

## **Brief History of Central Texas Science and Engineering Fair**

The Texas Academy of Science made the first attempt to organize and promote a regional science fair in central Texas in the mid-1950s with little success. It was late in 1956 that Baylor University became involved when the Baylor Chapter of The Society of the Sigma Xi provided the leadership to secure a regional science fair charter. Dr. Bryce C. Brown, who was a professor in the Biology Department and curator of the Strecker Museum, was named as director of the fair. Although the study of the sciences was not as emphasized in 1956 as it was to be after the USSR launched the first artificial Earth satellite, Sputnik, on October 4, 1956, Dr. Brown and his colleagues generated enough interest to get the fair started.

Baylor University and Sigma Xi sponsored the first fair on March 29, 1957. There were 40 entries from area schools in Bosque, McLennan, Navarro, Freestone, Limestone, Falls, Bell, Coryell, Somervell and Lampasas counties. The winner in the exact science division was John Jeanes and the winners in the natural science division were Mary Ellen Rogers and Barbara Bruner. All three of the winning students were from Waco High School.

The fair was known as the District X Texas Science Fair, and was affiliated with the National Science Fair. In 1964, the name was changed to the Central Texas Regional Science Fair. After 30 years of growth and expansion, the name was changed again, in 1994, to the Central Texas Science and Engineering Fair, Inc. (CTSEF).

The fair is now affiliated with the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). The CTSEF is one of 13 regional fairs in the state of Texas. Finalists sent to the ISEF have won numerous awards over the past 61 years. Many of the students who have participated in earlier fairs have gone on to earn doctoral degrees in scientific fields. Some have returned to serve as sponsors, judges, and board members.

Calvin B. Smith succeeded Dr. Brown as director of the Strecker Museum and director of the fair in 1983. Mr. Smith passed the duties of director to A. Scott Lea, MD, president of Waco Infectious Disease Associates and McLennan County Public Health Director in 1994. Stephen C. Scott, owner of Sydaptic, Inc., followed Dr. Lea as director of the fair in 1998.

Following the resignation of Mr. Scott in 2013, Jeanne D. Waggener, R. Ph., Market Health and Wellness Director, Wal-Mart Pharmacy, was elected as director of the fair. Under the leadership of each of the above, the long tradition of inspiring students to become involved in science and to develop interests that carry through into adulthood has continued.

In 2016, Jeanne Waggener retired as director and board members Linda Morris and David Lintz were appointed as acting co-directors.