



*A
Salute
to*

HEALTH & EDUCATION



UPDATE

Health and education: a foundation for human development

Health and education have been called the foundation for human development, and they are two of the most important concerns in a community.

And for good reason.

There has long been a well-documented connection between health and education. It's a connection that some researchers say can't be fully explained by such factors as income, the labor market or family background, but the connection is there all the same.

It is well-documented that health directly improves education and education directly improves health. Poor health or few options for health care typically leads to lower levels of education, and studies have also shown that communities that prioritize education typically have lower morbidity rates from the most common acute and chronic diseases.

Are such findings absolute? No, but they do highlight how important health and education are to individuals, families and communities. In almost any political debate, two of the issues invoked most often will be health care and education. And the more each is talked about, the more questions arise.

This section of Update, A Salute to Health & Education, seeks to answer some questions of local concern.

- How are the largest health care providers in Talladega and St. Clair counties – Coosa Valley Medical Center, St. Vincent's St. Clair and Citizens Baptist Medical Center – living up to their commitments to serve local communities?

- What are the services provided by the Talladega and St. Clair County health departments, and what are each department's goals?

- What is the intangible element that makes a local center so effective at providing long-term and short-term rehabilitation care?

- What has been accomplished in local school systems – Talladega County, Talladega City, Sylacauga City, St. Clair County, Pell City – during the past year, and what is in store for 2016?

- How are local high school students being introduced to career options in the medical field?

- Why is Talladega County's representative on the state Board of Education opposed to the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

- Why is St. Clair County's state school board representative so concerned about teacher salaries?

- What initiatives have recently benefited Talladega College and Jefferson State Community College, and what upcoming move will be of special significance to Central Alabama Community College?

- How has the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind continued to be a tremendous resource for Talladega County and beyond?

As you find the answers in the following pages, it is our hope that you will be informed and come away with much to think about. We further hope that you will support the many advertisers who have enabled The Daily Home to present this Salute to Health & Education to you.



CVMC hopes to continue its award-winning ways while serving the health needs of the community

By DENISE SINCLAIR
Home staff writer

SYLACAUGA -- Coosa Valley Medical Center officials hope the hospital can continue its award winning ways in 2016 while serving the health needs of the community.

The hospital had a stellar year in 2015 when it comes to recognition.

It was named one of the 10 best hospitals in Alabama.

The medical center was recognized by the Joint Commission of Hospitals for being a top performer in health care.

The hospital is one of the most equipped and diverse facilities in the area, offering various services that include but are not limited to women's health; labor and delivery; surgical; acute care; intensive care; post acute; emergency; express care and imaging.

Amy Price, chief nursing and operating officer said, "Last year our Emergency Department was

recognized by the American Heart Association for the Gold Stroke Award. This demonstrates our sustained performance in the area of Stroke Care at CVMC. Our Emergency Department team has achieved a high level of recognition and performance with this Gold Stroke Award."

Price also said the hospital's ICU is one of two hospitals in Alabama that have been recognized by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses as a Beacon facility.

"For patients and families, the Beacon Award signifies exceptional care through improved outcomes and greater overall satisfaction. For nurses, a Beacon Award signals a positive and supportive work environment with greater collaboration between colleagues and leaders, higher morale and lower turnover. We are so proud of our clinical team and medical staff leadership," Price said.

Glenn C. Sisk, CEO of the CVMC offered his compliments to the medical center staff.

"Since 1945, the then Sylacauga

Hospital to today's Coosa Valley Medical Center has been building on a tremendous legacy of care. As noted recently, the growing number of external recognitions for clinical delivery serves as a testament to the outstanding leadership of our medical staff coupled with the effective and trustworthy delivery of care by the entire CVMC team," he said.

Sisk continued by saying, "While we are pleased with our over 70 years of clinical advancement, we continue to challenge ourselves to enhance the care and compassion delivered to our patients and guests recognizing they are the true beneficiaries of our progress."

The CVMC Care Team is over 650 members strong, with 45 active medical staff professionals and approximately 100 courtesy, consulting and Emergency Department staff members, Sisk said.

Nineteen areas of medical specialization are currently represent-

See CVMC, Page 3A



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The medical center sponsors several public health events for the benefit of the community.

CVMC

From Page 2A

ed through the state-of-the-art 248-bed facility, with plans for added services on the horizon.

Sisk said Coosa Valley Medical Center's vision is dedicated to "providing our community with comprehensive health services that enhance the health and wholeness of each individual we serve through medical and spiritual support while affirming their personal value and dignity."

Sisk said a new general surgeon joined the hospital's team in 2015. Dr. Matthew Dimon attended medical school at the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham and followed up with his internship and residency at the University of Florida College in Jacksonville, Florida.

Also in 2015, the hospital expanded its GI lab services. The services are now relocated and removed completely from the normal operations of the hospital's operating room. There, virtually all invasive procedures to the esophagus,

stomach, small bowel and colon take place.

The expansion added seven new bed spaces and two procedural rooms. This expansion added for new jobs to the hospital. The construction and new equipment cost the hospital approximately \$1 million.

Some of the programs in place for 2016 include an employee wellness center. Christy Knowles, chief human resources officer, said all employees on the hospital health plan must go through this program which is a gateway to use the on-site pharmacy.

"This program benefits all team members," she said. "Another program starting is called 'lunch and learn' for the staff. It's an effort to make sure our employees are taking care of themselves."

Another program started in January is Scale Back Alabama. It is an initiative through the Alabama Hospital Association where teams are formed and weigh-in for an effort to lose weight.

Knowles said this program is from February to March. There will be state and local winners. Each day, she said a healthy meal is posted at Hickory

Street Cafe to help employees with their weight loss.

The hospital also sponsors men and women's events each year that focus on health and wellness. In 2015, Auburn basketball coach Bruce Pearl spoke at a dinner sponsored by the hospital.

Knowles said these events came about because of an initiative by the Sylacauga Healthcare Authority to address healthy community.

Scheduled in the spring is a women's event by award winning humorist Jeanne Robertson. It will feature a health fair, reception and dinner.

Sisk said this year CVMC is continuing to maintain its relationship with the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine. Eight students are training at the hospital in primary healthcare. "We hope that will remain and practice in the state. We hope to use it as a recruiting tool," he said.

The hospital will begin a new program in April for drug abuse patients in need of help called "New Vision," Sisk said.

Another project CVMC has started this year is installation of a computer in all patient rooms. "We are moving to a more electronic platform with a significant investment," the hospital administrator said.

Knowles said this program will run over \$500,000 with more up-to-date computers for nurses to use from scanning medicines in at the bedside of a patient to much more.

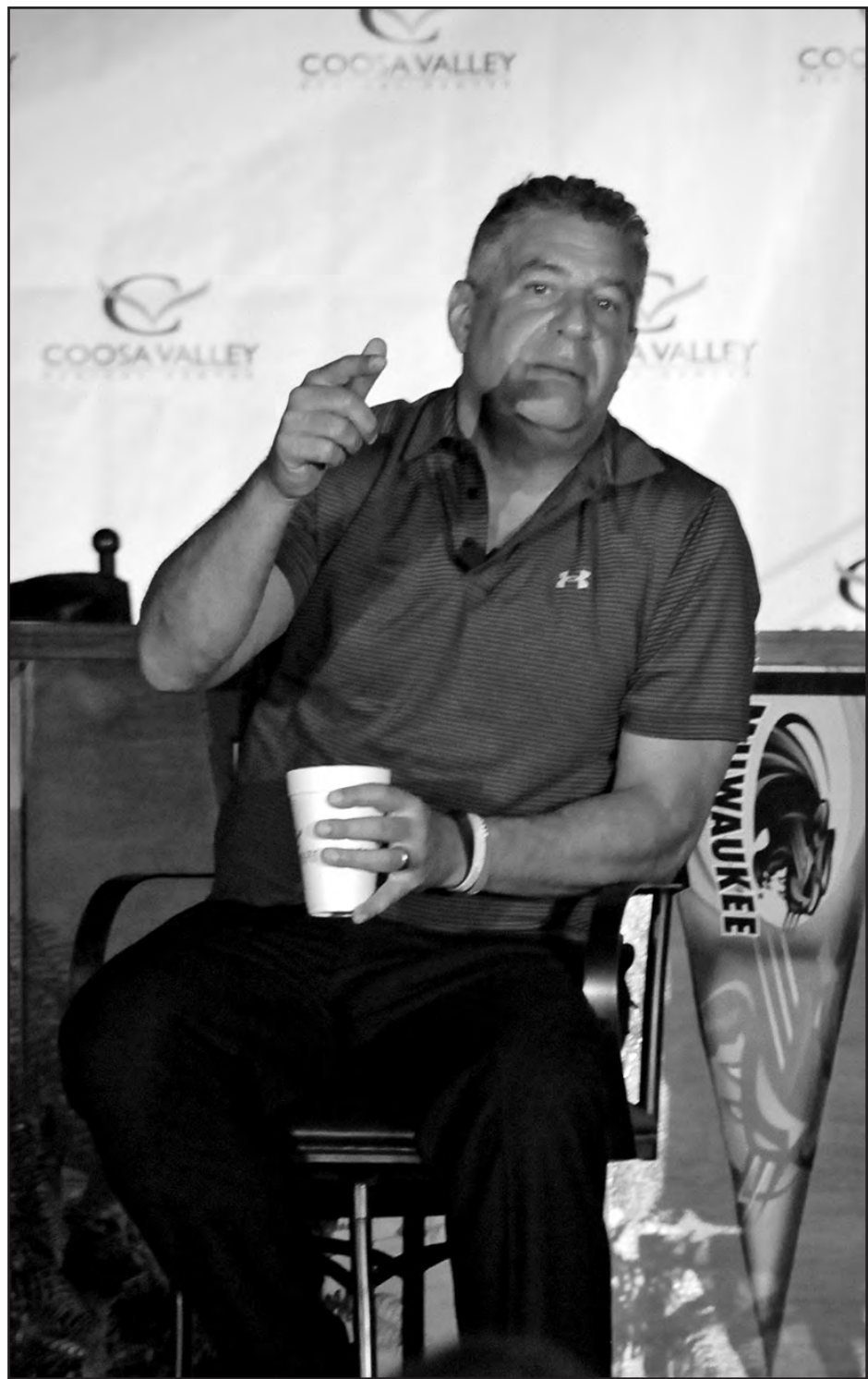
"The medical care at the bedside of a patient becomes more interactive where the medical staff can talk to a patient while charting their information," she said.

"We're excited about our future. We continue to make improvements in patient care and providing the community with an up-to-date health care facility," Sisk said. "Our service area is beyond Sylacauga. We serve patients from Coosa, Tallapoosa and Clay counties, as well as south Shelby County."

Knowles added the medical center is the largest employer in Sylacauga's city limits.



CVMC's staff treatps patients from Talladega, Coosa, Tallapoosa and Clay counties, as well as south Shelby County.



Auburn basketball coach Bruce Pearl spoke at a CVMC fundraiser during 2015.



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Citizens Baptist Medical Center looks to continue meeting the needs of the community

By ELSIE HODNETT
Home staff writer

Citizens Baptist Medical Center is proud of successful accomplishments last year and is hopeful for what 2016 holds, especially the joint venture between Tenet/Brookwood Medical Center and Baptist Health System, which, according to system officials, holds enormous promise for Citizens and its ability to meet the needs of the community.

“In 2015, we continued expanding the access of primary care physicians in north Talladega County, our primary service area,” said Joel Taylor, president of Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega. “We also continued our focus on the access of primary care providers and physicians. This includes new providers in Lincoln, Munford and north Talladega county, which is our primary service area.”

Recruiting of new providers was also a major

focus, Taylor said.

“At BHC Talladega are Sara Sadiq, MD, one of our newer physicians who is accepting new patients, and Skye Vice, CRNP, a certified nurse practitioner who’s new to the practice, is accepting new patients and also sees patients at BHC Munford.

“At BHC Lincoln is Misty Raylea, CRNP, a certified nurse practitioner, who is new to the practice and accepting new patients. At Talladega OB/GYN is Jessica Massey, CRNP, specializing in OB/GYN patients, who has joined Dr. Caceres’ practice and is accepting new patients.”

According to Taylor, Citizens “also cared for more patients in our emergency department than we have in the last 10 years – over 24,000 visits, averaging about 2000 per month, which was a 7 percent growth over the prior year. What this tells us is there continues to be a need for primary care in the area.

“Our team achieved chest pain accreditation

through the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care, which combines evidence-based care and process improvement initiatives for patients experiencing chest pain. Another achievement includes an investment in our Be Well workforce wellness program, which offers onsite, mobile clinics, amongst other services, to area employees.”

In 2015, the medical center introduced specialty care to its facility by way of telemedicine, which provides daily access to neurology specialists.

“As a system, we entered into a partnership with Tenet Healthcare, the parent company of Brookwood Medical Center in Birmingham,” Taylor said. “The new organization unites Baptist Health System’s four hospitals – Citizens Baptist Medical Center, Princeton Baptist Medical Center, Shelby Baptist Medical Center and Walker Baptist Medical Center – with Brookwood Medical Center. Together, the new system has more than 1,700 licensed beds, nine outpatient centers, 68 physician clinics delivering primary and specialty care, more than 7,000 employees and approximately 1,500 affiliated physicians.”

In partnership with Bradford Health, Citizens opened a medical detoxification unit to support the Talladega community. Bradford’s program aims to “bring hope to patients and their families and lead them down the path to recovery.”

Taylor said several initiatives that started in 2015 will remain a focus this year.

“A big focus will be the continued recruitment of providers and physicians for our community, particularly in the area of primary care and specialists. The beauty the Tenet/Brookwood partnership we entered into in late 2015 allows us to continue to care for our community locally, while also giving us better access to specialty care physicians, including neurosurgery and other tertiary care specialties.

“In 2016, we’ll be adding intensivists to our telemedicine repertoire, and we’ll also continue building out Be Well, our workforce wellness program, offering employer partnerships for employer-directed health-management programs for businesses throughout Talladega County. “The program, built around the five modifiable risk factors to prevent chronic disease (tobacco use, prediabetes and diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, excess weight and physical inactivity), aims to create a positive impact on an employee’s health. These services provide cost-effective, high-quality health care options to employee populations, and include access to a variety of services including Be Well on-site, Be Well on-call, and Be Well mobile, which offers primary care physician access through our Be Well

“There are always challenges, and we are committed to overcoming them.”

JOEL TAYLOR
President of Citizens Baptist Medical Center Talladega



Kory Burel and Barbara Embry serve as chaplains at Citizens Baptist Medical Center. Chaplains serve as spiritual caregivers who help patients and their families.

File photo

See Citizens, Page 5A

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 <p>Lisa Cooper, LPN Hospice Nurse</p>	 <p>Makeisha King, CNA Hospice Aide</p>	 <p>Carolyn Ashley, CNA Hospice Aide</p>	 <p>Annie Brown Social Worker</p>	 <p>Glenn Winter Chaplain</p>	



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The Baptist Health Systems Wellness Bus makes a stop in Talladega.

ted to overcoming them,” Taylor said. “A real and never-ending challenge for hospitals will continue to be attracting physicians and providers to care for our patients. And finding those who are called to serve in a rural market can be challenging.

“We’re excited about the new D.O., or osteopathic medical schools, opening in Auburn, and we now have one up and running in Dothan. Both of these schools provide a great opportunity for our community to have better access to be served by graduates of those schools.

“In terms of physician recruitment, one of the exciting things about the partnership with Tenet is their level of resources allowing us access to a network of physicians, which we in turn can use to recruit more physicians to our community. Technology also allows us to overcome challenges we’ve faced in the past. One of those is the advent of telemedicine, which with select specialties, like neurology, enables us to provide “face-to-face” care between patients and specialists.

“In telemedicine, we use internet-enabled cameras to offer Skype-like encounters between physicians and patients – patients can lie, from the hospital bed, in front of a monitor that brings them face to face with a physician on the other end, allowing a consultation to take place, even though the doctor is miles and miles away. A nurse or physician is at the patient’s bedside to help facilitate the consultation.”

Citizens

From Page 4A

mobile clinic, and more.”

Several projects are on the horizon, according to Taylor.

“In 2015, we renovated the first and third floors of the hospitals. This work of enhancing our facilities will carry on into 2016 and include renovations to other areas of the hospital. We will also begin construction of a new professional office building.

“A challenge in healthcare is always improving health literacy and education of the populace – this enables people to get the care they need in the right setting. Part of that is education and part of that is access to new levels of care, like mid-levels or CRNPs. Part of the reason a hospital exists though, is to make sure that people have access to care 24/7. But as providers, we have an opportunity and responsibility to educate consumers about what the right care setting might be for their particular medical issue. We’ll be working closely with SAFE and Get Healthy Talladega County this year to work on this effort. The effort will ultimately create a rural health care network for our community.


“There are always challenges, and we are commit-



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

RNs Christie Presley, Kerith Elrod and Violet Cook show off one of Citizens Baptist’s newly renovated patient rooms.

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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital opened in December of 2011 and continues to offer the most up-to-date medical services for the community.

St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to add more services, physicians and new administrator

By **DAVID ATCHISON**
Home staff writer

In December 2011 St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital, filling a much-needed role in the community.

"It has been so amazing," said Bob Barnett of Pell City, who serves as the chairman of the St. Vincent's Health System Board of Directors.

More than 300 people turned out for that historic day, the opening of a state-of-the-art hospital that continues to grow and prosper, while serving the surrounding communities.

"We have better access to doctors than we have ever had before," Barnett said.

He said people do not have to travel away to see a doctor or have a hospital procedure done.

"The community has really started using the hospital," Barnett said. "There have already been discussions about adding onto the hospital. It won't be long, if we continue to grow."

St. Vincent's St. Clair was constructed for future expansions, and the new hospital was equipped with almost all new equipment.

He said he sees all the quality numbers for SVHS hospitals, and St. Vincent's St. Clair in Pell City is right at the top of quality lists and patient satisfaction.

"It has been wonderful," Barnett said, adding that the hospital has made a positive economic impact on Pell City and St. Clair County.

He said a quality hospital helps attract large companies and industries.

"We would have never gotten that Veteran's Home, if the hospital wasn't there," Barnett said. "It has far exceeded my expectations, and I think the community is really embracing the new hospital."

Since opening in 2011, the hospital has added more and more services, as well as doctors who specialize in different areas of medicine.

Recently, the hospital named

Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA, the new administrator, who will work to help improve hospital services even more.

"Lisa Nichols brings her vast experience and expertise in providing quality patient care, improving processes, and enhancing physician relations to her new position at St. Vincent's St. Clair," said Michael Korpel, president of St. Vincent's East, St. Vincent's St. Clair, and St. Vincent's Blount.

"I want to focus on the community," Nichols said. "We're recruiting a lot of physicians who actually come here from Birmingham and our volume is improving month to month, year to year."

And as more physicians arrive in Pell City, so do medical services.

Nichols said St. Vincent's St. Clair now has an orthopedic group that preforms surgery.

She said the hospital has also grown its pain services and performs about 126 pain procedures each month.

Nichols said the hospital increased its gastrointestinal (GI) procedures to around 207 a month.

"We added additional general surgeons, and they are providing ER coverage 24-7," she said.

Nichols said the hospital also added an OBGYN, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist, although baby deliveries are performed at St. Vincent's East.

She said to offer that service at St. Vincent's St. Clair, the hospital would have to have specialty nurses and doctor, as well as a secured area for newborn babies.

"It doesn't mean down the road we wouldn't consider that," Nichols said.

Throughout the year, St. Vincent's Health System has offered free health screenings for the public.

Also last year, St. Vincent's St. Clair applied and was approved for a Swing Bed program from the Alabama State health Planning and Development Agency.

Hospital officials said the new service will allow patients to receive long-term and post-acute rehabilitation care within a hospital setting, especially when no long-term care or nursing home is available.

The Alabama State Health Planning and Development Agency issued a "Certificate of Need" to the hospital so it could convert 10 acute care hospital beds into 10 swing beds.

Beth Bourg, manager of marketing and communication for St. Vincent's Health System, said swing beds are part of the Transitional Care Program that allows smaller hospitals in rural areas to maximize efficiency and improved services offered to patients through the use of beds for both acute and skilled nursing care.

Swing beds are not restricted to Medicare and Medicaid patients.

St. Vincent's St. Clair also received Chest Pain Center Accreditation from the prestigious Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care.

"We want to continue to grow our services, and we do have some opportunities to grow," Nichols said.

She said Barnett was right that St. Vincent's St. Clair receives high marks in patient satisfaction.

"We've made tremendous improvements," Nichols said. "You can tell by patient surveys."

She said St. Vincent's St. Clair is in the top 10 percentile in quality care in the St. Vincent's Health System, as well as in their parent company, Ascension Health.

"I am very proud of the nursing staff," Nichols said.

St. Vincent's St. Clair is a \$32 million, two-storied, 79,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility at 7063 Veterans Parkway, Pell City.

St. Vincent's St. Clair is directly across the street from the new Col. Robert L. Howard Veterans Home.

"We have better access to doctors than we have ever had before."

BOB BARNETT

Chairman of the St. Vincent's Health System Board of Directors



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA, was recently appointed as the administrator for St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital.

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A living center staff committed to the health and well-being of its residents

By KELLI TIPTON
Home Staff Writer

Golden Living Center in Pell City offers long-term care, short-term rehabilitation services and hospice care by staff members who are committed to the health and well-being of its residents.

“Longevity with staff sets us apart from other facilities. It is unusual for the same nurse to treat the same patient for 20 years, but that is what we have here,” said Executive Director Jamie Lancaster.

This continuity is a benefit for residents at the center. “The staff here becomes like family to our residents,” said Lancaster.

Golden Living Center trains its staff in person-centered care. This type of care involves including the residents and their families in decisions about medical treatment and other aspects of care, and it increases quality of life for residents.

Staff members are required to take a certain number of continuing education credit hours each year. These classes are offered online by Golden University. “They take classes pertaining to infection control, HIPPA regulations and other things such as dignity and job burn-out,” Lancaster said.

Nurses at the center also use the latest technology and state-of-the-art equipment to care for residents. “CareTracker allows the staff to document, in real-time, the resident’s daily life. Their meals, their intake of fluids, their mood, it’s all entered into the system. This helps us identify subtle changes before they become big changes.”

And if a resident needs medical attention, Dr. Steve Fortson of Northside Medical Associates, comes to the center to treat them. “It is very traumatic for a resident to go to the hospital, and it is traumatic for their families to get a call at 2 a.m. that their loved one has been taken to the



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Golden Living Center in Pell City offers long-term care or short-term rehabilitation for those who need to heal in a sterile environment.

hospital. We can do intravenous drips, labs, X-rays, and swallow studies here instead of transporting them for these procedures,” Lancaster said.

Sometimes, a resident only needs to stay for a few weeks of rehabilitation. A broken bone from a car wreck or a fall will often require rehab. A wound that won’t heal needs special care in a sterile environment.

“We offer physical, occupational and speech therapy. We have Nautilus equipment specially designed for geriatrics. We use it in physical therapy. We also use electrical stimulation to promote wound healing,” Lancaster said.

For some residents who need chron-

ic care and 24-hour supervision, the center is home. Lancaster keeps the residents active mentally and physically to keep boredom at bay.


“We have a variety of activities for our residents to participate in. We go to the movies, and we take shopping trips. We have churches that come and have hot chocolate socials. We have a school nearby, and the students came in December and sang Christmas carols. In October, we went to the Pumpkin Patch. They have a petting zoo there, and the residents enjoyed that. During football season, we have tailgate parties. And they are preparing a performance for Valentine’s Day to the song, ‘Watch

Me (Whip/Nae Nae).”

For residents who have less mobility, aromatherapy sessions and hand massages are some of their favorite activities.

The center is a preferred provider for St. Vincent’s Health System and has been recognized by the Alabama Department of Public Health for its efforts to ensure that residents receive their proper and correct amounts of medications. It is also partnered with Nursing Home Quality Campaign, which is driving a program called Advancing Excellence.

For more information about Golden Living Centers, call 205-338-3329 or visit www.goldenliving.com.



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The Talladega County Health Departments are optimistic

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

The Talladega County Health Departments are optimistic about the future, with 2016 projections looking good for the year.

Vicki Southern, RN nursing clinical supervisor of Talladega County Health Departments, said there are two clinics in Talladega County, one in Talladega and one in Sylacauga.

“We are proud that in 2015 we were granted, by the state, vaccines that became available to the community,” Southern said. “It was a great success. We were able to give HPV vaccines to patients age 19 through 29 and Hepatitis B and Tdap vaccines to anyone needing them. Without this program, I believe we would have seen more Human Papillomavirus Virus, Hepatitis B and Whooping Cough in our county.”

Southern said there are several projects underway for 2016.

“We are in the process of updating our systems to total electronic charting by the end of the fiscal year, meaning we will become paperless,” she said. “This will increase our productivity and we will be able to serve our clients in a faster more efficient manner.”

Southern said the health department now takes Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance in their clinics for Family Planning services and are working on other insurance carriers this year.

“The goals of this program are to develop and implement patient-centered holistic plans of care that improve literacy, health outcomes and self-management of asthma, with more areas to be added later.”

VICKI SOUTHERN

RN nursing clinical supervisor, Talladega
County Health Departments

“We already take Medicaid, and we plan to continue to provide the following services with more clients added this year: Family Planning, Cancer Detection, STD (sexually transmitted diseases) program, Immunizations, TB and WIC (Women, Infants and Children),” she said. “Our staff provides very fast, quality care to each patient that walks through our doors.”

Southern said there is a nurse practitioner on staff in each clinic two days a week. Epidemiologist, Environmentalist, TeleHealth and Home Health are also housed in the clinics.

“We will be participating under a University of Alabama at Birmingham grant, a program in conjunction with Dr. D. Wallace, for Telemedicine Health for patients on home dialysis who are unable to travel to Birmingham for doctor visits,” she said. “We have the

patient come into the health department and the doctor is there via live teleconference. We then have a camera for the doctor to assess the patient, including blood pressure, port site and interview the patient. We are excited that this may be the beginning of other doctors getting on board for other diagnosis utilizing telemedicine.”

Southern said in this region, through the Regional Care Organization, or ROC, they are working with Viva Health UAB System on a program called Health Home Care Coordination.

“The goals of this program are to develop and implement patient-centered holistic plans of care that improve literacy, health outcomes and self-management of asthma, with more areas to be added later,” she said.

“Another program that we have been awarded is Early Head Start Program. The primary goal of this program is to

service children receiving their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment screenings, monitor compliance with appointments with their primary physician and dentist and assist the families with any other resources they may need (such as WIC, SNAP, TANF, food bank, etc.). We received this through a grant as well.”

Southern said the WIC program is going strong.

“We have added peer counselors to the staff who counsel new prenatal clients on benefits of breast feedings and problems new moms may have with breastfeeding,” she said. “This program also received a grant to give out incentives to WIC children such as plates, cups and frisbees. Nutritional are available in both clinics Monday through Friday to assist these clients along with issuance of many nutritional foods to aid in the health of mom and child up to 5 years of age. WIC also upgraded, with new toys for the children’s waiting room. Another program we are putting emphasis on is increasing outreach to include more families in need and getting the message out that just because you receive SNAP doesn’t mean you can’t receive WIC. You can receive both.”

“People do not realize all that the local health departments actually do in the community. I hope this year we will be able to do more outreach, take on new projects, improve on the programs we have now and be able to serve our neighbors with the programs we have.”



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Vicki Southern, RN, serves as nursing clinical supervisor for the Talladega County Health Departments.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Paula Ball and Angela Swain are social work case managers for the Talladega County Health Departments.

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St. Clair County Health Department offers clinical, environmental, home health and vital records services

By GARY HANNER
Home staff writer

The Alabama Department of Health is the primary state health agency. Its purpose is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public services to residents and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

All 67 counties in Alabama have health departments. The St. Clair County Health Department offers clinical, environmental, home health and vital records services.

Vital records services include certified birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates for events that occurred in the state.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring, quality services.

Programs and services provided by the St. Clair County Health Department include:

- Certificates – vital records.
- Disease prevention and control.
- Emergency medical services.
- Emergency preparedness.
- Environmental services.
- Health Care access.
- Home Health.
- Injury prevention.
- Personnel and employment.
- Violence prevention and aid.
- Regulation and licensure.
- Family health.

Each of the county health departments work to preserve, protect and enhance the general health and environment of the community by;

- Providing health assessment information to the county.
- Providing leadership in public health policy.
- Assuring access to quality health services and information, preventing disease and enforcing health regulations.

The State of Alabama is divided into 11 Public Health Areas. St. Clair County is in PHA 5 along with Blount, Etowah, Calhoun and Talladega counties. Each PHA office is run by an Area Health Office or Area Administrator. Area offices are responsible for developing public health services and programs specific to the needs of each area.

Suzette Harrison is the clinical nursing supervisor at the St. Clair County Health Department. She has worked for the health department the past 23 years.

Currently there are about 20 employees at the health department.

"Our county health department is funded out of the general fund of the state budget," Harrison said.

Harrison said many years ago, when she was a small girl going to school, she remembers getting shots at the county health department from Ms. Ruby Zackie.

"I'm not sure when she started working here, but she did work here for a long time," Harrison said. "All the kids who grew up in the Pell City area in the 1950s and 1960s remember Ms. Zackie. I was born in 1958, and I got all my shots here. Ms. Zackie just didn't work at the health department – she was the health department. When I was a kid, I never thought that I would one day work here. I was scared of her when I was little, and now, kids are scared of me. I'll be in the grocery store, and I will hear kids say, 'There's the shot lady.' Ms. Zackie gave me shots when I was a girl, and I remember giving her shots before she passed away."

The St. Clair County Health Department is at 1175 23rd St. North in Pell City. Clinical hours are 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Telephone number is 205-338-3357.



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

The St. Clair County Health Department is at 1175 23rd St. North in Pell City.



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Suzette Harrison is the clinical nursing supervisor at the health department. She has worked there for the past 23 years.



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Tanga St. John is the office manager at the St. Clair County Health Department in Pell City.

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‘We must repeal Common Core’

Q&A with state BOE member Stephanie Bell

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

An outspoken opponent of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, Stephanie Bell has pledged to support “true academic standards” while calling for “less bureaucracy and more opportunities for all children” in the state’s schools.

First elected to the Alabama Board of Education in 1994 and serving her sixth term, Bell represents District 3, which includes Talladega, Shelby, Coosa, Elmore, Chilton and parts of Montgomery, Bibb and Jefferson counties. This month, she responded to questions about the state of education in Alabama.

What is the role of the state Board of Education?

“The state Board of Education is given specific authority as designated by statute, laws passed by the Legislature. The board hires and fires the state school superintendent. We approve policies that include curriculum (courses of study), textbook approval, student assessment, special education, career technical education/workforce development, graduation requirements, school safety, teacher certification, programs in the state’s colleges of education (public and private), school standards and compliance, child nutrition, leadership and educator effectiveness, technology, among others.”

What motivated you to seek a seat on the board?

“I had been in the ‘trenches’ for many years as a student and as a volunteer, working to improve education for all students (including special needs children) in my community and in my state. Then there were two terrible events that happened right down the street in the elementary and high schools I attended.

“My nephew was attending the elementary school where a sixth-grader held the principal at gunpoint and, across the street, an innocent student was shot and killed in the parking lot of my alma mater.

“I tried to persuade others to run for the state board, and they kept trying to convince me to run. I decided to run for the state board after the person who qualified to run asked me to replace him on the ballot (for health reasons) after the primary. The odds were stacked against us, but we ran a true grassroots campaign with a pauper’s pocketbook and won.

“I ran because I was concerned about the future of the wonderful public schools I was blessed to attend and the future for our daughters and the children of our great state. I continue the fight because of our young grandchildren, Betsy and Abby, and the next generation.”

How does the state board relate to local school boards?

“First, we must listen to local school board members. Local school boards should be given more authority to make decisions. State law does allow the state superintendent and state board to intervene in local systems for academic, financial, and safety reasons. I support working with systems, such as Talladega City schools, to improve the educational opportunities and safety for all children.”

Do you often get to visit schools in Talladega County?

“Yes, I have been honored to visit schools in all three school systems in Talladega County on numerous occasions. I have served as the commencement speaker at graduations; presented well-deserved honors and awards directly to students, teachers, and individual schools; served as a speaker for school assemblies; toured new facilities; and simply dropped in for a visit when I have been invited. It is my favorite part of the job.”

What are some things happening in schools (statewide and in your district) that you’re especially proud of?

“I am proud of our students who continue to work hard and parents who support their children and the many dedicated teachers who are committed to the children in their classrooms. They do an outstanding job despite limited resources.

“I am always impressed when I visit the AMSTI (Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative) sites and see the contagious enthusiasm. I recently watched elementary children and their teachers at a science fair in my district.

“In October, I was honored to make the motion to approve the historic requirements for early identification and intervention of children with dyslexia. Students, teachers and schools continue to receive recognition for the great work they are doing in Talladega County despite numerous obstacles. I will continue to fight to remove those obstacles.”

How would you describe the state of education in Alabama at the start of 2016?

“We are blessed with many dedicated educators who are frustrated with constant testing, increased data reporting, requirements and regulations, constantly changing mandates, more federal control and new curriculum that is so scripted and burdensome that it crushes teachers’ love of teaching and hinders their ability to bring their expertise to the classroom.

“I will continue to fight for true higher academic standards -- not Common Core -- and work for quality career tech programs, safer classrooms, more local control, less bureaucracy and more opportunities for all children, regardless of family background or zip code.

“I have twice voted against the flawed controversial Common Core Initiative. Alabama was headed in the



Contributed photo

“I have been honored to visit all three school systems in Talladega County on numerous occasions,” state school board member Stephanie Bell said. She is an opponent of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

right direction in 2007-2011, before Common Core, when our state was recognized for historic progress in math and English on the National Assessment of Education Progress. We had moved from 47th and 48th in the nation to 24th and 25th in the most respected education rankings. Fordham gave our math and English standards the highest ratings. We must repeal Common Core and return to what works.”

What effect will the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act have on public schools?

“The Legislature did not include the Alabama Board of Education in the governance, oversight or approval of charter schools. The board’s only role is the ‘confirmation’ of a list of state charter commission member nominations by the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker and senate pro-tem.

“The state school board can only vote for or against the list of names. The board cannot submit names. The names submitted to the state school board included two heads of education special interest groups that receive taxpayer dollars, two former state legislators and a former state school superintendent who was elected chairman of the commission.

“Only four of Alabama’s 136 school districts (Athens, Bessemer, Birmingham and Madison city schools) have filed registration papers to become charter authorizers for the 2015-16 school year.

“We will not know the full impact of charter schools on public schools for at least five years. The first charter schools (about five) are expected to open in Fall 2017.”

What is your position on some of the educational issues the Legislature will consider this session?

“I support a pay raise for teachers and a fully-funded Foundation Program in the proposed Education Trust Fund budget. I support the bill to repeal common core. I support the proposed Student Privacy Act. I oppose the controversial RAISE Act that requires a flawed teacher performance tool (based on a “student growth” assessment model and evaluations written by parents and students) which could leave some of our best teachers vulnerable to reprisal simply because these teachers refused to “give” an undeserved grade. Such an evaluation would keep our best teachers from considering teaching in systems with the greatest need.

“I oppose the legislation to create a longitudinal data system that collects ‘data’ about students’ mental and physical health, assessment results and inappropriate personal information which is vulnerable to hacking, being sold to big businesses and being handed over to the federal government. I strongly oppose this legislation, which includes public, private and home schools and allows access to students’ names and other identifying information.”

What is your background in education?

“I worked numerous jobs to pay for my college education, earning a bachelor’s degree in English from Auburn University. I attended Montgomery Public Schools, first through 12th grades, and graduated from Jefferson Davis High School.

As a writer, I received a

CASE II Media Award from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and wrote many in-depth stories and columns about education in Alabama. I taught English at the Taichung YMCA in Taiwan as a Volunteer in Mission (VIM).

“As a chair of Montgomery’s first College and Career Night, I worked to publish the city’s first comprehensive college scholarship and financial aid catalogue. I worked to create and then served as voluntary executive director of the Statewide Committee on Reforming Education, a grassroots conservative organization dedicated to fighting GOALS 2000 and outcome-based education.

“I serve on the Education Commission of the States and was recently reappointed to the National Association of State School Boards Governmental Affairs Committee. I helped organize Alabamians United for Excellence in Education to fight the controversial Common Core Initiative.

“I have served on panels that studied effective middle schools and released the national report: “Reading at Risk: The State Response to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy.” Among many positive initiatives, I pushed for Alabama’s successful Reading Initiative and historic changes to policies impacting children with Dyslexia. “I have been honored to receive numerous awards, including the Alabama Friend of Education Award. I have learned from the numerous teachers in my family, including my Mother who taught pre-school for many years.”

To contact Stephanie Bell, call (334) 272-2777 or email stephaniewbell@gmail.com.

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Science curriculum acquaints students with medical skills

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Part of a program aimed at introducing students to biomedical sciences, Pell City High School's human body systems class is teaching students critical thinking skills that can benefit them even if they do not pursue a career in a medical field, according to its teacher.

"It's an honors science class that we offer, and it's much more in-depth than a typical anatomy class," Amanda Elliott said. The 2015-16 school term is the inaugural year for the class, which is offered by a grant from Project Lead the Way, a nonprofit organization that develops science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curricula for use in elementary, middle and high schools.

"When students understand how STEM education is relevant to their lives and future careers, they get excited. Invoking excitement is what Project Lead the Way does on a regular basis and the reason our students are successful," said Dr. Vince Bertram, the organization's president and chief executive officer.

"The entire program is inquiry-based," Elliott said. "It makes them think. Traditionally, students are used to being handed information, but here, they have to find it, apply it and explain it. It's not just a teacher standing up and talking for the entire class.

They've already had to research a subject on their own before we talk about it in class.

"Instead of just learning the names of the different bones, human body systems class helps them learn how they work. Instead of just learning that the brain uses neurons for electrical communication, they learn how it creates the electrical signals and then dissect a sheep's brain. It's very hands-on, very investigative."

Throughout the year, students examine the interactions of all human body systems as they explore identity, power, movement, protection and homeostasis. They build organs and tissues on a skeletal Maniken, use data acquisition software to monitor such body functions as muscle movement, reflex and voluntary action and respiration; and take on the roles of biomedical professionals to solve real-world medical cases.

"They actually learn to diagnose symptoms," Elliott said. "When we study endocrinology, they have to identify why a patient may have vision problems if something is wrong with his pituitary gland. Rather than just being told the answer, they have to think and find it for themselves."

The high school also offers a principles of biomedical science class, the introductory course of Project Lead the Way's biomedical science program. It explores concepts of biology and medicine to determine factors



Contributed photo

Lexi Castleberry uses an EKG sensor to test voluntary reaction times versus reflex reaction times during a lab project for PCHS' human body systems class.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Senior Mariah Smith and junior Robyn Geeslin take notes while researching the human digestive system.

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Project Lead the Way puts science into local students' hands

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Rachael Tawbush saw that the aprons, safety goggles and gloves had been put away, then asked her students as they prepared to leave the science lab, “What did you learn today?”

“Hearts are weird,” Katie Bowman quickly replied.

“Hearts are cool,” her classmate, Dusti Jones, countered.

The differing viewpoints were offered after the students in Tawbush’s principles of biomedical science class at Pell City High School spent an hour dissecting sheep hearts. The 2015-16 term is the second year the school has offered the elective class, which seeks through dissection to familiarize students with the workings of the human heart.

“This is going to be the most fun dissection you’ve ever done,” Tawbush assured class members before each team of two began cutting into their assigned organs. Some needed more convincing than others.

“I’m already saying, ‘Eeeew,’” Rebecca Leighton said as she walked into the lab before class started. Her classmates offered similar remarks and questions during the dissection.

“This is sick.”

“That’s gross.”

“This smells so weird.”

“When can we wash our hands?”

“Do we have a grill outside?”

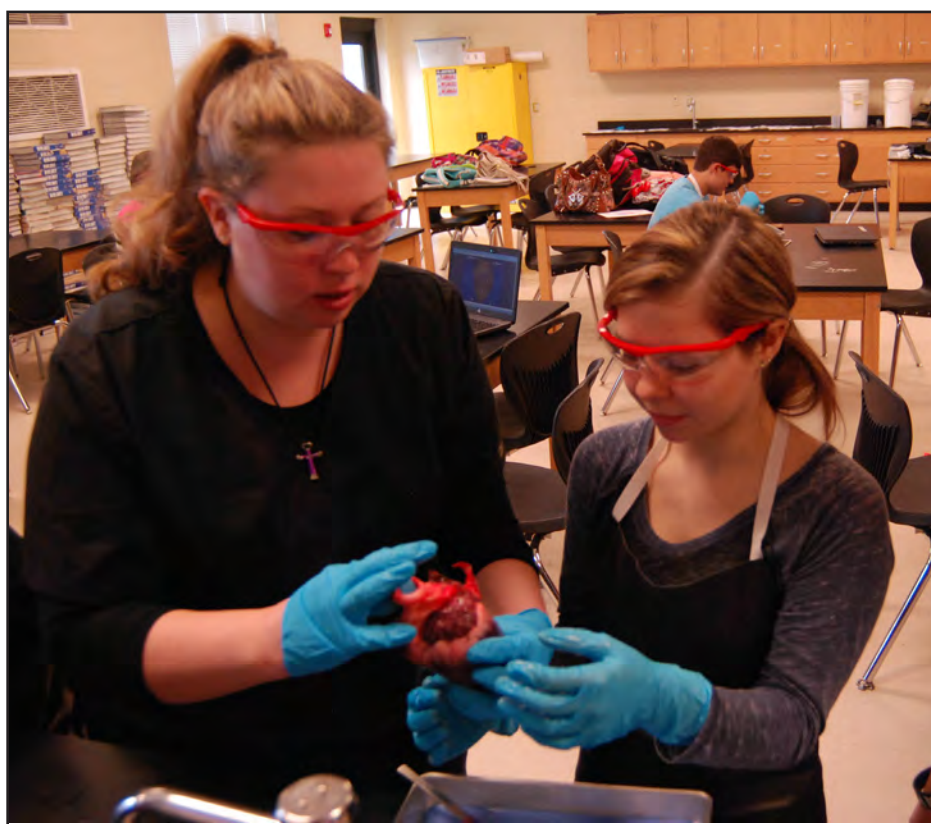
Before long, though, they were asking Tawbush questions about the structure of the heart and the causes of hypertension, blood clots and heart attacks. That’s the goal, she said, since the class aims to prepare students for medical careers.

“Not all of the students want to go into health services, but even if they don’t, they will still leave this class with an appreciation for it,” she said. “This is actually a college-level class, and my job is to guide them along in their learning. I answer their questions with questions in a way that makes them think. I want to make sure they’re prepared.”

The principles of biomedical science class is funded by a grant from Project Lead the Way, a nonprofit organization that provides science, technology, engineering and math programs to public, private and charter schools. It also funds a human body systems class, which counts as a required anatomy and physiology credit for Pell City students. A third class, medical intervention, is expected to be added next year.

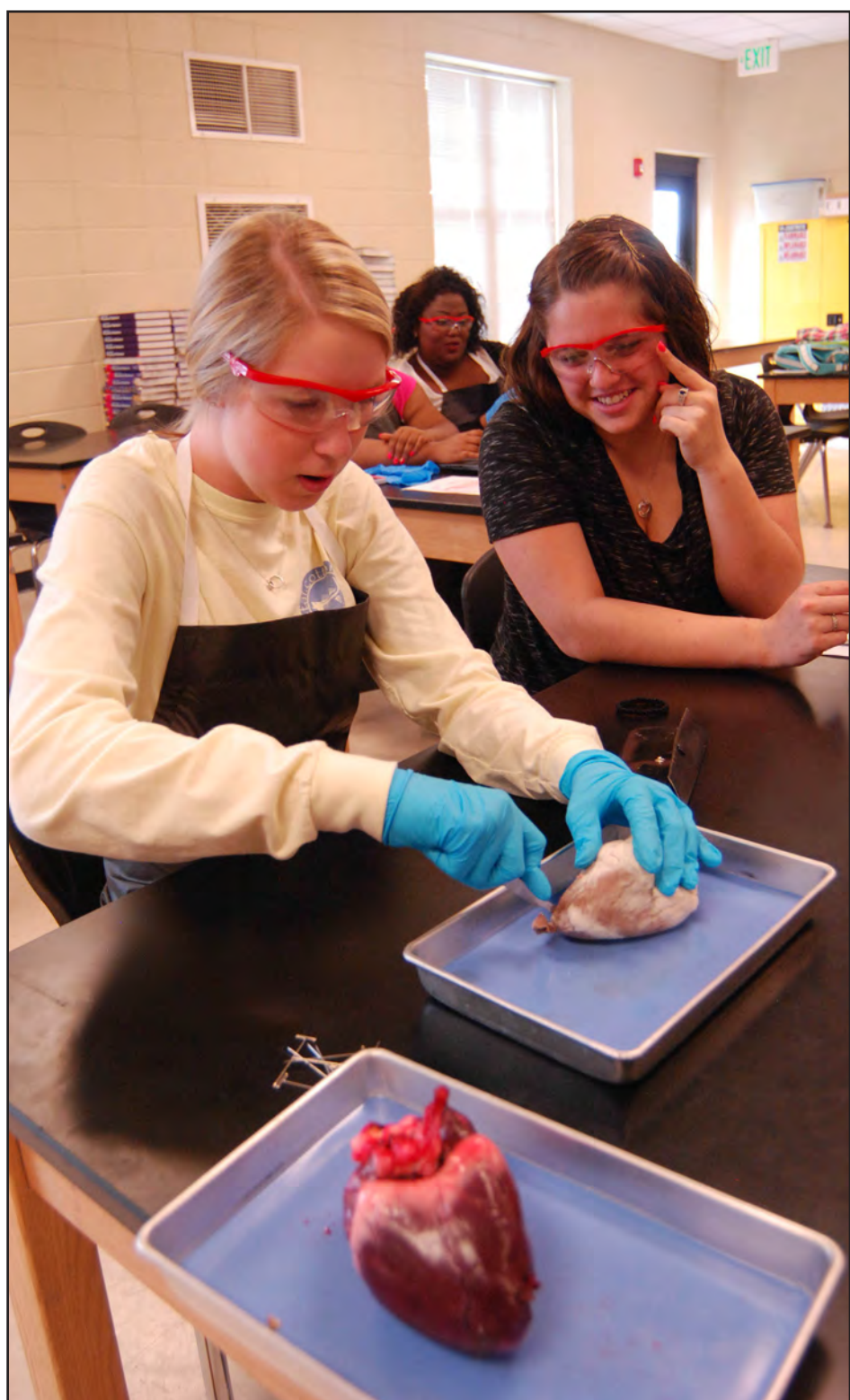
“Project Lead the Way allows us to bring the college classroom to our students,” Tawbush said. “It has put \$100,000 of equipment into their hands that they otherwise wouldn’t have seen before they got to college. This

See **Project**, Page 13A



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home/File

Teacher Rachael Tawbush points out the components of a hog’s heart to student Abby Smith.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home/File

Katie Bowman watches as Paeton Cash dissects a sheep’s heart during principles of biomedical science class at Pell City High School.

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File photo
Maegan Looney provides directions from her laptop computer as Alexis King cuts into a sheep's heart.



File photo
Pell City High School's principles of biomedical science students have been generally fascinated by their class assignment to dissect cow, hog and sheep hearts.

Project

From Page 12A

before they got to college. This curriculum has done and is doing wonderful things for our students.”

With degrees in biology, environmental science and chemistry, Tawbush enjoys her role as guide and conducts the class with the clinical detachment and humor of a trained scientist, which she was before leaving a career in research for the classroom.

“If you need to puke, there’s the trash can,” she warned a class before distributing organs for dissection. The receptacle remained unused for that purpose.

“It’s OK,” she said to one student who was initially reluctant to slice her scalpel into the sheep’s heart on the tray before her. “You’re not going to hurt it. It’s already dead.”

Students’ responses to the class and its out-of-the ordinary projects appears to be favorable.

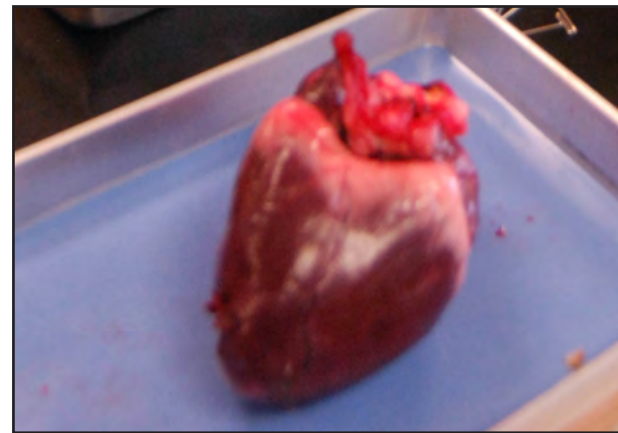
“I’ve learned so much from this class,” said Mariah Smith, who hopes to pursue a career in nursing. “One thing I’ve learned is that teamwork is what it’s all about.”

Jones, who volunteered to dissect a cow’s heart, said she finds the activity “cool,” even if she isn’t sure exactly why.

“I don’t know. Weird stuff like this is cool to me,” she said. “My sister is a heart nurse and helps out with heart surgeries, so I guess that’s where I get it from.”

“The students enjoy having us put science in their hands,” Tawbush said. “It’s also helping them to see that there are many career paths in the bio-medical field other than doctors and nurses: 911 operators, criminal justice, EMTs, medical examiners, crime scene investigators. Through hands-on, project-based learning, they’re learning how to think and getting introduced to things they’ve never considered before.

“Our goal is to get these kids career-and college-ready. Some of these kids are going to be our physicians one day, so I want to make sure they’re prepared.”



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File photo

Lincoln Middle School's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) organization was one of many local student groups to garner awards during the past year.

Talladega County Schools see success from strategic planning

By CHRIS NORWOOD
Home Staff Writer

Talladega County Schools Superintendent Suzanne Lacey attributes the recent successes of the system to a long-term strategic plan, assuring that “we are all committed to providing a strong education for children through innovative teaching and learning.”

For instance, in the year just gone by, the county system was able to provide “a device for every student in the district,” Lacey said. “That’s something we’ve been working on for the last six years, to support student learning. And we’re one of five or fewer systems with 3,000 students to achieve that.”

This was partially due to the system getting \$1 million in federal eRate funds infrastructure. “We couldn’t have done it without that,” she said. “I’m really proud of the fact that eRate supports us. It’s a really complex process, but our tech specialist Randy Roberts does a really great job.”

In addition to reaching the one-to-one mobile device landmark, the county also upgraded to “a 10 gigabyte, off-site disaster recovery system, to make sure everything stays safe if something happens to our data.” The system has also recently adopted Google Apps for Education, she added.

The county system has been a part of the Alliance for Excellence in Education since 2013, and has presented some of its digital models and programs nationally. Later this year, Lacey and a team of Talladega County educators will be heading for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to study coding and computational learning, which she described as “an opportunity for growth and learning.” This approach emphasizes problem solving, “which is the growth market for jobs.” The system has gotten a \$300,000 grant from the Alabama STEAM Initiative to promote computational thinking at various grade levels.

A county team will also be visiting the Model School Conference in Orlando, Florida. “We’re becoming recognized as an innovative district,” she said.

Of course, none of this is possible to accomplish without professional development, which has been another major factor in the system’s progress and innovation, Lacey said. “Our teaches go and study best practices and return with that knowledge to their schools. We have an ‘expert down the hall’ program and teacher leaders who are available to help where they are needed, in all 17 schools.”

Other programs include the Ilearn Institute and Advanced Learning Partnership for the new Chromebook computers. In 2015, the system implemented an internal computer repair shop that has saved an estimated \$65,000 since May, and has added 200 touch-screen boards that makes teaching on those one-per-student devices possible.

“Our future is to continue the great work we’re doing,” Lacey said. “Our mantra is improvement.”

Currently, all Talladega County Schools participate in the state A+ College Ready program, and Talladega County Central High School is a pipeline school for advanced placement courses. The board has adopted the 2020 Plan from the state, like the other

districts in Alabama, “but we have our own vision to accomplish that. Our career tech program has added programs to meet the needs in the region, including a law and public safety track, health care of course, and expanding science, math, technology and engineering programs ...”

Partnerships with Gadsden State and Central Alabama Community College are in place and there are also partnerships to teach skills like welding and industrial maintenance that are in demand. “(The goal) is to have kids graduate and go to work or con-

tinue their education immediately,” Lacey said.

The career tech program currently has 3,828 students (out of a total enrollment of 7,500 or so), 22 teachers and two career coaches who “help students pursue their interests and create pathways to a career.”

In order to reach that career, it is first necessary to graduate, however. The district has seen tremendous progress here as well. Countywide, the graduation rate is 94 percent, or five points higher than the state aver-

See Talladega, Page 15A



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

All of Talladega County schools, including Munford High School, participate in the state's A+ College Ready Program.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

“We are committed to providing a strong education for children through innovative learning and teaching,” Superintendent Suzanne Lacey said. Talladega students are enjoying new project-based learning initiatives.

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Talladega

From Page 14A

age. That figure has been rising steadily since 2007, when the district wide rate was 72 percent. It was up to 79 percent by 2011, then up to 90 percent.

Of the seven high schools in the system, two, Fayetteville and Talladega County Central, boast 100 percent graduation. At 85 percent, B.B. Comer is the only high school in the system with a graduation rate less than 90 percent. Even so, that figure is up from 60 percent in 2011.

At Childersburg, the most recent graduation rate was 94 percent, compared with 96 percent in Munford, 95 percent in Winterboro, and 93 percent in Lincoln.

To accomplish that, however, the student needs to be healthy and not distracted by hunger. To this end, the county system has partnered with Alabama Childhood Food Solutions to provide food for “food insecure” students over weekends, and has applied for a grant to provide breakfast and lunch for students in Lincoln, Munford and Winterboro over the summer.

Shortly before Lacey was interviewed for



File photo

B.B. Comer High School’s graduation rate has improved by 25 percent since 2011.



File photo

Watwood Elementary School’s lunchroom is scheduled to receive a renovation.

this piece, voters in Childersburg approved a two mil property tax increase, which will be used to upgrade the facilities there, including the athletic complex. The baseball and softball fields in Childersburg are owned by the city, which will be collaborating with the board on renovations there. The lunchroom at Watwood will also be renovated, as will the gym at Childersburg Elementary. At the other end of the county, Lincoln is getting six new classrooms to accommodate 80 new students in the fast growing area.

Environmental programs at Munford and Winterboro have recently earned “Green Ribbons” for those schools, meaning nine of the 17 schools in the system have been so honored. More awards are expected in the coming year. The outdoor learning project in Munford includes ponds and wetlands, and there are green houses in Lincoln. “And all of these are tied in to career tech.”

Lacey says much of the system’s recent success comes from “an exceptional team, collaborating and continuing to build a framework to do great things for kids. It’s no good without all of these folks working together, side by side, and that...all ties back to the strategic plan...”

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‘Every child deserves a quality education’

Q&A with state BOE member Cynthia McCarty

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Calling teachers “the most critical factor in a child’s education,” Dr. Cynthia McCarty has pledged to seek a pay raise for Alabama’s public school educators this year.

A professor of economics at Jacksonville State University who was elected to the Alabama Board of Education in 2014, McCarty represents District 6, which includes St. Clair, Calhoun, Blount, Cherokee, Marshall, Cullman and Morgan counties and part of Dekalb County. A year after attending her first board meeting in February 2015, she responded this month to questions about the state of education in Alabama.

What is the role of the state school board?

“To set educational policy, hire and evaluate the state superintendent, review the budget, craft a strategic plan for education and monitor assessments to verify that our mission of preparing graduates for college and career is done. I have visited St. Clair and Pell City Schools and communicated with Superintendents Seals and Barber on multiple occasions. I plan on extended visits of both systems in the next six weeks.”

What effect will the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act have on public schools?

“The new act that allows charter schools to be created in Alabama is interesting. In my understanding, the act allows a local school system to start its own charter, or a group of citizens to petition to start

their own. In each case, public school dollars will be used.

“I do believe that every Alabama child deserves the chance to have a quality, relevant education. Most of our school systems do this. In the rare cases where school systems consistently fail their students, I would not oppose a local school board or a group of citizens that organizes an innovative school designed to better meet the needs of students -- perhaps by offering longer hours, Saturday classes, parent classes, intense math reviews, etc.

“I have read of some charters that made tremendous strides by using innovative approaches. However, I also know that about half of charter schools have not performed better than the local public school. One point of caution is that as a public school, a charter must accept all that apply -- or if demand exceeds seats -- it must hold a similar ratio of students as that reflected in the general student population (poverty, disabilities, ethnicity, etc.). I am curious to read the applications once the process is finalized and will monitor how this moves forward.”

What issues related to education are you concerned about this legislative session?

“As to bills this term, I am concerned about the shortage of teachers and the sharp drop in college students majoring in education in our state. In my opinion, teachers are the most critical factor in a child’s education. They have not received a meaningful raise since 2008. Since that time, CPI inflation has risen 9.7 percent. In effect, teachers have suffered a 10 percent cut in pay over

this time period. To address the shortage and attract solid candidates into education, I will push for a large raise for our educators.”

What are some things happening in schools (statewide and in your district) that you are particularly proud of?

“I am thrilled that our graduation rate has soared to 89 percent, which means that 89 percent of those who start as freshmen graduated from high school in four years. A tremendously creative, intense effort by our school leadership, teachers and staff has brought this about.

“I am excited that so many of our schools are taking advantage of the extra flexibility granted to them to initiate such classes as the pharmacy tech and firefighter courses at Pell City High School. Some of our systems have begun academies where graduates will earn a credential and/or college credit and have offered many quality, hands-on programs in high-demand fields.

“With regards to college credit, I am proud of the increased number of students passing AP exams. In addition, I am so proud of those schools and students who offer their students dual enrollment in an increasing array of both career tech and academic subjects.

“I am proud of the teachers who volunteered for multiple additional days of professional development to master more effective teaching methods. Most teachers are constantly searching to better meet the needs of all their students. Each student matters. I have witnessed systems that monitor each student’s academic

growth dozens of times during the year. Each week those teachers meet to discuss new strategies so that all the school’s students show the growth they are capable of achieving.

“The recent introduction of career coaches in schools has allowed students to determine and focus on their long-term goals, develop a strategy to reach them, and take classes accordingly. These coaches are often a student’s best advocate, encouraging them to take more challenging courses, complete scholarship forms and prepare for the workforce.”

Is there room for improvement?

“Every school in Alabama needs to complete the infrastructure required to provide access to the Internet. Some schools do not have this.

“To better prepare our children for career and college and to meet the demands of Alabama businesses that often can’t fill positions, we should increase our offerings of quality career tech and dual enrollment courses. Too many of our high school graduates are taking developmental (also called remedial) courses, expensive classes that do not count toward graduation and often frustrate students. We are aggressively working with the community college system to resolve this issue so that none of our graduates will take these classes.

“Teachers are the key. As critical professionals we must attract and retain effective teachers. Teacher salaries must be attractive to our best and brightest, first so that they enter the profession and second, so that they remain in it. We are promoting large salary



Dr. Cynthia McCarty
increases for our educators.”

What is your background in education?

“I have taught college students for 25 years, which gave me a keen understanding of our K-12 strengths and weaknesses. I have also worked with Alabama teachers in providing them with professional development in my role as the director of the Center for Business and Free Enterprise Education and Entrepreneurship, which I’ve been for the past 15 years.

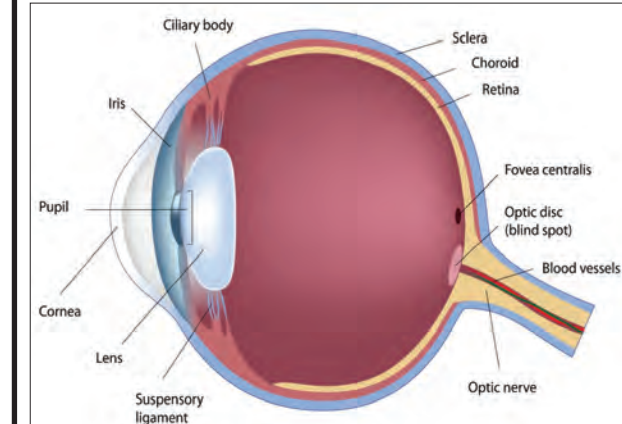
“In addition, I have worked with our chambers of commerce and learned about the workforce skills needed by our business sector. Due to my experience in higher education, teacher professional development and the business community, plus my passion for the children of Alabama, I wanted to serve so that I could help our students reach their potential.”

To contact Dr. McCarty, call (256) 310-6048 or email csmccarty60@gmail.com

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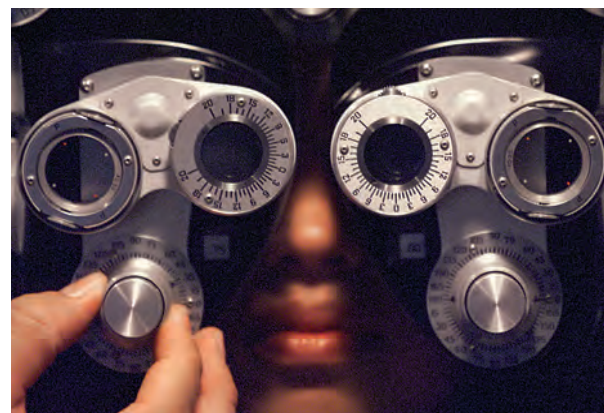
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Childersburg approves reovations for schools

By DENISE SINCLAIR and LACI BRASWELL
Home Staff Writers

Voters said “yes” last month to a property tax increase for Childersburg schools and athletic facilities.

The unofficial vote for the increase of 2 percent to 5 mills was 396-206, according to the Talladega County Probate Office.

The current property tax rate for Childersburg of 3 mills has been in place since 1997. Other cities within Talladega County, such as Munford, Lincoln and Fayetteville, already have a 5-mill tax in place.

Talladega County Schools Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey said that the increase will be used to update athletic facilities and schools, and it will benefit more than 60 percent of students who attend schools in Childersburg.

The tax hike will help fund roughly \$5 million in renovation efforts in the schools, Lacey said.

“This is a great effort between the schools and the city. I want to thank everyone,” she said. “Childersburg schools are going to benefit from everyone’s generosity and support. This is a huge economic investment in our students.”

According to Dr. Dan Payant, director of operations for Talladega County Schools, “it is required by law that funds from the tax can only be spent on capital improvement projects in the city of Childersburg.”

Improvements proposed for the tax increase include building a new football stadium at Childersburg High School, improving the baseball and softball fields, renovating the gym at Childersburg Elementary and also renovating the cafeteria at Watwood Elementary School.

John Cox Stadium, where the Childersburg Tigers play football, was constructed in 1948, making it almost 70 years old. Plans call for the proposed stadium to be complete in time for the 2017 season and include upgrades such as a track around the field.

Previous information from the board said the 5-mill tax would cost homeowners living in a \$50,000 home \$10 a year, or roughly 3 cents a day. With its approval, the tax hike will go into effect Oct. 1.

Jay Hooks, principal at Childersburg High School, said, “I’m excited about this opportunity for our schools and others in Childersburg. Our students are great and deserve good facilities. This improvement of facilities will instill pride in both students and the community.”

Hooks has been principal at Childersburg High School for five years. He said seeing improvements in their facilities will help boost student morale.

“We already do great things in the classroom, and I look forward to us doing great things with our facilities,” he said.

Lacey said work will begin immediately to move forward with the improvements.



NEW STADIUM FOR CHILDERSBURG HIGH SCHOOL



BASEBALL RENOVATIONS FOR CHILDERSBURG HIGH SCHOOL

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Renderings of the proposed new football stadium and renovations to the baseball fields for Childersburg High School.

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IRFAN RAHIM, MD

Dr. Rahim completed his pediatric residency training at Metropolitan Hospital Center, New York, NY and joined Pell City Pediatrics in November, 2000. He is a board certified pediatrician and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics.



RUBINA SIDDIQUI, MD

Dr. Siddiqui completed her pediatric residency at St. Lukes/Roosevelt Hospital, New York and joined Pell City Pediatrics in November, 1995. She is a board certified pediatrician and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Sylacauga High School has received a facelift in recent months and continues to undergo needed renovation.

Sylacauga City Schools continue to move forward with construction and instruction

By DENISE SINCLAIR
Home staff writer

SYLACAUGA -- The future for Sylacauga City Schools is exciting as the system continues to move forward with new construction and quality instruction in 2016.

The city schools also had a good 2015 including the renewal of a 9 ½ mills on property tax for another 25 years, said schools superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman. “This was a great victory for the community. Citizens were very supportive of the idea of renovations in the system. This included the purchase of the bank building downtown and its renovation as the new central office for city school,” Freeman said.

The superintendent said locating downtown is adding to the value of being a good economic partner for downtown.

“We are finishing an upgrade in our system of heating, air conditioning and lighting in our schools through an energy performance contract. This will offset energy costs from the perspective of upgrading and being environmentally friendly. It is an excellent accomplishment,” he said.

Freeman said the support of the community during 2015 as renovations of schools continue through 2016 is important. “There is so much to be proud of here. Once we are completed with these projects, I would match our facilities against anyone,” he said.

Freeman said these are exciting times for the school system.

In recent weeks, the seats and carpeting have been replaced at Sylacauga High School’s auditorium.

Work continues in the area around the original gym, often referred to as the “old gym,” which will

bring that facility up to date for physical education classes, along with volleyball and basketball. The gym can also be used by any outdoor athletic team when needed due to inclement weather.

A major enhancement to the entire north wing of the school is the addition of new offices and locker room facilities. A weight room/fitness center will provide strength and conditioning equipment for physical education and athletics.

When work is completed on the original gym, renovations will move to the competition gym on the Broadway side of the school. Renovations are expected to be complete by this summer.

Hardwood floors will replace the existing rubber court. New bleachers will extend wall to wall on both sides, increasing seating capacity. The gym will be freshly painted and equipped with new scoreboards, scorer’s table and team chairs. New offices and locker rooms will complement the renovation. Also, an elevator will be added to the north end of the school building.

Between the two gyms, the school’s media center will hold a center stage. Along with library services, this resource center is being enlarged and equipped with state-of-the-art wireless capabilities and technology to meet the needs of students today and in the future, Freeman said.

City schools construction future projects will include Phase IV for audio/visual upgrades in the auditorium and creating a fine arts wing by renovating the existing area above the new media center.

Freeman said outdoor athletic renovations have begun with Phase I at the soccer field along Main

Avenue. New lights are going up at the soccer field as well as a new scoreboard, fencing and soccer goals and goal posts. The field has been enlarged to be regulation size in preparation for the start of soccer season this year.

There is also a new north parking lot on 8th Street that has been finished and landscaped.

This complements work previously done for the soccer concession stand, restrooms and press box.

Work on athletic renovations Phase II started in January. The project focuses on the visitors’ side of Legion where the structure will accommodate locker rooms for boys and girls soccer, as well as visiting football teams, and public restrooms and concessions.

Enclosed batting cages for the Babe Ruth baseball field and softball field at Pinecrest will be installed at the end of their spring seasons.

Freeman said Legion Stadium home side renovations make up Phase III of athletic renovations, with stadium turf being a separate project for Phase IV. While the turf project will be completed in time for football season, portions of work on the stadium itself are expected to last through the season.

Bleacher seating will be ready to accommodate fans when football season begins, and a new press box will open for the media.

Freeman said 75 percent of the work will be done by the time school starts back in the fall with the exception of Legion Stadium.

The combined construction projects will result

See Sylacauga, Page 3B



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Improvements to the turf at Legion Stadium are expected to be complete by the start of the 2016 football season, while other work at the stadium will continue throughout the season.

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Sylacauga

From Page 2B

in approximately \$6.5 million in capital improvements to Sylacauga school facilities.

In 2016, Freeman said the teaching and learning aspects of schools will include expanding career and technical programs, dual enrollment, virtual learning and fine art.

“We want to enhance what we are offering and are looking to grow our programs including expanding access to technology for the 21st century for communications, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. The world wide web opens this up for us. We want our students exposed to technology to expand and enhance their learning abilities,” the school superintendent said.

This includes expanding more service to the food program and improving transportation.

“Approximately one-half our students are transported by buses. We are upgrading our fleet. We’ve purchased two new buses this year. Our fleet will be up to date by next year with the purchase of another bus. Our bus drivers are unsung heroes. They are a very important part of what we do each day,” Freeman said.

The school system, Freeman added, is always looking for ways to collaborate with community partners. “Our mission can only be successful if we have community support for schools,” he said.

On proposed 2 percent pay raise for teachers, Freeman said they deserve a raise. “They have an important responsibility they carry in schools.”

He said schools are providing more and more for children from school nurses to feeding programs to counseling. He noted schools are responsible for creating good citizens so they can be successful.

When questioned about what the school board was going to do with the old central office on 4th Street, Freeman said, “We are taking our time on deciding its future use. We’re not in a rush. We are going to look at how it can best serve the school system and community.”

The board of education is planning an open house for the new central office in March, the superintendent said.



Tucker Webb/The Daiyl Home

Among the capital improvement projects undertaken at Sylacauga High School are renovations to the gymnasium (top), media center (middle) and athletic facillities (bottom).



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A time of change for Talladega City Schools

System experiences transitions during 2015-16

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home Staff Writer

The year 2015 was one of chaos, uncertainty and transition for the Talladega City School System, with three superintendents and five chief financial officers since the end of the 2014 school year and three new board members being elected in municipal elections.

As this article goes to press, Superintendent Donna King remains on paid administrative leave, and Frank Costanzo serves as interim superintendent. Bobby Hathcock, former superintendent of Pell City Schools, remains assigned to the school system as an observer, an assignment he received from the Alabama Board of Education late in King's tenure.

Both Hathcock and Costanzo emphasized a need for transparency and teamwork, not only among employees and the board members themselves, but with all of the other stakeholders, including parents and students.

Hathcock arrived in Talladega after Alabama Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice sent a letter threatening a state takeover of the system if several concerns were not addressed.

According to Bice's letter, the state's concerns about the system included the "safety of the students within the district," including physical safety, drug use and threats to teachers; lack of timely due process for both teachers and students; inability to hire critical personnel in a timely manner; lack of communication with the schools and the community; inability to contact school personnel due to malfunctioning phones and failure to post the board's



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Members of the Talladega City Board of Education are James Braswell, Jake Montgomery, interim superintendent Frank Costanzo, Mary McGhee, Shirley Simmons-Sims and Chuck Roberts.

financial statements.

King, in a letter of response to Bice, said many of the system's problems could be traced to bad relations between the board and its superintendents.

"In the last 20 years, this system has had six superintendents," she wrote. "Two of those superintendents served as interim superintendent before they entered into contracts. In contrast, the Talladega County Board of Education has had four superintendents in approximately 40 years.

"The five superintendents before me have served shorter than average terms of office. They have encountered lengthy legal battles, multiple personnel issues, negative media coverage, but most common among the challenges faced by each superintendent has been the issue of board relations.

"The thought that all five superintendents before me were somehow not up to the challenge is a misconception. In contrast, the board of education membership has changed little since 1999.

"Characteristic of the Talladega City Board of Education has been the image of divisive three-two vote(s). Once the vote of the board shifted from a majority in support of the superintendent to a majority against the superintendent, progress in the system would idle until a new superintendent was in place."

Costanzo was initially brought in to coordinate a five-year, long-range plan for the system, with input from every conceivable group with an interest. As this goes to press, the public hearings that will shape the plan are still being held.

The board has already agreed to begin updating and repairing its communication infrastructure, but the terms of this contract are still being negotiated.

During the 2015 election cycle, three of the five board members were voted out of office, including Juanita Curry McClellan and Elizabeth Smith, who were serving their first terms. McClellan was defeated by Mary McGhee, who had served on the board since the early 2000s before being defeated by McClellan in the 2011 cycle.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

A recent highlight for Talladega City students was a visit from University of Alabama mascot Big Al.

See Talladega, Page 5B

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File photo

Frank Costanzo is interim superintendent of Talladega City Schools, and Mara Walls serves as the system's interim chief financial officer.

Talladega

From Page 4B

The other two newcomers are attorney Jake Montgomery, who serves as chairman, and Chuck Roberts. Neither Montgomery nor Roberts had ever sought seats on the school board before. The balance of the board is Shirley Simmons-Sims and James Braswell.

The new board appointed Mara Walls interim chief school financial officer in late January, putting her into a position that has seen even more turnover than superintendent in recent months. Walls is the fifth CSFO hired by the school system in just more than two years. She replaces Bethany Waters in an interim capacity until the board

is able to hire a permanent replacement.

Mable Gunter retired as the permanent CSFO in late 2010. Her successor, Tina Parris, resigned after the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Danny McCullars was hired as Parris's replacement by former Superintendent Doug Campbell after current Superintendent Donna King had been hired but before King had officially started working.

McCullars resigned in October 2014, after less than two months on the job. The board then voted to hire David J. Wasserman, but Wasserman submitted a letter withdrawing his application the same day the board voted to hire him.

Waters was hired by the board in December 2014 and resigned a year later.



File photo

Members of the Talladega High School football team visited local nursing home residents during the past year.

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
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Despite challenges, St. Clair Schools celebrate accomplishments in career tech, health education



File photo

Congressman Mike Rogers spoke to St. Clair county students during a tour of the Third District last year.

By GARY HANNER
Home staff writer

While funding remains a challenge, the St. Clair County School System still accomplished a number of good things during 2015, according to its superintendent.

“When the economy took a turn for the worst, school funding took a hit,” Jenny Seals said. “It has been challenging, but I am so proud of the people who stepped up and have written grants in order to secure funds.”

Accomplishments named by Seals, now in her 10th year as the school system’s top administrator, include:

- Adding such new programs as culinary, fire science and health science to the Eden Career Technical Center.
- Establishing a middle school gifted center.
- The Project COPE Mental Health Program.
- Locally-funded personnel.
- Adding four additional pre-K classrooms, bringing the county-wide total to 10.
- Buying land for a new Springville Middle School.
- Implementing the After-School Child Nutritional Snack and Dinner Program.
- Undergoing a self-study for Advanc-Ed Accreditation.
- Adding two Advanced Placement sites, allowing all high schools in St. Clair County to offer the advanced-credits courses.

- Establishing a National Technical Honor Society at Eden Career Tech Center.

For the third consecutive year, the career tech center in Ashville hosted summer school during 2015. Summer school principal Adrienne Dodgen said the program involved more students than in the previous two years.

“We had 115 students taking summer school from grades 5-12,” she said. “They were all from the St. Clair County School System. We use the APEX web-based class program, and students had the benefit of working at home. They had to come here to ECTC to take their tests.”

Summer school sessions were held Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m. during early summer, with a one-week break.

“We had some students take summer school to stay ahead,” Dodgen said. “Or they needed to clear their schedule for this year because they wanted to take some advance placement courses. We did have some fire science students in summer school. Because all of our schools have gone on a seven-period school day, we had some fire science students that needed to come up here and take a couple of classes to get the schedules workable so they could attend the fire science class at the Pell City fire department.”

County Schools joined the discussion in 2015 with local health care organizations about

the shortage of licensed practical nurses throughout the St. Clair area. Board of education members were told by Angie Cobb, the clinical services administrator at The Village at Cook Springs, that LPNs are difficult to find.

“We’re stuck between a rock and a hard place,” said Cobb, who also serves as an at-large member of the board. “The Alabama Board of Nursing told me there were less than 60 LPNs in St. Clair County. Something needs to be done for us to be able to have nurses.”

The board subsequently approved a contract to hire as many as five nurses.

LPNs are entry-level nurses who perform various duties, such as providing basic bedside care, measuring and recording patients’ vital signs, and preparing and giving injections. These tasks, however, can only be those as directed by their supervising registered nurse or physician.

RNs have a broader scope of practice. Some RN duties include recording patients’ medical histories and symptoms; giving patients medicines and treatments; setting up plans for patients’ care or contributing to existing plans; observing patients and recording the observations; consulting with doctors and other health care professionals; operating and monitoring medical equipment; and helping perform diagnostic tests and analyzing results.

LPNs also typically earn less than RNs and have more limited advancement opportunities.

Dr. Cristy Daffron, program chair for the nursing program at the Jefferson State Community College Pell City campus, said there is a shortage of both LPNs and RNs.

She said the school had the largest RN class ever enrolled this fall at the Pell City campus, 35 students.

The community college, which has four campus sites, once offered an LPN program but dropped it and now offers only an RN program for students.

Brenda O’Neal, who is the Nursing Education Program associate dean and in charge of nursing programs at all campuses, said Jefferson State graduates more nursing students than any other community college in the state.



Terry Green



Scott Suttle



Marie Manning



Angie Cobb



John Degaris



Randy Thompson



Allison Gray




Jenny Seals



File photo

Superintendent Jenny Seals with BOE member John Degaris.

See St. Clair, Page 7B



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St. Clair

From Page 6B

She said Jefferson State, on the average, graduates approximately 250-300 students each year.

Daffron said there is plenty of opportunity for people who want to enroll in LPN or RN programs, and the shortage for nurses has more to do with the demand of services, not educational opportunities.

She said even though Jefferson State does not offer a LPN program, there are colleges that do.

Daffron said the RN program takes longer to complete than a LPN program. Daffron said people are living much longer, so there is a greater need for nurses in the health care profession.

O'Neal also said professional careers for women were once limited. Today, there are more professional career opportunities for women.

"Nursing is a service oriented profession, and some women do not want to work in a profession that provides this type of service," she said. "The nursing profession used to be one of only a few choices for females. Today, there are many opportunities for females in a wide variety of occupations."

O'Neal said Jefferson State plans to expand its nursing programs.

"Jefferson State is looking to expand room on its campuses for nursing space," she said. "We would like to continue to grow the nursing programs to meet the needs of our community."

Superintendent Seals also named two endeavors planned for 2016 and beyond, which are additional career tech programs and academic partnerships with colleges and universities to increase dual enrollment offerings, and a new robotics program at the gifted center at Eden Career Tech Center.

Seals said there about 1,100 employees and about 9,000 students who make up the St. Clair County School System.

There are a total of 17 schools, one alternative school and one career tech facility, bringing the number of facilities to 19.

The seven members who make up the St. Clair County Board of Education are Scott Suttle, president, Moody district; Marie Manning, vice-president, Ragland district; Randy Thompson, Ashville-Steele district; Allison Gray, Odenville district; John DeGaris, Springville district; Cobb, at-large; and Terry Green, at-large. Terms are staggered so all seven seats are not up for election at the same time.

Green is serving his last term being on the board. Next November, he will have completed 18 years in the office. Former Moody Mayor Bill Morris ran unopposed during the recent election for Green's seat.

To contact Suttle, email scott.suttle@sccboe.org or call 205-640-1455.

To contact Manning, email marie.manning@sccboe.org or call 205-884-0383.

To contact Cobb, email angie.cobb@sccboe.org or call 205-629-5288.

To contact DeGaris, email john.degaris@sccboe.org or call 205-594-4369.

To contact Thompson, email randy.thompson@sccboe.org or call 205-594-7370.

To contact Allison Gray, email allison.gray@sccboe.org or call 205-629-7026.

To contact Green, email terry.green@sccboe.org or call 205-640-4184.

To contact Seals, email jenny.seals@sccboe.org or call 205-594-2282 or 205-337-0468.

BOE meetings are generally held once a month at the central office, 410 Roy Drive, Ashville, AL 35953.



File photo

The welding department at the John Pope Career Tech Center in Ashville has a dual enrollment partnership with Jefferson State Community College.



File photo

Auto collision repair is another of the courses offered at the career tech center.



File photo

Late in 2015, State Sen. Phil Williams presented Supt. Seals with a \$2,400 donation to benefit the Steele Junior High School library.

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Members of the Pell City Board of Education are Jeff Jones, Laurie M. Henderson, Cecil Fomby, Tammie Williams and John Sawyer.

Pell City School System

Trying to meet the needs of the community and the students

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

Superintendent Dr. Michael Barber said the Pell City School System has finished several construction projects in the past year, but he is more excited about the partnerships the school system has made with local governments, businesses, industries and the local college.

“We have a school system that is becoming more relevant in the community,” Barber said. “We’re really trying to meet the needs of the community – and the students.”

In the past year, school officials have met with local government, business and industry leaders in an effort to help students reach their goals. School officials also visited and toured local industries to better understand the local needs.

“Not all students want to go to college,” said Pell City High School Principal Tony Dowdy. “Some of our students’ goals are to finish high school and go to work. We want to help them land a good job.”

Pell City High School students are now attending classes that will help prepare them for college or the local job market, or both.

The school system now has programs where students can learn to become firefighters, pharmacy technicians and nursing assistants, or use those courses as a springboard for more advance college programs.

Barber said more partnerships are forming to help provide opportunities for students.

“We’re strengthening these bonds, relationships here,” Barber said.

John Garrison, owner of Garrison Steel Erectors, Inc., recently told the school board young people come to his business looking for jobs, but do not have the job skills for employment.

“We would like to put those young people to work,” he said.

Garrison applauded the school system for its efforts, like helping provide welding programs that Pell City High School students can receive at Jefferson State Community College and also at the

high school.

“We need workers,” Garrison said. “You have the future workers.”

He said with the proper training students can receive six-figure income in the construction trade.

“It’s a sad state of affairs,” Garrison said. “We have all these kids coming out of school and nowhere to go.”

Garrison said through efforts of a construction

association he is a member of, a new tax was established for all construction in the state. The money from the construction tax will help fund training programs throughout the state that will benefit companies like his, as well as schools, like Pell City. The new tax is expected to generate about \$3 million-\$5 million and is earmark for training programs for future construction workers.

Garrison said he wants to help the Pell City and the St. Clair County schools systems tap into the state funds.

In an effort to train students in more skilled and technical jobs, Barber said the school system secured a grant to help install nine welding stations at the high school. He said Garrissonn Steel Erectors, Inc. employees are actually helping students garner the skills used in the construction industry.

The Pell City School System also has a strong partnership with Jefferson State Community College, offering dual enrollment programs through the Technology Center on the college campus in Pell City.

The Pell City School System invested \$235,000 into the electronics curriculum at the Technology Center. The money came from a grant the school system secured.

The Technology Center also added welding technology classes, where students can earn a two-year applied science degree.

Barber said during the upcoming year, he not only wants to improve community ties in Pell City but beyond.

“We started here in Pell City, but we want to visit outside the city,” he said.

He said school officials are looking at developing more hands-on technical programs for students.

“This is a sound road and we’re seeing results already,” Barber said.

He said students could actually learn a skill that could help pay their way through college.

“It’s all about opportunities,” Barber said. “I want to bring opportunities to our student body, so when students walk out of those high school doors, they can travel the path they want to travel.”

See Pell City, Page 9B



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

In 2015, the Pell City Center’s storm shelter was completed providing shelter for the community and classroom space for students.

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The Sylacauga City School System is governed by a five-member Board of Education whose members are appointed by the City Council of Sylacauga for staggered five-year terms. This group formulates the policies that govern the entire system.

The Sylacauga Board of Education holds monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Meeting dates are subject to change and will be posted on the website and at each school building.

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Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

In 2015, Alabama State School Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice, right, visited Pell City High School to spotlight health science programs as part of the Alabama Board of Education’s Innovation Celebration, which highlights innovated school initiatives and programs throughout the state.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home/File

Pell City High School’s innovated programs brought statewide attention with its nursing, pharmacy and biomedical programs. Here, science teacher Rachael Tawbush steadies a cow’s heart as student Dusti Jones dissects it as part of a study of the organ’s internal parts.

Pell City

From Page 8B

He also said the Pell City High School offers advance course work to help prepare students for college.

“We have more advanced course offerings than we have ever had before,” Barber said. “I want to bring opportunities.”

Pell City’s initiative has drawn statewide attention.

Alabama State School Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice visited the Pell City High School on his “Innovation Celebration” tour, which highlights innovated school initiatives and programs throughout the state.

Bice toured the biomedical, pharmacy and nursing assistant programs at the high school.

“They have connected the dots of the academic and the real world,” Bice said.

In the past year, the school system has also completed several construction projects.

Barber said through a partnership with Pell City and the St. Clair County Commission, construction of the Pell City Center storm shelter was completed. The facility can shelter 1,100 people, but the space is also used for classes.

Workers also completed the new parking lot at Iola Roberts Elementary School and installed a new roof on Duran South Junior High School.

If residents have any questions about school programs offered at the high school or any other education-related question, they can contact Barber or any of the Pell City Board members at 205-884-4440 or at the following email addresses.

Dr. Michael Barber:
michael.barber@pellcityschools.net
Laurie Henderson:
lhenderson@pellcityschools.net
Cecil Fomby:
cfomby@pellcityschools.net
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File photo

The Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind was founded in 1858 and continues to be an important resource in Talladega County and beyond.

AIDB: Making a difference in 2016

By LACI BRASWELL
Home Staff Writer

Founded in 1858, the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) in Talladega continues to make a difference in not just the lives of Talladega residents but anyone who takes the time to get to know AIDB.

"The state of AIDB is strong," said Dr. John Mascia, the institute's president. "Our students and programs are showing strong accomplishments and demonstrating positive results. Our audits of both the state and foundation reinforce that we manage our resources wisely and effectively."

Mascia said AIDB cannot be satisfied with just getting by.

"There's always room for improvement. We have a desire and a vision to be a world class institution and our staff and students are driven by our championship culture. They frown upon mediocrity."

Mascia noted that the AIDB staff has a special calling for something that is more than just a job.

"Their desire to provide the very best education and rehabilitation services and career opportunities to individuals who are deaf, blind and deafblind is their

true mission. People who do not have this special calling do not last long at AIDB," he said.

Mascia added that he is proud of how the institute conducts communication.

"We are an organization built on integrity and transparency. It also means that we embrace mistakes and we learn from them, but we accept no less than an individual's best effort, this includes staff and students," he said.

Mascia also expressed his appreciation for the aid AIDB receives.

"We appreciate the strong support we receive from the Alabama Legislature, and we do not take it for granted. Our legislators, and especially Sen. Jim McClendon, Sen. Del Marsh, Sen. Arthur Orr, Rep. Bill Poole and our entire local delegation, know that we will spend wisely on behalf of our students so that they can live happy and productive lives," Mascia said.

According to the AIDB president, several initiatives were accomplished this past year.

"Alabama School for the Deaf and Alabama School for the Blind both earned five year re-accreditation from AdvanceEd in 2015 following extensive review team evaluations," Mascia said.

"Recently, the Helen Keller School completed their review process and the team is recommending them for re-accreditation as well. I am very proud of the hard work that our staff has put into this process."

Several programs and curriculum projects received expansion in 2015.

"The new Landreth Music Center, dedicated in September on the Alabama School for the Blind campus, will provide us with the space and equipment for development of a professional recording studio that can train students for careers in the sound and recording industry. This is a state of the art addition to not only our music program, but to our career training efforts as well," Mascia said.

Curriculum expansions were also added to the Helen Keller School.

"Helen Keller School incorporated agriscience classes into their curriculum, teaching deafblind and multi-disabled students how to grow vegetables and raise chickens. I believe that this is a great example of hands-on learning at its best," Mascia said.

The E.H. Gentry Technical Facility has also made several improvements and additions.

"Our Gentry facility has worked with Alabama Industrial Development Training to add their Ready to Work curriculum to our program. These components include FDIC money management, computer skills, operations management, precision management and statistical processes and soft skills training such as communication, problem solving, workplace behavior," Mascia said.

Those who complete the program will receive an Alabama Certified Workers Certificate.

"We hope to improve upon an already impressive employment record for Gentry graduates who are pursuing employment as their goal," Mascia said.

A total of 97 clients found work at Gentry last year.

"In 2015, we took the first steps toward building a new, expanded approach to Outreach services. At mid-year we hired two Lead Providers for Outreach Instructional Services. In just a few short months, we reached into 14 school systems and provided 40 services for new students we haven't touched before," Mascia said.

The impact AIDB has on our community will continue to grow due to several upcoming plans and projects.

"AIDB will be hosting a science, technology, engineering and math summer camp for students who are deaf and hard of hearing called Deaf Drones and Droids," Mascia said. The camp will be in partnership with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in New York.

"The STEM background knowledge will better prepare students for college and careers in the STEM field," Mascia said. "We are also in the process of updating our Strategic Plan during 2016."

Those growing accomplishments cannot be reached without challenges, he added.

"One challenge we face as we are continuing to develop a culture of inclusion means making sure that our work environments and classrooms are complete-

See AIDB, Page 11B



File photo

Tabitha Royal, left, is the service coordinator for the Alabama Institute for the Deaf & Blind Senior Services.

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AIDB has earned five-year re-accreditation from AdvanceEd. The Helen Keller School has also been recommended for re-accreditation.

AIDB

From Page 10B

ly free of barriers. We will continue to make an investment in our technology infrastructure because we know from members of the deaf, blind and deaf blind communities that technology is the great equalizer.”

Recruitment also presents itself to be a challenge.

“Recruiting qualified staff for all of our programs statewide but particularly for our Talladega programs has been a longstanding challenge. Hiring with true diversity in mind remains a strong goal of mine and the entire administrative team. True diversity includes employing people with disabilities and we continue to make progress in this area but we still have work to do,” Mascia said.

Attaining new partnerships and building new relationships is another of AIDB’s goals for 2016.

“Growing new partnerships, relationships and understanding across the state and here in Talladega will be a priority for us in 2016. One of our greatest frustrations is the challenge to make our story known and understood, which is critically important for those who need our services and for those who would

support our programs through funding and advocacy,” Mascia said.

He noted that many of AIDB’s accomplishments would not be successful if not for the community and volunteers.

“It is important to me, as president of AIDB, that we act as role models for our students in the spirit of giving back to the community. We do not want our students to grow up thinking that it is OK to accept or ask for assistance without taking the opportunity to support others, as well,” he said.

AIDB gives back to the Talladega community in the way of jobs, leadership and civic support.

“First Bank of Alabama, Talladega Superspeedway, NASCAR, Honda and ACE Hardware are strong supports. We sincerely thank them for investing their time as well their resources in what we do,” Mascia said.

Getting to know the people of Talladega and who AIDB serves is important to Mascia.

“I know that people have great respect for AIDB and for the work that is accomplished here. But I encourage people in this community to become involved, to support our special mission. It takes all of us staff, students and the community working together to keep AIDB strong for the future,” said Mascia.



File photo

One of the many ways in which AIDB gives back to the community is through its Senior Services program.



File photo

“It is important to me, as president of AIDB, that we act as role models for our students in the spirit of giving back to the community,” said Dr. Mascia, center, here giving state school superintendent Tommy Bice, right, a tour of the campus.



File photo

“Our students and programs are showing strong accomplishments and demonstrating positive results,” AIDB officials have said.

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Jefferson State seeks to “bridge the gap” between college degrees



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Staff Report

Jefferson State Community College’s Pell City campus has implemented several new programs, including one aimed at “bridging the gap” between two-year and four-year college degrees.

“As many as 60 percent of our students are transfer students,” said Dr. Nicholas Kin, Jefferson State’s associate dean who oversees operations at the Pell City campus, where he also teaches biology. “That means they get their A.A. or A.S. degrees here and then transfer to a four-year college to get their bachelor’s degrees.”

Through a new joint admissions partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Jefferson State students can qualify to receive UAB student identification granting them use of the university’s library, recreation and other resources while enrolled in the two-year college.

“It’s awesome,” Kin said. “You get to pay Jefferson State tuition and attend classes here in Pell City while enjoying the benefits of being a student at UAB. Then you automatically transfer to UAB after finishing your degree here. It’s a great opportunity and a very smooth way of bridging the gap between Jefferson State and a four-year degree.”

Another of Jefferson State’s goals is reducing the number of students who are

placed in developmental education classes through free math tutoring, student seminars at Pell City High School aimed at helping students improve college placement test scores, and a summer math boot camp for non-traditional adult students.

“If you’re 10 or 15 years out of high school and wanting to go back to college, when was the last time you used algebra?” Kin said. “The boot camp is a five-week refresher course that will help students score higher on placement tests.”

Other new initiatives at the Pell City campus include:

- Soft/essential skills seminars to help students develop professional communication skills and learn how to dress for a job interview and prepare a resume.
- Making completion of a college orientation class a requirement for all A.A. and A.S. degree candidates.
- FastTrack career programs, which enable students to prepare for certification as certified nursing assistants, dental assistants and medical billing and coding professionals through courses ranging from 10 weeks to six months in length.

At the start of the 2015 fall semester, the Pell City campus had an enrollment of 650 students. Kin said enrollment ranges between 600 and 700 per semester. The campus employs 50 fulltime and part-time staff members, and it offers 75 classes



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Dental courses are now taught at Jeff State in Pell City. In the chair is Viktorya Johnson. At the left and right are students Angie Larimer and Holly Frost. In the center is instructor Penny Murphy.

per semester.

During 2015, Jefferson State’s Technology Center in Pell City received four new industrial robots for use in a variety of courses across several manufacturing and technology degree options. They were obtained through an Alabama Workforce Development Grant.

“Industrial robots are now a mainstay in advanced manufacturing and it is crucial that our graduates have a good technical foundation in understanding how to operate, program and service these robots,” said David Felton, Jefferson State’s manufacturing and technology coordinator.

The manufacturing and technology program prepares students for employment in such industries as industrial and automotive manufacturing, equipment technology and maintenance, biomedical equipment technology, industrial and commercial electronics and computer aided drafting/design (CADD).

“Many types of learners will benefit from these new robots,” Felton said. “They are used by high school dual enrollment students, traditional students and workforce education students. The entire St. Clair County manufacturing community gains from this.”

A 2015 partnership between the college and Pell City Dental has allowed students interested in a career in dentistry to take courses in Pell City.

“The partnership started when Jeff

State contacted us,” said Penny Murphy, Pell City Dental’s administrative coordinator. “They were offering this program in Birmingham and wanted to branch out to the campus in Pell City. We were excited to be part of this program because it is a great way to educate students in this area.”

The course lasts 11 weeks, with classes meeting two nights per week. One night is spent on campus in the classroom, while the other is spent at Pell City Dental for hands-on clinical courses.

“Our goal is to teach them the basics,” Murphy said. “We want these students to learn what a dentist wants them to know when they first come in right off the bat. Things like making temporary crowns, and being able to take out alginate impressions. The most important thing they need to know is the anatomy of the mouth. Teeth numbers, suction, handing instruments to the doctor, dental terminology, etc., so when the dentist is talking, they understand what’s going on. Just learning the roadmap of the mouth. They come out of the course having a good hard knowledge of what we do every day here in the office.”

Dr. Scott Barnett, owner of Pell City Dental, said the partnership with Jeff State is invaluable.

“It is a win-win-win all the way around,” he said. “The class gives students knowledge and experience in dental assisting, and it gives us and the dentists in the area a resource when looking for potential employees.”



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Talladega College: ‘The Alpha Lyrae Vega of them all’

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

Talladega College is continuing to build foundations for success.

“The board of trustees and the office of the president commended the staff and faculty for serving, educating and nurturing our most precious commodity -- the children,” President Billy C. Hawkins said.

The president also noted the important role of the college’s summer programs.

“Potential students visit the campus, rarely fully matured to deal with all that college life offers,” he said. “They are trying to enhance themselves as they find themselves. It is our role as an education institution to ensure students are in an environment where positive growth occurs in every aspect of their lives.” Talladega College has continued to maintain the grounds and campus facilities.

The college also played host to numerous enriching social activities.

In addition, it made improvements to its instructional rooms with new technology, which provided new undergraduate research opportunities.

Last summer, almost 100 incoming freshmen participated in the Summer Institute. The four-week summer program was created to prepare high school graduates for their college careers.

The summer program was open to all students from all academic backgrounds and was developed to aid students in preparing for their academic work for the 2015-2016 fall semester.

Talladega College also offered two three-credit courses, including a basic math class and a basic English class during the summer program. Upon successful completion, students were granted full-time student status.

Plans to expand the college are expected for the 2016-2017 school year.

Last year, Talladega College was one of nine Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) to sign a historic agreement with the California Community College System. The agreement will make it less difficult for students who complete 60 credits at a community college in California to transfer to an HBCU.

Based on the California system, in 2011, 500 students from California community colleges transferred to HBCUs that same year. Education officials believe the number is likely to increase in the

coming years.

There are more than 150,000 students in California in need of a college home outside of the state, according to college officials.

New student centers and classroom improvements were also made last year at Talladega College.

In October, the college organized its Student Success Center. The center provides students with the tools required to be academically successful, offering academic and counseling workshops to help students succeed in all aspects of his or her time on campus. The center will also assess and review how to implement programs that improve student retention and advocate to have initiatives that have been proven to increase retention.

The staff of the new center met with faculty, students, student groups and college staff to talk about retention issues, including the causes of poor attendance and inadequate outcomes, academically.

In addition, the center is developing a comprehensive retention plan that will include the entire Talladega College community to analyze data and monitor student success outcomes from multiple student groups, and also to help identify trends and work with Student Affairs to create a robust student activity.

The college also earned multiple academic accomplishments this past year that spanned nation-wide.

Scholars from Talladega College competed nationally at the Honda All-Star Challenge. The team representing Talladega College went up against 48 other HBCU students for the national title in the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge National Championship Tournament held in Torrance, California.

The HCASC is a competition that showcases the academic skills of the brightest students from HBCUs across America.

Summer internships were also a key focus for the college this past year. Students participated in summer programs across the country including such campuses as Tuskegee University, Michigan State University and the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

In 2015, the College FastTrack program celebrated its fifth anniversary. The program was created in 2010 to help the college recognize the changing profile of today’s learners and to continue the legacy of Talladega College to provide a “state of the art” education.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The Savery Library is a landmark on the Talladega College campus.

The FastTrack program enables students an opportunity to obtain their bachelor’s degree in 18 months, while still being allowed to work full-time.

Campus life also flourished during the 2014-2015 school year, according to Hawkins.

The Talladega College Band was one of eight HBCU bands to be showcased in the 13th Annual Honda Battle of the Bands Invitational Showcase, hosted by the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. The Marching Tornado band made debut and impressed the crowd with its talented showmanship.

The Talladega College Choir was also invited to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. The choir performed in front of an estimated crowd of 600.

The concert was part of a month-long effort by the Smithsonian to complement the murals from the college, which were on exhibit.

In April of 2015, the choir also got the chance to perform with vocal powerhouse Yolanda Adams at the United Negro College Fund’s 36th Annual Evening of Stars.

Sports

Talladega College Athletics continued to thrive during the last school year.

The men’s basketball team advanced to the Final Four NAIA National Tournament, and was also ranked number one in the Gulf Athletic Conference.

Talladega College senior, Luis Benitez became the first TC student to be drafted by an American professional baseball team.

Benitez was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies to compete professionally during the 2015-2016 season.

Philanthropy efforts at Talladega College also do not go unnoticed.

Talladega College’s Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics was awarded \$25,000 from the Alabama Power Foundation. Funds were distributed evenly between the five areas in the division: Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

In all, the division used the funds to retain students in STEM complement lectures, which included hands-on exercises that enabled students to have a deeper understanding of course materials and improved the laboratory equipment.

Funds from Alabama Power were used to purchase such supplies as microscopes for the Biology Department, a spectrophotometer for the Chemistry Department; a document camera for the Computer Science Department; iPADS for classroom use and the purchase of statistics software for the Math Department; and a Lenz’s Law Demonstrator, dissectible fuel cell, ring launcher and a YBike Explorer Go-Kart for the Natural Sciences Department.

“In our past 148 years of educating young minds, Talladega College has always met the challenges that present themselves as we fulfill our mission. We will continue to do so in the coming years and thank you for your support to keep us the Alpha Lyrae Vega of them all,” Hawkins said.



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St. Clair Schools benefit from pre-K grants



File photo

St. Clair County’s pre-kindergarten programs, such as this class at Odenville Elementary School, received a boost in 2015 with the addition of four new programs funded by education grants.

By **GARY HANNER**
Home Staff Writer

During 2015, four pre-kindergarten program grants were awarded to St. Clair County Schools, and two were awarded to St. Clair County Head Start.

Ashville Elementary (\$120,000), Margaret Mustangs No. 2 Pre-K (\$85,000), Moody Elementary Pre-K No. 2 (\$85,500) and Springville Elementary Pre K No. 2 (\$85,000) received grants. St. Clair County Head Start received two grants in the amount of \$45,000 apiece.

Jan D. Bailey, the system’s school improvement coordinator, said the four grants awarded to St. Clair County bring the total number of pre-k programs to 10.

“Our first program started in 2007 at Springville Elementary School,” she said. “We then added programs at Ragland High School, Margaret Elementary School, Moody Elementary School and two programs at Odenville Elementary School.”

Bailey said the system was blessed to receive these additional funds for pre-k.

“Alabama is doing a great job putting money in the early development years of children,” she said. “Our students in St. Clair County are getting a jumpstart

on their academic journey.”

Gov. Robert Bentley said the local grants were among 200 funding awards aimed at providing more than 3,600 additional Alabama 4-year-olds with access to high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten programs.

Pre-k provides such benefits as effective, high-quality early childhood experiences that prepare children for school success and lifelong learning; an enthusiasm for learning; an ability to function in a social setting; age-appropriate communication and problem-solving skills; age-appropriate physical and emotional skills and optimal health.

“Numerous studies have shown that students who have participated in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs are less likely to repeat a grade, require remedial education or be placed in special education,” Bailey said. “They score higher on achievement tests, are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to college, get higher-paying salaries as adults and are more likely to stay out of prison and off welfare.”

Principal Tammy Coefield of Ashville Elementary School said the grant was a blessing for the school and community. “It fills a need we have had for some time.”

Springville Elementary Principal Bobby Byrd described it as phenomenal.

“Being the father of a child who was in that pilot program in 2007, my wife and I saw the benefits of the program,” he said. “He had a certified teacher and a certified assistant. Both teachers were tremendous.”

Byrd said the pre-k students attend school from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. They eat in the lunchroom, go to physical education classes and take computer classes.

“We’re extremely excited to provide this for the children,” Byrd added. “We are able to touch 18 more 4-year-old children prior to them coming to us in kindergarten. The structure and foundation of these pre-k programs set students up to be successful for kindergarten and beyond.”

“The most important part of a child’s education is a good, solid foundation at a young age, and our first class voluntary pre-k program provides that. All children, regardless of where they live, deserve the opportunity to excel,” the governor said. “A high-quality, voluntary pre-k program improves their chances of success in school long-term. This is a wise investment that will benefit children and families throughout Alabama.”

Grants were awarded based on several criteria, including local needs, local demand and assurances of high-quality standards at the new and expanding pre-k sites.



Submitted Photo

With the new Ag in Action vehicle are Jennifer Childers, Etowah County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Charity Mitcham, St. Clair County SWCD; St. Clair County Commissioners Tommy Bowers and Jimmy Roberts; Kent St. John, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Commissioner Jeff Brown; St. Clair WCD Supervisor Garry Staples; SWCD Chairman Perry Poe; Commissioner Ken Crowe, St. Clair SWCD Supervisor Terry Templin with the St. Clair County SWCD; and Commissioner Chairman Paul Manning.

Ag in Action

Staff Report

The St. Clair County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Ag in Action Committee have accepted a \$5,000 sponsorship from the St. Clair County Commission for the purchase of a new trailer and truck.

“With the gracious \$5,000 sponsorship, along with other grant monies, the Ag in Action Committee was able to purchase a truck to haul the Ag in Action trailer from school to school and other local events,” said Perry Poe, chairman of the SWCD. “The total project cost of the Ag in Action trailer and truck was a little over \$90,000, which includes the trailer, truck and education components.”

The Ag in Action trailer is an agriculture learning lab on wheels, an enclosed trailer that houses a transformed cotton picker cab, an electronic learning station, Maggie the milking cow, a miniature cotton gin and more. It will allow students in kindergarten through middle school grades an opportunity to experience farming while at school.

Students in St. Clair, Etowah, Cherokee, Blount, DeKalb, Calhoun and Marshall counties will have access to the trailer, which has educated more than 70,000 students, teachers, and adults about agriculture, forestry, soil and water conservation education since 2012.

The St. Clair County Soil and Water Conservation District will have the trailer at several local schools in April. To arrange for the Ag in Action trailer to visit a school or event, contact Charity Mitcham at (205) 338-7215 or stclairswcd@yahoo.com.

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Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

The Childersburg campus of Central Alabama Community College is on Highway 280.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONSOLIDATION

Central Alabma, Southern Union State and Chattahoochee Valley to merge

By DENISE SINCLAIR
Home staff writer

Central Alabama Community College is expecting one of the biggest events in its history as 2016 progresses.

Two other community colleges will be merging with Central Alabama Community College this year. Southern Union State Community College and Chattahoochee Valley Community College are being merged into Central Alabama Community College, said Brett Pritchard, coordinator of public and high school relations at Central Alabama.

This all started, when the board of the Alabama Community College System voted Dec. 10, 2015, to consolidate seven community colleges into two.

While merger proposals are frequently controversial, there was no opposition to (or discussion of) the proposal at the board meeting in December, according to public records. The plan still requires other approvals, including from the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, the accreditor of the institutions.

The plan includes the Central Alabama Community College consolidation with Southern Union and Chattahoochee Vally and would consolidate three community colleges under Faulkner State Community College. They are Jefferson Davis Community College, Southern Community College and Reid State Technical College, Pritchard said.

“This is basically the biggest thing for us this year. We have a timeline of functioning as one regional community college,” he said.

A new name will be chosen for the merger of the three two-year col-

“This is basically the biggest thing for us this year. We have a timeline of functioning as one regional community college.”

BRETT PRITCHARD
Coordinator of public and high school relations

leges with input from the communities where the schools are, input from the schools along with the help of a firm, Pritchard said.

Southern Union State Community College is in Wadley and is consolidated under Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City and with Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phenix City.

New chancellor of the Alabama Community College System is Mark Heinrich. Heinrich said the mergers should help the system deliver more education and training by creating larger institutions. They would eventually save money.

In October 2015, Dr. Susan L. Burrow was appointed president of Central Alabama Community College (CACC) by the ACCS Board of Trustees. She had served as interim president of CACC since February 2013. CACC has campuses in Alexander City and Childersburg, a center in Talladega and an instructional site in Millbrook.

Pritchard said more consolidations are likely and that they are looking at the entire state. The resolutions passed in December 2015 started the process of merging the institutions, which will require a signoff by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools,

which could take a year, officials have said.

Central Alabama Community College is a two-year institution that enrolls more than 2,000 students and has been accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools since 1969.

The college traces its history to the Alabama State Legislature Act No. 93 passed in 1963, which provided for the establishment of several institutions of higher learning in Alabama. The college opened as Alexander City State Junior College in 1965 in the old Russell Hospital in Alexander City. In 1966 the college moved to its current campus in a dedication ceremony led by then-Gov. George Corley Wallace. Also in 1966, the state opened Nunnelley State Technical College in Childersburg as part of the No. 93 Act of 1963. In 1989 the Alabama State Board of Education merged the technical college and the junior college to form the present-day community college.

The college fields teams in golf and men’s baseball, and women’s softball.

Central Alabama Community College awards the associate degree in science, the associate degree in applied science, the associate degree in occupational technology, certificates, and short-term

certificate.

Pritchard said the college works with local school systems in a dual enrollment program.

This program allows high school students to take academic coursework at Central Alabama Community College. The college partners with area high schools and local Boards of Education to facilitate the cooperative dual enrollment.

When it comes to enrollment, Pritchard said the number of students attending Central Alabama was up. He said enrollment is largely based on the economy. “If the economy is good, we see less students. If it is slow, we see more enrolling,” he said.

In addition to the academic aspect of the college, there is also

the technical courses available in industrial automation, industrial maintenance, welding, machining, electronics and cosmetology.

Central Alabama offers an associate degree in nursing. The program is accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.



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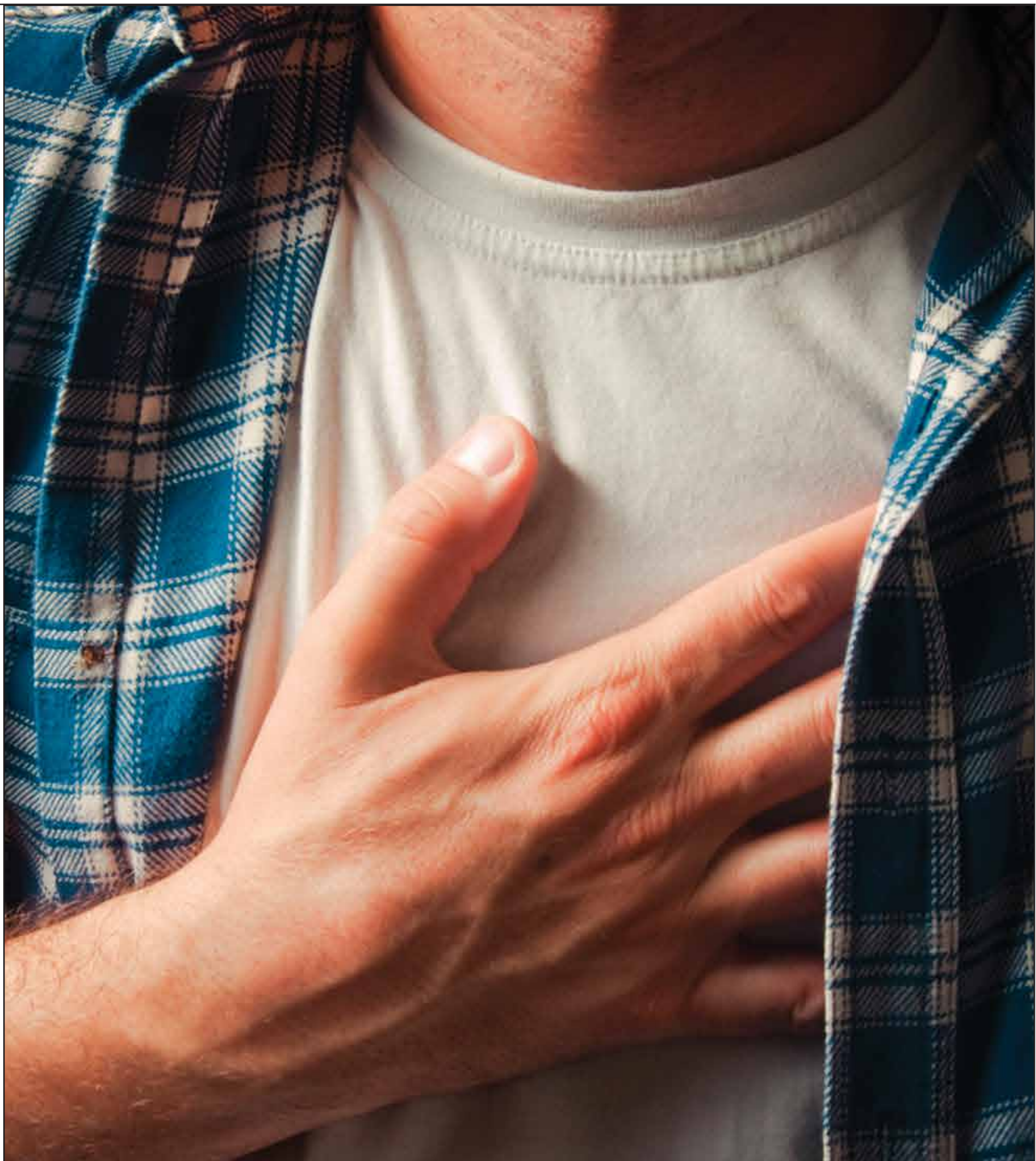
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File photo

The merger of Central Alabama, Southern Union State and Chattahoochee Valley community colleges is seen by officials as a significant milestone.



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