Each year, the schools around Hitchcock Independent School District diligently honor impactful historical figures and the contributions they made to the advancement of our society during Black History Month. Whether it’s through posters hung along the hallways, class projects, or school-wide performances, each of HISD’s 5 schools have taken pride in honoring the meaning of February each year.

This year, however, two students at Hitchcock High School took notice of the lack of recognition as the month wore on. So they got to work.

Merely sophomores with over half of their high school careers still left to go, Si’Maya Clemons and Chelsey Gregory took the initiative to showcase Black History Month and its historical meaning to teachers, staff and peers when they noticed not much had been done at the school yet for this year. The young women approached high school counselor Kelly Temple for guidance on what they could do given the short notice of time left in the month. After hearing their various ideas, ranging from simple announcements over the intercom for the rest of the month to an entire program for the whole school to see, Temple saw the clear choice.

“At first we wanted to do a Black History Program, but then we thought if we couldn’t do that since it was kind of short notice, we could just say something on the announcements,” said Clemons. “Once we told Mrs. Temple our ideas though, she immediately said ‘Nope. We’re doing this [program] now.’”

So off they were, working over approximately two and a half weeks with their English teachers, Temple, and classmates to bring a Black History Program to the school.

Fast forward to Thursday, Feb. 22, 2023, as the Hitchcock High School Gym filled with the entire student body, staff and teachers all ready to see the hard work Clemons and Gregory had put in over the last few weeks.

Behind the two sophomores calling the shots, the Black History Program showcased the history of many historical figures, represented those who made waves in Black History in the past, and gave kudos to those creating Black History today. The program featured more than 15 students showing their respect and recognizance of the importance of Black History Month to all of Hitchcock High School.

Clemons and Gregory stated their goals with the program were to pull out the deeper meaning of Black History Month and to specifically showcase figures that aren’t typically heard of everyday, including Madam C.J. Walker, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political and social activist and Sojourner Truth, American abolitionist, in addition to house names like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. The students also felt it essential to recognize those continuing to
make Black History today by showcasing figures such as Amanda Gorman, American poet and activist, various inventors and notable athletes.

When asked about their plans going forward, Clemons and Gregory were already spitting off ways to improve upon this year and make their Black History Program even bigger and better than it already was.

“We think with more planning time that we can definitely grow upon what we were able to do this year,” said Gregory. “We want this to be something that the students continue after we graduate, so we want to create a solid foundation for them and hopefully start a legacy with this program that is put on each year.”

While Clemons and Gregory were working so intensely to put on a successful program about Black History Month, they didn’t even have time to realize the history they were also making as young Black women.

As February comes to a close and we shift from Black History Month to March and Women’s History Month, it is imperative to recognize the outstanding contributions these two young women have not only made towards Black History, but also Women’s History, because of the initiative they took to honor something so important to them.

From Hitchcock ISD, kudos to these young women as they have not only helped lead their generation in Black History and Women’s “Her”story, but have shown what being an HISD #WorldChanger is all about.