For immediate release

UTB/TSC Alumna Becomes First Principal of New Brownsville School

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS – AUGUST 27, 2008 – More than 100 high school freshmen entered the old Clearwater Elementary School on Palm Boulevard for the Brownsville Independent School District's first day of class on **Monday, Aug. 25** and met a longtime district employee and University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College alumna at the leadership helm.



Roni Louise Rentfro, 51, began her first job as a principal at the Brownsville Early College High School, a partnership between BISD and UTB/TSC. The district renovated Clearwater Elementary to house the early college high school students.

The school will add 100 students yearly and have a maximum of 400 students in attendance who will take high school and college-level courses for dual credit. The school's students were selected by lottery and invited to attend because they have the potential of being the first in their families to go to college.

"Students can expect a rigorous and exciting selection of courses taught by eager and innovating teachers preparing them for college work," Rentfro said.

When students graduate, they will have a high school diploma and an associate degree from UTB/TSC.

Earning a high school and associate degree at the same time was something unimaginable when Rentfro was a student in Brownsville Hanna High School in the 1970s.

"Brownsville has grown up," Rentfro said. "Education and job opportunities have expanded tremendously. Students don't have to leave to get a higher education and higher paying jobs."

This year's freshman class will begin their college experience in the spring when they take a kinesiology course with Dr. Zelma Mata, associate professor and chair of UTB/TSC's Health and Human Performance Department.

Rentfro, a Brownsville native, once dreamed of being a zoo director and even spent 13 years during high school and college at Brownsville's Gladys Porter Zoo caring for animals of all sizes and shapes from elephants to tarantulas.

She was in the first graduating class of Brownsville Hanna High School in 1975. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology and minor in business administration in December 1984 from Pan American University at Brownsville (now UTB/TSC) and a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies from UTB/TSC in May 1997.

"I've always been very appreciative for the student-oriented faculty programs and scheduling that's offered at UTB/TSC," Rentfro said. "They've been able to increase the degree offerings, especially at the master's level."

Rentfro began work with the school district in August 1986 when she became an eighth-grade Earth science teacher at Oliveira Intermediate School. She has also been a gifted and talented science teacher, district teacher evaluator and grants administrator.

For more information call the Brownsville Early College High School at (956) 698-1476.