

Barbers Hill: We're No. 1 in nation in assets per pupil

BY CHRISTOPHER JAMES

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In addition to having a good business sense, Barbers Hill ISD makes it a priority to keep good relationships with industry leaders and strives to be an innovative district — components that have facilitated one of the top education foundations in the nation.

In fact, Barbers Hill ISD is number one in the nation in assets per pupil according to Dewey & Associates.

“So much of what we do is outside of the box. We did not do bake



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the box and trying to be more innovative and creative.”

Founded in 2010, the Barbers Hill Education Foundation has a current endowment value of \$13 million.

sales or carwashes or all of the things that are typical,” said Superintendent Greg Poole. “We are doing some things that others aren’t, and I really believe education is best served by doing things outside

More recently Barbers Hill Education Foundation received a donation of \$34,000 from Coca Cola. The district will receive \$9,000 up front, with the rest of it coming in the next five years. In addition, Barbers Hill ISD has returned a little less than nine percent since its inception.

“We absolutely want to put that money to work in a productive way. So school districts are very limited on how they can invest their money, so we maximize the opportunities the best we can,” said Poole. “On

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the foundation you're given more latitude, so number we want to wisely invest the money so we can grow it."

Another objective that Barbers Hill ISD wants to achieve with its education foundation is to utilize it for research and development opportunities. To do that, the Barbers Hill ISD staff is asked to come up with innovative and progressive ideas to assist their students in learning.

One such idea is the implantation of standing desks for students to provide a better learning environment.

"We don't have the student's desks yet, we've ordered two sets," said Poole. "But if that turns out to be the success we think it will and really

just allow kids to have a conducive environment to learning, that is the type of thing that we're using money from the interest."

Barbers Hill's recipe for success, according to Poole, is partnering with industry and utilizing tax incentives.

"We just have an incredible tax base and they're great people. Exxon is philanthropic and so is Enterprise and Lone Star and you just have to find the avenue," said Poole. "And as crazy as it sounds, it's about identifying a need to people."

In terms of tax incentives, Barbers Hill ISD is a leader in utilizing tax code 313, which is an agreement by a taxpayer to build or install property and create jobs in exchange for a ten-year limitation on the taxable property value for school district maintenance and operations tax purposes.

"Chapter 313, we've utilize them in a way to help grow our foundation as well," said Poole. "And these are devices where we're one of the leaders in the state. And we have brought in \$3 billion in tax base using these instruments. We have like 20 or 21 313s, which has all been in the last 10 years."

Despite having such successful education foundation, Barbers Hill is looking to expand. One idea Poole wants to pursue is to mimic the 12th Man Foundation used at Texas A&M University.

"We have some very high wealth individuals that are very, very proud of their Barbers Hill connection," said Poole, who is a graduate of Texas A&M. "They're as proud of their Barbers Hill connection as they are their college."

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