard Ogola: Minority Travel Grant, American Heart Association Council on Basic Cardio-vascular Sciences, AHA Scientific Sessions, New Orleans, LA; November 2016.

Shyanne Page: Meritorious Acknowledgement, Basic Science Award, Laura W. Bush Institute of Women's Health / Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, 5th Annual Gender-Specific Medicine & Women's Health Symposium, Lubbock, TX; October 2016.

Jee Hyun Park: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Scholarship, TTUHSC GSBS, October 2016.

Alok Ranjan: Young Investigator Travel Fellowship Award, Symposia on Cancer Research 2016, "Cancer Evolution: Mechanisms of Vulnerability and Resistance", University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas; October 2016. (selected Aug'16)

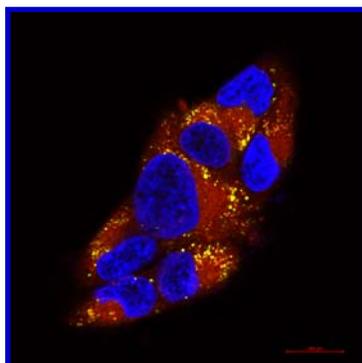
Alok Ranjan: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Scholarship, TTUHSC GSBS, October 2016.

Alok Ranjan: Graduate Student Research Award in Biotechnology, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS), Denver, Colorado; November 2016 (selected Aug'16)

Kshitij Verma: Mary Lou Clements-Mann Scholarship, TTUHSC GSBS, October 2016.

Kshitij Verma: Graduate Student Research Award, American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists, Drug Discovery and Development Interface, 2016 AAPS Annual Meeting and Exposition, Denver, CO, November 2016.

Kshitij Verma: Graduate Student Travel Support Award, Society of Toxicology, to attend SOT 56th Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, on March 2017. [rec'd Dec'16]



“Sub-Cellular Co-Localization of Disulfiram Nanoparticles in Lysosomes”

photo by

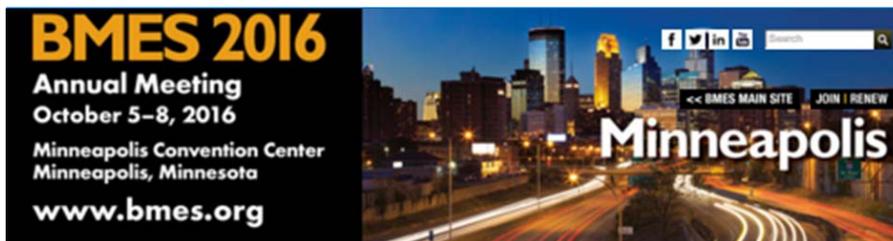
Hanumantha Rao Madala

**Graduate Student / Research Assistant in
Dr. Kalkunte S. Srivenugopal lab**

**Vector Laboratories' Photo Contest
winning entry**

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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Biomedical Engineering Society
October 5-8, 2016
Minneapolis

Ahasanul Hasan, Ziyue Dong, Wei Li, Amanda Flockton, Kurt R Stenmark and Fakhru Ahsan. "PAH Afflicted Pulmonary Arteries on-a-Chip for Screening Drugs and Studying PAH Pathophysiology"

Symposia on Cancer Research 2016 "Cancer Evolution: Mechanisms of Vulnerability and Resistance"
October 6-7, 2016 * Houston



Alok Ranjan and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Suppressing glioblastoma by antipsychotic drug". Symposia on Cancer Research 2016, "Cancer Evolution: Mechanisms of Vulnerability and Resistance"



Laura W. Bush Institute for Women's Health
Gender-Specific Medicine
& Women's Health Symposium
October 21, 2016
TTUHSC Lubbock, TX

Shyanne Page, Ronak Patel and Abraham Al-Ahmad. "Building a sex-specific neurovascular unit in a dish using patient-derived human induced pluripotent stem cells"

Lone Star Regional Chapter of the Society of Toxicology
October 21-22, 2016
Baylor University, Waco, TX



Nehal Gupta, Parul Gupta and Sanjay Srivastava. "Penfluridol Reduces Paclitaxel Resistance in Breast Cancer by Inhibiting HER2/ β -Catenin Signaling." **Podium Presentation.**

Hanumantha Rao Madala, Surendra R. Punganuru and Kalkunte S. Srivenugopal. "Synthesis of a novel non-diuretic, brain-penetrating, ethacrynic acid analog and demonstration of its potent efficacy in orthotopic glioblastoma (GBM) models." **Podium Presentation.**

Sharavan Ramachandran, Neel Fofaria and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Novel Propanoic acid derivative sensitize BRAF mutated melanoma cells and overcome resistance to Vemurafenib therapy"

Kshitij Verma, Tianzhu Zang, Trevor M. Penning, and Paul C. Trippier. "Design, Synthesis and Evaluation of Inhibitors of Type 5 17β -Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase (AKR1C3) as Novel Therapeutics to Manage Castration Resistant Prostate Cancer (CRPC) and Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)"



SOCIETY for NEUROSCIENCE

Society for Neuroscience
November 12-16, 2016 * San Diego

Ronak Patel, Shyanne Page, Abraham Al-Ahmad. "Development of an In vitro patient specific neurovascular unit based on induced pluripotent stem cells"

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (cont'd)



American Heart Association Scientific Sessions 2016 November 12-16, 2016 New Orleans

Benard Ogola, Yong Zhang and Thomas Thekkumkara. "2-Methoxyestradiol Down-regulates Angiotensin Type 1 Receptor Through GPR30 Dependent EGFR Phosphorylation at Tyrosine 1148"

American Association
of Pharmaceutical
Scientists
November 13-17, 2016
Denver

2016 AAPS

ANNUAL MEETING AND EXPOSITION

NOVEMBER 13-17, 2016

COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER, DENVER

Faleh Alqahtani, Ekram Ahmed Chowdhury, Raktima Bhattacharya, Reza Mehvar and Ulrich Bickel. "Intracerebral Microdialysis Technique for comparing [^{14}C] Sucrose and [^{13}C] Sucrose in Mouse Brain."

Nehal Gupta, Parul Gupta and Sanjay Srivastava. "Penfluridol Reduces Paclitaxel Resistance by Inhibiting HER2/beta-catenin Signaling"

Hanumantha Rao Madala, Surendra R. Punganuru and Kalkunte S. Srivenugopal. "Development of stable and brain-penetrating disulfiram nanoparticles, characterization and efficacy in malignant glioma cell culture and xenograft models"

A.G.M. Mostofa and Kalkunte Srivenugopal. "MGMT, a Human DNA Repair Protein and Anticancer Drug Resistance Determinant Interacts With PCNA and Functions as a S-phase checkpoint"

Alok Ranjan and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Glioblastoma Tumor Growth Suppression by a Novel Antipsychotic Drug"

Sharavan Ramachandran, Neel Fofaria and Sanjay K. Srivastava. "Novel Propanoic acid derivative sensitize BRAF mutated melanoma cells and overcome resistance to Vemurafenib therapy"

Shikha Prasad, Ravi Sajja, Luca Cucullo. Preventative Effects of Metformin against Cigarette Smoke-Induced Neurovascular Damage:

Kshitij Verma, Tianzhu Zang, Trevor M. Penning, and Paul C. Trippier. "Design, Synthesis and Evaluation of Inhibitors of Type 5 17β -Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase (AKR1C3) as Novel Therapeutics to Manage Castration Resistant Prostate Cancer (CRPC) and Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)"

Kshitij Verma, Tianzhu Zang, Trevor M. Penning, and Paul C. Trippier. "Design, Synthesis and Structure-Activity Relationship Optimization of Baccharin Derivatives for AKR1C3 Inhibition"


AES ANNUAL MEETING
DECEMBER 2 - 6, 2016 | HOUSTON TEXAS

70th Annual Meeting
George R. Brown Convention Center
6th Biennial North American
Regional Epilepsy Congress

American Epileptic Society * December 2-6, 2016 * Houston

Yoon Jung Lee, Alejandra Fernandez, James Stoll. "A triheptanoin-containing diet reduces spontaneous electrographic seizures in pilocarpine-induced epileptic mice"

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**2016 ANNUAL AAPS TTUHSC SOP
ALUMNI & FRIENDS RECEPTION**
November 15 – 5:30-7:00PM
Hyatt Regency, Mineral Hall; Denver



L-to-R: Sami Nazzal, Md. Nutan



L-to-R: Md. Kowser Miah,
Alok Ranjan, Kshitij Verma



L-to-R: Lloyd Alfonso, Dr. Tom Abbruscato,
Md. Jahidur Rashid, Dr. Fakhru Ahsan, Md. Nutan



L-to-R: Sharavan Ramachandran,
Hanumantha Rao Madala, Kshitij Verma



L-to-R: Dr. Ulrich Bickel,
Dr. Reza Mehvar, Md. Jahidur Rashid



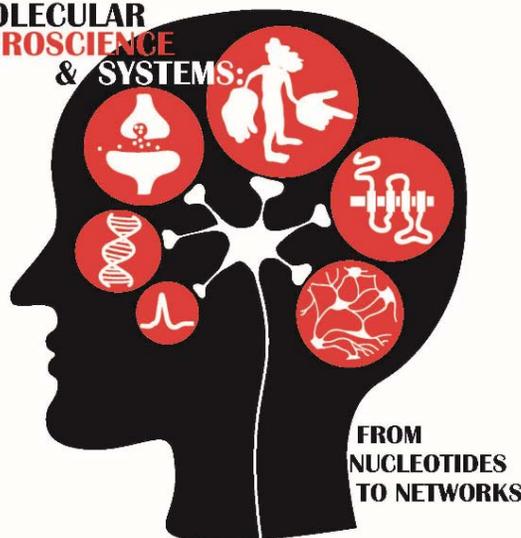
L-to-R: Shikha, Nilesh Gupta, Ravi Sajja,
Nehal Gupta, A.G.M. Mostofa

SPRING CONFERENCES



11th Annual Drug Discovery
for Neurodegeneration Conference
February 12-14, 2017 * San Diego



**MOLECULAR
NEUROSCIENCE
& SYSTEMS:**


Every year, students of the **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS)** organize and run **Student Research Week (SRW)** on the TTUHSC Lubbock campus. Now in its 29th year, the theme for this upcoming SRW is “**Molecular Neuroscience & Systems: From Nucleotides to Networks.**” SRW 2016 is scheduled to take place **March 7-10, 2017**, with a vendor show on March 7th, the poster competition on March 8th-9th, and the keynote addresses on March 10th.

The event will feature **keynote addresses** from two distinguished biomedical scientists:

Jon Kaas, Ph.D.

Dr. Kaas’s pioneering has led to important discoveries about the evolution, organization, and plasticity of the mammalian brain. He is currently a Distinguished Centennial Professor of Psychology, Associate Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology, and Professor of Radiology and Radiological Sciences at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN.

Susan Slaugenhaupt, Ph.D.

Dr. Slaugenhaupt’s groundbreaking research in the role of aberrant mRNA splicing in certain genetic diseases has led to the implementation of a screening program and clinical trials for a potential therapy for some of these diseases. She is a Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Genetic Research, as well as the inaugural Scientific Director of the MGH Research Institute.

For biographies of the speakers and information about the schedule for SRW, please visit our website at: <http://www.ttuhsu.edu/graduate-school-of-biomedical-sciences/student-research-week/default.aspx>.

The poster competition is an integral part of SRW, and all TTUHSC students, residents, and clinical fellows are encouraged to participate. Posters can relate to any biomedical or clinical research area, not just to our SRW theme. For questions or concerns, you may contact Jeremy Thompson, Director of Student Research Week 2017, at: jeremy.thompson@ttuhsc.edu.



“Our voluntary thoughts not only reveal what we are, they predict what we will become.”

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*A. W. Tozer*

Medi Park bridge, photo by Yoon Yung Lee,  
Graduate Student/Research Assistant in Dr. James Stoll lab

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## ALUMNI DIRECTORY

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## Congratulations are in order!



*Dr. Paul Trippier and his wife Shannon had a new baby girl this October. Welcome to Chloe!*



*Drs. Vardan and Anna Karamyan had a new baby girl in December. Welcome to Nairi!*

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### GSAA BULLETIN BOARD

#### GSAA students participated Fall 2016 in:

**September**

- Habitat for Humanity (volunteered)
- Back to School Picnic (Palo Dura Canyon)

**October**

- American Heart Association 2016 Amarillo Heart Walk
- Panhandle Cancer Cure Foundation's 8th Annual 5K & 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk
- Halloween Social

**November**

- Bowling Night
- Winter Coat & Clothes Drive for Salvation Army

**December**

- Winter Coat & Clothes Drive for Salvation Army
- Holiday Party & Graduate Recognition

#### Social & Community Events Planned for Spring 2017:

**February**

- Bowling

**March**

- Panhandle Food Bank Garden, volunteering

**April**

- Ski /White Water Rafting Trip, Taos, NM
- International Night
- March of Dimes, March for Babies

**May**

- Nachos Party Fundraiser for Wildfire Victims
- Graduation Party

### GSAA Events



Habitat for Humanity



Back to School Picnic (Palo Duro Canyon State Park)



American Heart Association 2016 Amarillo Heart Walk

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GSAA Events



Panhandle  
Cancer Cure  
Foundation's  
8th Annual  
5K & 1 Mile  
Fun Run/Walk



Halloween Social



Bowling Night



Christmas Holiday Party & Graduate Recognition