Around the State: Mission Arlington's Christmas Store benefits families

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The annual Christmas Store at Mission Arlington benefited 7,551 families—more than 30,000 individuals—last month, allowing parents and other caregivers to "shop" for free gifts for their children. (Photo by Jemar Bahinting)

The annual Christmas Store at Mission Arlington benefited 7,551 families—more than 30,000 individuals—last month, allowing parents and other caregivers to "shop" for free gifts for their children. It marked about a 15 percent increase over the number served in 2022. More than 7,800 volunteers from throughout North Texas—including some from as far away

as Denton and Anna—helped adult family members who visited the store select one large gift and two small stocking-stuffers for each child in their household. More than 1,000 people made spiritual decisions, including 354 adults who professed faith in Christ—a 32 percent increase over the previous year—and 678 who either rededicated their lives to God or asked for someone to visit their home to tell them more about what it means to follow Jesus. **Tillie Burgin** is founding executive director of Mission Arlington.

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A Houston Christian University cyber engineering student team won first place at the 2023 Capture the Flag competition in the annual Alamo Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association chapter event in San Antonio. The victory by students **Ethan Thomas**, **Ashley Huynh**, **Olachi Ajawara**, **Leonardo Yerena**, **Krzysztof Turski** and **Alicia Martinez** marked the second time a team from HCU won the top award at the annual conference. The competition featured both undergraduate and graduate students solving challenges related to cybersecurity such as reverse

engineering, cryptography, web vulnerabilities, memory forensics, network vulnerabilities and data analytics. In addition to garnering a first-place win at the NCL, two HCU teams finished within the top 10 percent during this nationwide event involving more than 10,000 students.

Howard Payne University's Model United Nations team competed at a conference at the University of Santa Barbara, Calif. Model United Nations is a simulation in which students from various schools participate as delegates of assigned countries who advocate for their country's perspective on an issue. The goal is for students to experience how countries with different viewpoints would attempt to reach peaceful solutions to international issues. **David Claborn** is team coach and professor of government at HPU. Team members are freshman **Joshua Daugeault** of Monahans; junior **Michael Eckert** of Temple; junior **Alec Hughes** of Brownwood; junior **Hannah Parnell** of Idalou; senior **Madison Tuck** of Edgewood, N.M., and junior **Sadie Willie** of Florence. The team's next competition is scheduled April 19-21 in Amsterdam, Holland.