



# School honored for turnaround

Tracy Wolff, Frost Bank, lawyer also get Peacemaker awards.

BY LISA SANDBERG  
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

Once plagued by gang violence and poor attendance, Harris Middle School was the kind of low-performing inner-city institution most parents would just as soon avoid.

But then a few peacemakers arrived on campus, and soon student disputes that might

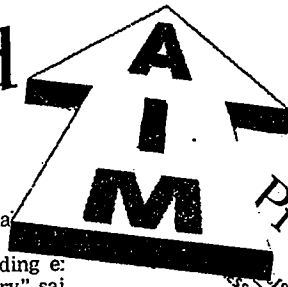
day night at its annual raising gala.

"They're an outstanding example of a success story," said foundation chair Abigail (Kampmann).

The Foundation's Peacemaker Awards honor "unsung heroes" who promote nonviolent resolutions to local community conflicts.

A second honoree was Cheryl L. McMullan, a veteran lawyer and former secondary school teacher who began advocating conflict resolution in the late 1980s — years before it became fashionable.

Today, as head of the peer



JOEY GARCIA/ST

**Program teaching skills in problem-solving**

Teaching students how to resolve problems before they result in detention, expulsion from school or even violence is the goal of educators and the Bexar County Dispute Resolution Center.

Trainers from the center spent July 6 teaching a group of Madison High School students how to resolve their disputes through the AIM program called Amigos in Mediation.

Along with Freeman and about 40 other classmates in a daylong session, students took part in a workshop that covered identifying a conflict, resolving a dispute, and identifying the parties and interests involved.

Some of the agencies helping Alamo Area Juvenile Center, Education Department, Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department and the Alamo Area Mediators Association.

J. Frank Rizzo, a peer mediation coordinator for the resolution center, said Madison makes his twelfth student training workshop since receiving the grant.

"To me, if you can teach people to settle their conflicts, then that will be the best way to help them when they are in conflict."

## Bar Foundation

### Presents Check to Amigos in Mediation

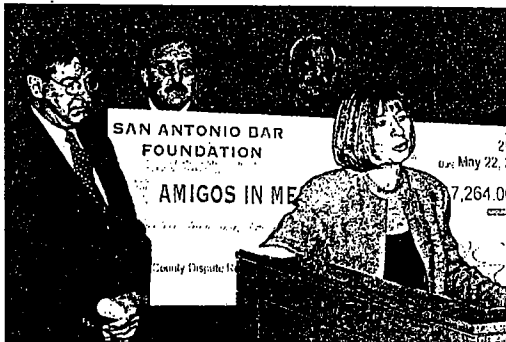
On Tuesday, May 22, Diann Bartek, Chair of the San Antonio Bar Foundation, presented a check in the amount of \$17,264 to Marlene Labenz-Hough, Director of the Bexar County Dispute Resolution Center, on behalf of the Amigos in Mediation (AIM) peer mediation program. The AIM program, which is administered by the Bexar County Dispute Resolution Center, is funded in part by a grant from the Criminal Justice Division, Office of the Governor. Matching funds required by the grant were publicly donated to the Center by the Bar Foundation at a Bexar County Commissioners Court session. In addition to the contributions of the Bar Foundation, the \$17,264 includes funds donated by the Bexar County Women's Bar Association, the San Antonio Bar Association - ADR Section, the Federal Bar Association - San Antonio Chapter, the Alamo Area Mediators Association, and the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association. Representatives of each organization will be recognized by the Commissioners Court for their generous demonstration of commitment to the youth of San Antonio.

The AIM peer mediation program assists schools to implement peer mediation programs as a means of resolving student conflict in the school systems throughout Bexar County. The program's Peer Mediation

Coordinator, Frank Rizzo, trains school staff as mediation trainers, assists them in training students as peer mediators, and helps the schools establish their own resolution programs. Once trained, the students mediate differences among their peers and campus disputes.

Labenz-Hough commended the associations for their support of the AIM program. "With their assistance, we have been able to introduce peer mediation programs in 61 schools. The AIM program has trained 460 school personnel and over 1,000 student mediators." In the last six months, over 316 of those disputes. According to Hough, "Peer mediation helps students find ways to resolve their differences without resorting to violence. It aids students in accepting the consequences of their actions and helps them see other ways to resolve their differences. It promotes a healthy and positive force that can lead to a better future for our youth."

Schools interested in implementing an AIM peer mediation program may contact Frank Rizzo at (512) 388-1400.



Diann M. Bartek, Chair of the Bar Foundation, presents the County Commissioners Court with a check in support of Amigos in Mediation. At far left is Richard Billeaud, President of the Federal Bar Association. Behind is Frank Rizzo and Uless McKinney.



Holding the \$17,264 check are, from left to right, Bexar County Dispute Resolution Mediation Coordinator, and Pat Nance, Assistant

## Student of the Week

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary



Name: **Marina Peacher**  
School: **Reagan Senior High School**

Marina Peacher, the daughter of Jorge and Bona Peacher, is in the top five percent of her class. She has been named to the National Honor Society and B Honor Roll at Reagan and enrolled in advanced placement courses her senior year. She is a member of the National Honor Society and the National Olympians and is a Senior Class Historian. Marina has served as a President's Council Representative and participated in Elf Louise and the National Community and Justice and was a retreat leader for teens at Holy Spirit. She is a certified mediator for Amigos in Mediation, a program of the Bexar County Dispute Resolution Center and was a member of Family Leadership of America.

She plans to pursue a career in Medicine at the University of North Carolina. Marina says she admires her family as they have "always encouraged me to follow my dreams."

"Student of the Week" award presented by S.A. Life magazine to high school area who are outstanding school principals. "Student of the Week" award presented by KWEX-TV and KSWB-TV. Marina will be featured on the show at 9 a.m. next Saturday.