

Brandon Thompson took over scoring 10 points in a row, as Stevens battled back to tie the game at 59 at the end of the third quarter.

In the fourth, both the teams would match shot for shot. A pivotal play in the game came in the last minute as Stevens had made a key defensive



Photo by Chris Rodgers

Senior Josh Orta plays tough defense on Wagner's point guard.

we knew we were the better team. We (seniors) took it harder than others because we started this, and we wanted to make it special," Thompson said.

EP21 offers scholarships, college prep

BreAna Branham

Features Editor

Students and parents seeking help with scholarships, college preparation, college admission and more can now refer to Empowerment 21 (EP21), "empowering teens for the 21st century."

Participating students will not only gain much needed knowledge of college, but they could also win prizes such as laptops and up to \$1,000 in the process.

Founder Nippy Betz was inspired to begin Empowerment 21 in 2001 when his children were near high school graduation and had no scholarships offered to them.

Betz had no money for his children to go to college, but after creating a timeline and researching, he was able to obtain more than \$65,000 in merit-based scholarships by the end of his daughter's senior year and over \$130,000 for his son. Betz aims

to help students and parents avoid situations like this or help them get through them.

"I just feel obligated to give back to the community, and this is where I can make a difference," Betz said.

EP21 started as a non-profit organization. For two years the program was funded completely out of pocket. Betz then asked the pastor of Grace First Baptist Church, Pastor Walter L. Starks, if he could receive help from the church education committee and the request was approved.

A board of directors was created to help keep the program on track. Gregory Belleny, who runs the Grace First Baptist education committee, serves as vice president, Robert Hill as secretary, and Adrienne Betz as treasurer.

"My duties include establishing an internship program, ensuring EP21 remains committed to its core values, advising youth and parents of educational and scholarship opportunities,

seeking or pursuing additional grants and funds for our organization, and being a backup speaker for our President, Nippy Betz," Belleny said.

Together, Betz and his board of directors have been a big help to students and parents.

"In less than three years, we have helped teens earn well over \$3,000,000 in merit-based scholarships, while earning countless millions in grants, stipends, and loans," he said.

Being associated with EP21 has been an overwhelming success with students.

"It has helped me a lot. Before I started going, I wasn't worried about the cost of college, but it opened my eyes and made me recognize that college is expensive. My parents may or may not be able to pay for it, so it was time for me to step up and handle mine," said LaShandra Banks, senior at Business Careers High School.

The EP21 committee has received thanks for everything they have done.

"As in the past, when a youth graduates from college, and they thank us for helping, every minute we spent in the past and will spend in the future is worth it," Belleny said.

Betz has a goal for the program to become the premier scholarship program in Texas and the United States.

"I try to make it easier by facilitating a monthly guided discussion with the intent of teaching teens, parents, and school administrators something they don't already know that will help them reach their educational dreams and goals," Betz said.

Meetings are held on second Saturdays in the Earl Warren High School auditorium from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

For more information, refer to the EP21 Web site, www.empowerment21.com.

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THE TALON

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Varsity basketball makes playoff history

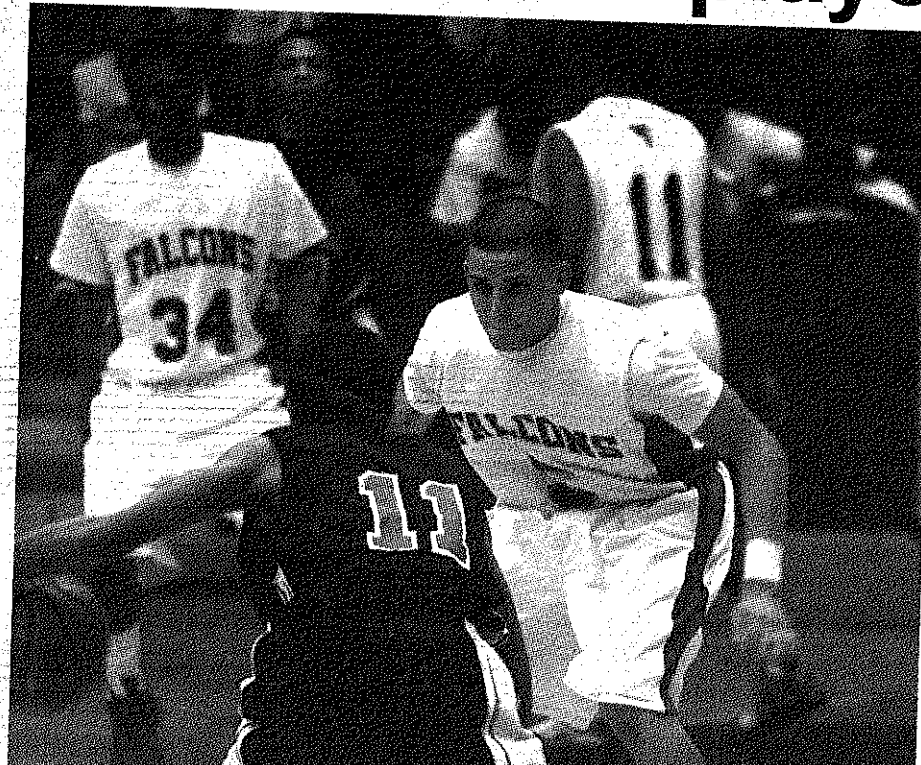
Trevor Harris

Sports Editor

The Stevens Falcons varsity basketball team made history this season as they achieved their first taste of playoff success, but their third round match-up against Wagner would be their toughest of the season.

Stevens faced Wagner on March 4, a team that they had defeated earlier in the season.

Wagner, known for their intense pressure, jumped on the Falcons early with their great outside shooting. Senior Josh Orta kept the Falcons in the game in the first half, as he went on to score a game-high 28 points. Wagner was able to hold a slim lead heading into halftime.



stand, but while trying to get the ball up the court Wagner forced a steal, and advanced the ball up the court for a wide-open lay-up to give them a two-point lead. Stevens took a blow on the play, when Orta had to come out of the game due to injury.

After a time-out, the Falcons had one more chance, trailing by two with 39 seconds left. Although Thompson had been scorching the Wagner defense, his three-point attempt rattled off the back of the rim. Wagner capitalized on their free throws, ending the Falcons historic playoff run. Wagner came out on top of the intense game with a 79-74 win.

With this being the first four-year class in Stevens' history, the seniors felt the emotion of the game.