



Citizens' quality goes above and beyond

By LAURA GADDY
Special to The Daily Home

When Citizens Baptist Medical Center CEO Doug Brewer makes a list of the hospital's recent accomplishments, its reputation for sending patients home free of infections rises to the top.

During the second half of 2016, the facility reported fewer infections than did any other in Tenet Healthcare, a network of 80 hospitals of which Baptist Citizens is a part, Brewer said. That means when a patient comes to the emergency room in need of a routine surgery, such as an appendectomy, that patient can be sure they are in the right spot, he said.

"I would stay exactly right here," Brewer said of his choice of hospitals in such a scenario. "This is the place to have something like that done."

Even though hospitals treat illnesses, infections acquired during hospital stays are "a major, yet often preventable, threat to safety," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A survey published in the New England Journal of Medicine determined that in 2011, the most recent year for which information is available, there were 721,800 hospital acquired infections, with pneumonia and surgical infections tied for the most common type of infection at 157,500.

In the past five years, Citizens Baptist has reported just one infection, a urinary infection. That low rate places



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Doug Brewer serves as CEO of Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega. During the past year, the hospital reported fewer infections than any other facility in the Tenet Healthcare network.

the hospital above average and is something Citizens Baptist can be proud of, said Vandelyn McGrue, who heads the hospital's quality department.

"We are very resilient when it comes to patient care," McGrue said of her four-person team of registered nurses in the

quality and case management department. "We go above and beyond as to what any nurse would do."

The federal and state governments require hospitals to provide infection reports in at least five categories, said McGrue. They are: "central line" infections that are acquired when a device is inserted into a major vein near the heart, catheters, Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus or MRSA, Clostridium difficile or C. diff, and infections that result from surgery.

MRSA is a serious bacterial infection that is often resistant to antibiotics and can cause problems ranging from skin infection to bloodstream infections. Like MRSA, C. diff. is resistant to antibiotics. C. diff. causes diarrhea and fever among other symptoms, according to the CDC.

It is up to the small quality department at Citizens Baptist to ensure the 117 bed facility adheres to practices aimed at eliminating these infections.

The quality department includes two case managers, both registered nurses. This pair is responsible for reviewing the

needs of each patient housed at the hospital, which, on an average day, ranges between 30 and 40.

Another quality department member, also a nurse, is responsible for infection control, a job that includes reporting infections to the appropriate agencies and monitoring the tests doctors use to detect infection in patients.

McGrue said the methods her team uses are common across the medical industry, but the vigilance with which they, and other Citizen's Baptist employees, follow those methods makes the facility stand out.

Citing an example of the steps the hospital takes to keep antibiotic-resistant infections at bay, McGrue said before prescribing antibiotics Citizens Baptist's physicians test patients to determine what type of bacterial infection they have. She said that allows the doctors to prescribe an antibiotic that is tailored to fight the illnesses patients have instead of prescribing general antibiotics, which when misused have been linked to an increase in antibiotic-resistant illnesses like C. diff.

Citing another example, McGrue said Citizens Baptist's two surgeons seek out information to stay up-to-date on medical procedures, and they share their findings with nurses. Their diligence and cooperative approach to work helps the hospital take better care of its patients, she said.

"Instead of just saying 'go and do' they explain why," she said.

McGrue said the quality department is nothing new, but in recent years her department, and departments like it at other facilities, have become more prominent. She said one reason departments like hers are receiving more attention is because federal changes in medical care requirements have given the job increased financial importance.

The law prevents the hospitals from charging patients for expenses associated with treating hospital acquired infections when insurers do not pay, and unprepared hospitals are sometimes left footing the bills for patients who receive these infections in their care.

"That forces the hospitals to put good processes in place," McGrue said.



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Citizens Baptist is a 117-bed healthcare facility with a reputation for providing high-quality patient care.

Citizens Baptist Medical Center Recent Developments

2017

Health fair: In 2017, Citizens plans to host a health fair, which will include screenings and health information for the community. The hospital also plans to schedule mammograms and colonoscopies for patients without health-care for the event.

\$4.5 million investment: The hospital plans to add a new primary care and specialists clinic that will occupy about 24,000 square feet, and invest in program improvements.

New doctors: The hospital is recruiting new physicians and hopes to add at least one urologist, a pulmonologist and a two general practitioners.

New programs: The hospital plans to expand its orthopedic program, and is exploring the possibility of adding a program to include joint replacements.

Birthing services: Citizens began hosting a Brookwood Baptist Medical Center obstetrician for weekend stays.

Citizens began offering 24-hour nurse practitioner coverage.

2016

\$3.5 million investment: In 2016, the hospital remodeled its emergency department, same day surgery area and intensive care unit. It also installed a new nurse call system and invested in new operating room equipment. The hospital also installed a state-of-the-art MRI for breast exams, cardiology and brain exams among other tests.

Birthing services: The hospital began partnering with Brookwood Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham to offer enhanced obstetric services.

Cardiology: The hospital began partnering with Brookwood Baptist Medical Center cardiology department, hosting their physicians at the Talladega facility.

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Coosa Valley Medical Center continues its commitment to the community, focuses on new healthcare services

By DENISE SINCLAIR
Home staff writer

SYLACAUGA – Coosa Valley Medical Center continues its mission to be committed to its community in 2017, while focusing on bringing new medical services to town.

In 2016, CVMC received the first Pillar of the Community Award from the Chamber of Commerce.

When presenting the award to CVMC, Mike Landers, executive director of the chamber, said the hospital's stated mission of service, compassion and care, its culture of volunteerism and community service instilled in all of its associates and its 'broad-based' services to all businesses in the community have made it a partner that established itself as a "Pillar of the Community."

Vanessa Green, chief business development officer, said CVMC wants residents in Sylacauga and surrounding areas to know the hospital is here for them and committed to making sure each patient gets the care he or she needs.

"We are going to continue being committed to Sylacauga bringing additional medical services from a new Emergency Department group of

physicians to a new program helping people break through the cycle of addiction," Green said.

The medical center has been highly decorated for its services in recent years, including being recognized by the Joint Commission of Hospitals for being a top performer in health care. It is one of only 10 hospitals in Alabama that received the recognition. The Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

One new program the hospital has implemented is called New Vision. It focuses on helping people break through the cycle of addiction. This is an inpatient medical stabilization and withdrawal management service for adults with drug, alcohol and related health issues.

The service accepts appropriate adults, who are currently using or are experiencing acute withdrawal symptoms from certain drugs. It consists of a medically supervised hospital stay that typically lasts 3 days.

CVMC saw a need for this program, which is reaching out beyond Sylacauga into other com-



File photo

CVMC officials want residents of Sylacauga and surrounding areas to know the hospital is here for them and committed to making sure each patient receives proper medical care.

munities.

In 2017, the hospital will continue to grow its cardiology program reminding the public they don't have to travel beyond Sylacauga to receive cardiac care. There are two cardiology groups providing service to the city.

The hospital has a cardiac cath lab for heart patients available for the two groups can use.

The two groups are Alabama Cardiovascular Group and Cardiovascular Associates. Both are in Sylacauga, open Mondays through Fridays. Both offer patients a comprehensive range of cardiac services from general cardiology to diagnostics, intervention and specialty clinic.

With the commitment to the cath lab, patients can be treated locally without traveling to Birmingham.

The medical center places special emphasis on heart care by providing a CommunityLinks program each February on heart disease. This year, Dr. Christopher Huff, a cardiologist with CVA, made a presentation on vascular diseases and free

vein screenings were held prior to his program.

Also, the annual Heart & Sole Run is held in February benefitting cardiac and pulmonary rehab.

This is a great service the hospital brought to the community and much needed, Green said.

The Alabama group has a doctor in the hospital available on a daily basis should someone need help. Both are dedicated to the community and patients in Sylacauga, Green said.

Other services the hospital is providing in the community include:

Home Care Agency which was just recognized in the top 25 percent in home care nationally. The agency has been moved back to the hospital campus from another location.

Hematology and Oncology expansion is complete with more chemo chairs added for comfort, individualized care and more privacy. Treatment is provided five days a week by Hematology & Oncology Associations under the direction of Dr. Allen Yeilding who has been in

Sylacauga for more than 30 years.

The emergency department is undergoing some changes this year to provide faster service to patients. The ED sees more than 30,000 patients each year.

Technology upgrades are ongoing, with the hospital board giving significant investments to these.

Recruitment of more doctors, including a general surgeon, is a priority.

Another goal involves continuing to have an orthopedics doctor available, especially in sports medicine, and an athletic trainer for local high schools.

A strong rehab program is available with top-notch equipment. Occupation and speech therapy along with rehab are also available.

Coosa Valley Medical Center Auxiliary is an important part of the medical center. The group gives back thousands of dollars each year to the hospital. Funds are raised annually through the gift shop, jewelry sales and Holiday Tree of Love. This year, the volunteer organization has purchased 15 new wheelchairs for the

hospital. These purchases benefit the entire hospital.

The Imaging Services Department has the latest technology including MRI, CT, X-ray, Mammography, Ultrasound and special procedures and Nuclear Medicine with CT, Ultrasound and X-ray services available 24 hours a day.

Other services offered include women's health; labor and delivery; surgical; acute care; intensive care; post-acute; emergency; and express care.

CVMC has more than 71 years providing healthcare to the public. It has a huge economic impact on the community as its largest employer. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis listed the total economic impact of the hospital as \$129,750,000. Total labor income generated by CVMC is \$44,482,000 with some 640 employees.

For more information on the medical center, go to www.cvhealth.net. The hospital is also on Twitter and Facebook. It is at 315 West Hickory Street and can be reached at 256-401-4000.



Local MRI clinic receives accreditation for quality of service

STAFF REPORT

SYLACAUGA – Coosa Valley MRI has been awarded a three-year term of accreditation in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) as the result of a recent review by the American College of Radiology (ACR).

MRI is a noninvasive medical test that utilizes magnetic fields to produce anatomical images of internal body parts to help physicians diagnose and treat medical conditions.

The ACR gold seal of accreditation represents the highest level of image quality and patient safety. It is awarded only to facilities meeting ACR Practice Parameters and Technical Standards after a peer-review evaluation by board-certified physicians and medical physicists who are experts in the field.

Image quality, personnel qualifications, adequacy of facility equipment, quality control procedures and quality assurance programs are assessed. The findings are reported to the ACR Committee on Accreditation, which subsequently provides the practice with a comprehensive report that can be used for continuous practice improvement.

According to director of operations Robin Angelo, the accreditation is evidence that Coosa Valley MRI is "living up to our daily mission. We're really proud of that, even as we're always trying to improve. Our patients and their safety come first, and we're going to get the highest quality of images possible so that diagnosis can be made, a treatment plan can be put in place, and quality of life can be restored. We see people every day faced with life-altering injuries, debilitating diseases, terminal illnesses and fears of the unknown. We have a responsibility to them, and never overlooking the human element requires us to provide them with hope and compassion."

The ACR, founded in 1924, is a professional medical society dedicated to serving patients and society by empowering radiology professionals to advance the practice, science and professions of radiological care. The College serves more than 37,000 diagnostic/interventional radiologists, radiation oncologists, nuclear medicine physicians, and medical physicists with programs focusing on the practice of medical imaging and radiation oncology and the delivery of comprehensive health care services.

For more information about Coosa Valley MRI visit www.coosavalleymri.com or follow it on Facebook.

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Elegant, peaceful assisted living at Seasons of Talladega

By KELLI TIPTON
Home Staff Writer

Seasons of Talladega is an elegant and peaceful licensed assisted living facility that provides premiere amenities to active seniors who need a little help with their daily lives. Whether they need someone to manage their medication, assist them with meals, or ensure they are safe throughout the night, residents can have peace of mind knowing the staff is on call around the clock, seven days a week.

The beautiful 32-bed facility is now under the management of Schmidt Wallace Healthcare Management. "The property has always been owned by Schmidt Wallace. They actually built this facility back in the early 1990s. They have been in the health-care business a very long time. Now, they are taking over the day-to-day operations," administrator Malinda Hoffman said.

Schmidt Wallace also owns Talladega Healthcare and Rehab. "People who have had short-term rehab stays, who still need a little extra help, can stay here until they are well enough to go home, or they can stay here long term for assisted living," Hoffman said.

Most of the residents are from Talladega County and surrounding areas. "Families who live in this area want to put their family member here because it is close and convenient to visit," Hoffman said. "We have two homes that are licensed to provide 16 residents with assisted living. Assisted living can mean that they need help with taking showers and getting dressed, or they need help with their meals or medication. We offer assistance, but we are not a skilled care facility. They can have home health come in, but our staff cannot provide skilled services."

Some of the services offered include a medical



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The staff at Seasons of Talladega includes an activity director who plans events and activities, such as bingo, to keep residents engaged mentally and physically. An on-call pharmacist is also available to make sure residents have timely access to their needed medications.

director and on-call physician, Dr. Anne Davis, but residents can keep their own physicians if they choose. An on-call pharmacist makes sure medications are filled in a timely manner. Meals are planned by a registered dietician, and an activity director plans activities to keep residents engaged. "We have a variety of activities from art to bingo, depending on their interests," Hoffman said.

Security and safety are of utmost importance. "There is someone here all the time. If a resident needs something during the night we can help

them, or if they were to fall, we could immediately call for an ambulance. They wouldn't have to wait until someone checked on them the next day," Hoffman said.

Seasons of Talladega is a licensed facility. "That means we have regulatory oversight," Hoffman said. "We maintain a license for both of our homes, which requires us to follow the Department of Public Health's rules for assisted living facilities."

The facility is in Talladega at 150 Seasons Way. For more information, call 256 315-9502.



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St. Vincent's St. Clair: Five years in and still growing



Submitted photo

St. Vincent's St. Clair recently celebrated its fifth anniversary in Pell City. Services have doubled every year the facility has been open.

By **DAVID ATCHISON**
Home staff writer

St. Vincent's St. Clair continues to grow, offering more advanced services as the community hospital celebrates its fifth anniversary.

One area in which the hospital continues to grow and shine is its surgical services.

"I am very proud of our surgical services and our team here," said St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital Administrator Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA.

Nichols said St. Vincent's St. Clair has some of the best outcomes and highest patient satisfaction marks among its many hospitals.

Kara Chandler, RN, BSN, CNOR, who is the director of surgical services and the interim director of the Wound Care Center, said the surgical services department has grown each year since the hospital opened in December 2011.

"We have doubled our services every year and we hope to continue that," Chandler said.

She said doctors are now performing joint replacement surgeries at St. Vincent's St. Clair and introducing patients to St. Vincent's Joint Navigation program, the first and only health system in the area to provide a navigator to guide patients through joint replacement surgery.

Chandler said patients go through preoperative education and assessment.

Nichols said patients will learn to make sure their homes are set up properly for rehabilitation, ensuring they have no issues when they return home after surgery.

Chandler said medical professionals will go over what medical equipment that they will need and patients will actually meet and talk with their physical therapist and case manager before their surgery, if they require rehab.

She said the Joint Navigation Program helps ensure that patients fully recover from joint surgery.

"We even go over the medical equipment they will need," Chandler said. "We have had fabulous results."

She said they offer knee replacement surgery and are currently working on offering total hip replacement surgery.

Chandler said rehab starts shortly after surgery.

"Usually, in the afternoon after surgery, they are up and moving," she said.

Nichols said the recovery period depends on the patient themselves and of course their medical condition.

"They have to be motivated to work the joint and pain out," she said.

Hospital officials said St. Vincent's St. Clair currently has five general surgeons and two GYN doctors/surgeons.

"We just added our fourth orthope-



Lisa Nichols, RN, MSHA



Kara Chandler, RN, BSN, CNOR

dics work in the Advance Wound Care Center, which has two hyperbaric chambers.

The Advance Wound Care Center treats hard-to-heal wounds, cases that

need advance care.

The Advance Wound Care Center provides specialized, state-of-the-art evaluation and treatment of a wide range of wounds.

Nichols said the center uses the most up-to-date approaches to wound healing, including hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

She also said St. Vincent's St. Clair Hospital Pain Management services are growing.

"The goal in pain management is to work closely with the referring and/or primary care physician to achieve optimum pain relief for the patient," Chandler said.

She said pain management procedures may help decrease frequency and intensity of pain, decrease dependency on narcotics, resolve sleep disturbances and improve overall quality of life.



Submitted photo

St. Vincent's St. Clair has three operating rooms and one gastrointestinal laboratory to serve patients.

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New cancer treatment provides alternative to surgery, radiation

Grandview Medical first in Alabama to offer procedure

STAFF REPORT

Grandview Medical Center has become the first and only hospital in Alabama to offer a minimally invasive treatment option for men diagnosed with prostate cancer.

High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) eradicates prostate cancer cells through the precision focusing of sound waves to a targeted location. While traditional treatment options have included surgery and radiation, the process results in the creation of heat due to the interaction between the sound waves and the cancerous tissue, destroying the cancer cells.

“Because this is a non-surgical approach and does not require radiation, the risk of side effects that accompa-



Dr. Andrew Strang
Urologist

ny traditional treatments, such as erectile dysfunction and incontinence, is significantly decreased,” said urologist Dr. Andrew Strang. “Additionally, this is an outpatient procedure that is minimally invasive requiring no surgery and no radiation.”

HIFU has been available outside the United States since 1995. It received FDA approval in 2015. Not all prostate cancer patients are candidates for the procedure, Strang added. “Patients would need to discuss this option with their urologist.”

Statistically, one in 7 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Other than skin cancer, it is the most common cancer in American men.

New Chief Nursing Officer
Also during the past year, Sherry Cole has been named Grandview’s chief nursing officer (CNO). Cole began her medical career at Carraway Methodist Medical Center after graduating from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In 1987, she earned her master’s degree in nursing and moved to the University of Alabama Hospital before joining Trinity Medical Center in 1994.

She has served in a variety of clinical positions during her career, including staff nurse, cardiac transplant coordinator, clinical nurse specialist for intensive care and surgery, cardiovascular clinical excellence coordinator, chest pain center coordinator and director of cardiovascular intensive care unit.

Cole was named an Alabama Hospital Hero by the Alabama Hospital Association in 2012 and was recognized as Outstanding Critical Care Manager by the Greater Birmingham Chapter of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses in 2014. In 2015, she was named Nursing Director of the Year by Trinity



Submitted photo

Grandview Medical Center has become the first and only hospital in Alabama to offer a minimally invasive treatment option for men diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Medical Center.

“Sherry has a proven track record,” said Keith Granger, Grandview’s CEO and president. “She brings a collaborative spirit with her and understands that by working together, great things can be accomplished. It is this spirit and her dedication to excellence in patient care that will help position us for the future.”

Thyroid Care

As many as 20 million Americans have some form of thyroid disease, and as much as 60 percent of that number remains unaware of the condition, according to Dr. Sheela Lohiya, an endocrinologist with Grandview Medical Group.

“Thyroid disorders can mimic several other health conditions, making them more difficult to diagnose,” she said. “If you even suspect you might have a thyroid problem, consult with your primary care physician or endocrinologist as soon as possible.”

The thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland in the neck, helps regulate metabolism, heart rate, energy levels and body temperature. The most common thyroid-related conditions are hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.

“Hypothyroidism indicates an underactive thyroid gland,” Lohiya said. “It is the most common thyroid disorder in older adults. Symptoms often include fatigue, unexplained weight gain, increased cold sensitivity, joint and muscle pain, dry skin and depression. Hyperthyroidism indicates an overactive thyroid gland, which is more common in people under age 50. Symptoms may include rapid heart rate, anxiety, insomnia, increased appetite, weight loss and excessive perspiration.”

Thyroid conditions are more serious than just a matter of discomfort, she added. “Too much thyroid hormone can cause atrial fibrillation, affect blood pressure and decrease bone density, which can lead to osteoporosis. Pregnant women with untreated hypothyroidism have an increased risk of miscarriage, preterm delivery and developmental problems in their children.”

To protect thyroid health, Lohiya recommends

adopting an anti-inflammatory diet that involves avoiding sugar and processed foods, increasing Vitamin D intake and avoiding environmental toxins.

Upcoming Events

Grandview plays host to two significant events next month, one for the general public and one for health care professionals.

The Lunch & Learn program “Atrial Fibrillation: From Diagnosis to Treatment” is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Friday, March 10, at Grandview’s campus on U.S. Highway 280. The first of a quarterly series of programs focused on cardiac education, the event is free and open to the public.

Speakers will include cardiologists Drs. Joaquin Arciniegas, Jose Osorio and Anil Rajendra, all of whom specialize in electrophysiology. Seating is limited, and reservations are required. To reserve space, call 205-971-7474.

The 10th annual Birmingham Live Advanced Endoscopy Course is set for Saturday, March 17. Nationally recognized gastroenterologist, researcher, professor and author Dr. Robert H. Hawkes will speak. The course is designed for physicians and nurses. To register, call 205-971-4926.

Accreditation

Grandview has been recognized with the following accreditations awarded for quality of care provided by its medical staff.

- National Hospital Accreditation: The Joint Commission.
- Bariatric Weight Loss Surgery: American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery and the Bariatric Center of Excellence, American College of Surgeons.
- Cardiovascular Medicine: Certified Chest Pain Center, Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care.
- Emergency Medicine: Level III Trauma Center.
- Sleep Medicine: American Academy of Sleep Medicine, National Sleep Center Accreditation.
- Cancer Care: American College of Surgeons, Commission on Cancer Accreditation.

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Shanna Lockwood, successful photographer, photo editor, and digital media manager for USA TODAY Sports Images, got her start at Southern Union’s Wadley campus. Being a photo editor at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games and at Super Bowl XLIX are just two of many highlights of her career.

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Agriculture education returns to Childersburg High

First-year teacher works to help students understand where food comes from

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Once a staple of comprehensive high school curriculums, agriculture classes have gradually disappeared from many course offerings.

However, an agriscience program returned to Childersburg High School at the start of the 2016-17 year, with around 70 students participating.

"The ag program had been inactive here for several years," said teacher Amanda Lovelady. "I'm not sure for how long, but it's been long enough that it's totally new for all the kids who are here now. None of them have ever had ag before."

And if their participation in a recent class horticulture project to plant flowers at the school entrance is any indication, they're enjoying the new opportunity.

"Be careful as you pull it up," Lovelady advised students as they removed old plants from several ornate pots near the school's front doors. "Careful. Try not to shake the dirt out of the pots. Y'all don't get the little thorns in your hands. Here," she said, handing her door key to one of the male students, "go back to the room and get some gloves."

After the old plants had been removed, the students separated several flats of new plants accord-

ing to type: ivy, pansies, decorative cabbage. "Yeah, this is some good stuff here," Lovelady said as she watched them. We have two boxwoods. They should go in the tall pots. What we want to do is see our design before we start potting it."

Lovelady demonstrated how to plant one of the boxwoods before supervising one of the students in potting the second. "OK, that's good, but we still have to fill up all these other pots. What do you think would look good over here? Maybe some color?"

Suggestions were made, bags of new soil were opened and emptied into pots and virtually all the students had their hands in the dirt.

The student who had been sent to retrieve gloves returned and offered a pair to his classmate.

"It's too late," she said. "I already got my fingernails dirty."

"I need to wash my hands," another student said.

"We'll wash our hands when we get back inside," Lovelady assured her. "Y'all have made some good suggestions. You're doing a fantastic job."

She responded to questions the students asked, sometimes smiling at other comments they made.

"These plants won't try to kill each other, will they?"

"Are these year-long plants?"

"I just got dirt in my shoe!"

"What are those little round things in the roots?"

"Oh, my gosh! There's a big old spider!"

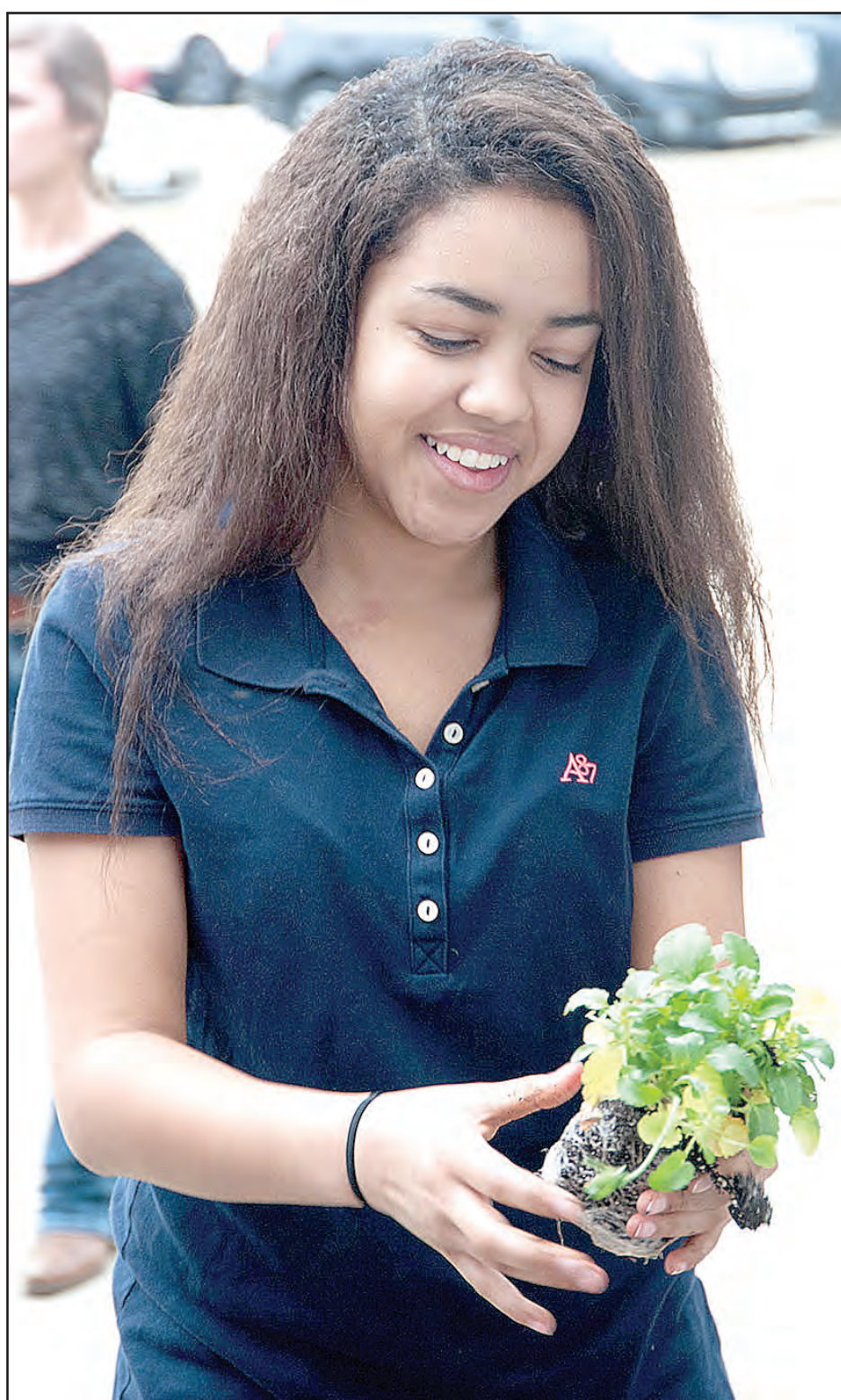
"Do we have to water these now?"

"Yes," Lovelady replied to that question, "this is our job now. And if you like doing this, there's an FFA competition in horticulture coming up. Think about it."

Getting her students to think about agriculture and its role in their lives – something most hadn't done before taking the class – is what Lovelady says she finds most gratifying about her role as teacher.

"Used to – 10, 20, 30 years ago – everybody was more familiar with agriculture. Families had their own gardens or, if they didn't live on a farm, they had a relative or someone they knew who did. But agriculture has gotten away from this generation, and it's become something of a lost art. It's good to instill an understanding in these kids of how it relates to the real world."

An Autaugaville native who holds an agriculture education degree from Auburn University, this is Lovelady's first year as a teacher, and "I'm on Cloud 9 being able to introduce these kids to agriculture. When the class started, I asked them to write down



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home

Agriculture student Lyris McGinnis prepares a plant for potting during a horticulture project at Childersburg High School. A new agriscience program began there at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

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what they believe agriculture is. I got answers like, ‘planting things,’ ‘farming’ and ‘being a farmer.’ They’ve come to learn that agriculture takes in things like engineering, math, social sciences, nutrition and mechanics. Even how to read a tape measure, which some of them had never done before being in this class.”

Besides the Childersburg High students, class enrollment includes students from Winterboro, Fayetteville and B.B. Comer high schools who are participating in Talladega County Technical Career Education. Shortly after the class began last fall, Lovelady started the students constructing six raised planting beds in which they planted fall crops. Early spring crops will be planted there next month.

Students have also made a field trip to the Alabama Wildlife Federation’s Natureplex in Millbrook, a \$6 million outdoor education center, and to farms near Childersburg and Winterboro.

“It was harvest time, and the kids got to ride in the combines,” Lovelady said. “One of my students works on a farm, and he loves it, and I have a few others who don’t live on farms but know something about them, so for most of these kids, it was their first time seeing where the food they eat comes from. Even make-up, shelter and what they wear – they hadn’t realized that they use agricultural products every day.”

Although it may

not happen before the end of the school year, she hopes to construct a chicken coop at the school. “We’re working on meeting all the regulations and requirements to have one. We’ll probably sell eggs as a fundraiser and hatch some in class, which the kids are really looking forward to. I have a lot of ideas, but getting them all done is another matter.”

Lovelady launched the program with no startup funds, but it has received aid from the technical career education program, a grant from the Coosa Valley Resource Development and Conservation Council and proceeds from selling meat snacks as a fundraiser.

With the class came a new Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter at Childersburg High. The three-student team of Jacoby Carden and Jackson Newsome of Winterboro High and Ray Edwards of Fayetteville High recently finished 12th of 80 teams at the FFA Forestry Career Development competition.

“For our first time out, we did really well,” Lovelady said. “FFA is another way of helping the kids to see the different aspects of agriculture. There are so many, any student can find something they’re interested in. It can be horses and farm animals, soil, flowers, public speaking, small engines – so many things that are so good for them to know.”

As their teacher, she considers it her responsibility to instill in them her love for agriculture.

“It is kind of unusual

to see a female teaching ag, but my dad was a sharecropper, and he grew cotton, corn, soybeans and watermelons, and that’s where my pas-

sion for it comes from,” she said. “I’ve always been the one wanting to be on the cotton picker with my dad. My husband and I live on a

farm outside of town here, and I’ve always loved farm life. When I first start telling students agriculture is the coolest thing in the world, it’s

a challenge, but I want them to leave my class feeling like they learned something they didn’t know before.”



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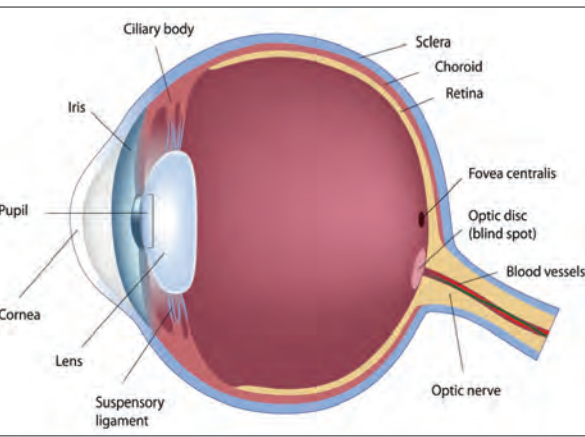
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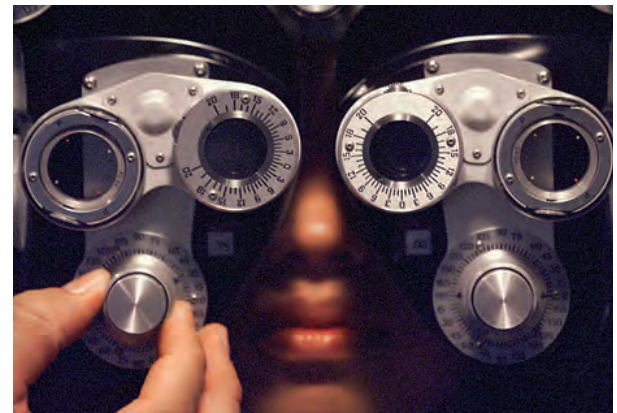
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Jamie Martin/Governor's Office

Dr. Cynthia McCarty, second from right, votes during a meeting of the Alabama Board of Education. At left is Stephanie Bell, who represents Talladega County on the state board.

‘Creativity is booming’ in Alabama and local schools

Q&A with District 6 Alabama BOE member Cynthia McCarty

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Cynthia McCarty says she believes that every child deserves a quality education.

As a member of the Alabama Board of Education representing District 6, which includes St. Clair, Calhoun, Blount, Cherokee, Marshall, Cullman, and Morgan counties and part of Dekalb County, she supports pay raises for teachers and smaller class sizes.

McCarty is a professor of economics at Jacksonville State University and has started the second year of her first term on the state school board. Earlier this month, she answered several questions from The Daily Home about educational issues facing state and local school systems.

What have been the state board of education's significant accomplishments during the past year?

- We conducted an intensive search and ultimately hired a new state superintendent, Mr. Michael Sentence. Working with him and his state department team, we are currently drafting a strategic plan for Alabama education. Thus far, we have formed committees for math, science and English.
- We increased the number of career coaches in high schools such that each high school is visited at least once a week. These coaches provide critical support and guidance for our students in their decisions on class selection, career tech opportunities, dual enrollment, and overall career paths.
- We have increased opportunities in career tech, increasing the number of career tech classes offered and often partnering with local community colleges.
- We have increased opportunities for students to take AP courses, with more students taking them than ever.
- We created a teacher scholarship program so that teachers interested in pursuing National Board Certification would have the \$2000 in fees paid for them.
- We increased opportunities for gifted children with a generous \$1.25 million increase in funding.
- First year teachers told us they were often overwhelmed by the many unexpected demands placed on them. We initiated a teacher mentor program to help them transition from college to their own classroom.
- We saw math scores for grades 3-8 increase. The English assessment scores for most grades also increased or stayed level.
- Our data show us that more students are staying in school longer. With richer career tech opportunities and more AP courses, we are better able to meet the needs of more students.
- We've allowed schools to be more

flexible, even allowing some seniors to take all their classes on location at the community college.

- What most impresses me, however, in all the schools, is the consistent nurturing and compassion shown by the educators, administrators, and staff – from the bus drivers to the cafeteria workers – for the students. When students know that we care about them, they will be more successful.

How can those accomplishments be built upon?

- We want to increase our ability to serve all of our students. Thus, we can increase the career tech offerings we provide such that we are using state-of-the-art equipment and offering more courses in high-demand, high-pay areas.
- We can improve and increase professional development for our teachers. They are asking us for better quality professional development.
- We can fully fund the cost to transport children. It is only funded at about 80 percent today.
- We can lower class sizes. Some of our 4-6th grade classes have 35 students. That is too many for one teacher, no matter how effective he or she is.
- We can help lower the shortage of math and science teachers by coming up with creative solutions.
- We can encourage more teachers to become National Board Certified.
- We can encourage school leaders to be more creative when they see problems.
- We can increase the number of career coaches so that our college bound students are able to earn more scholarships and college credits and so that our career-bound students are able to land high-paying jobs.
- We can work more closely with our Colleges of Education to be sure that our teachers are well prepared upon graduation.
- We can offer more teachers scholarships to pursue National Board Certification, an achievement proven to improve teacher effectiveness.
- We can work to offer our educators better compensation packages: We want to attract and keep the best educators.
- We want to lower the remediation rate--the number of students who are required to take no-credit courses when they go to college.

What education-related issues are you most interested in or concerned about during the coming legislative session?

I am most concerned about lowering the average number of students in classes for grades 4-6. I would like to see pay raises without an increase in medical insurance deductions. I would like to see more quality, relevant career tech courses offered. And I would like to see

more incentives for teachers to pursue National Board Certification.

You did not support the hiring of Michael Sentence as state superintendent. What prompted your decision?

I did not vote for Mr. Sentence. After conducting hours of research – phone calls, emails, school visits, etc. – I concluded that Dr. Janet Womack was the candidate that best met the board-approved characteristics. However, once Mr. Sentence was chosen, I called him the next day and offered my full support, inviting him to visit my schools, which he has done.

You have been outspoken against federal overreach into local schools. What do you expect in that area from the new administration in Washington?

I expect the new administration to allow states more flexibility in the area of education. We won't know the details until the new secretary of education is confirmed and has time to communicate with us.

What are some things happening in schools in your district that you're particularly proud of?

Creativity is booming. In my district, I see evidence of innovative leadership all around me. From the school that addresses a dip in math scores by adding an extra remedial math course for all students to the schedule, to data rooms where every single student's growth is tracked (a green note means the student is showing academic growth while a red note means the student isn't progressing as needed and that the teachers will develop an improvement plan for him) innovative ideas are at work.

Some principals meet with every student individually to discuss the student's current status and to give him a stretch goal for the state assessment. Some schools have weekly parent meetings where homework problems are explained to the parents. Some schools have a grade in professionalism: students who turn in sloppy homework will have a point deducted. Some schools are offering classes in areas where the students can earn industry credentials by graduation (Pell City High School is one). Some have agriculture programs (Moody High School is one) where the students build greenhouses, nurture farm animals and visit nationally acclaimed universities that have solid agriculture programs.

I am so proud of the true nurturing I see when I visit schools. When the principal meets with every single student on an individual basis to discuss goals and strategies, that is powerful and communicates that every student matters. Also, as I said above, the relevant, high-quality career tech courses (more in middle schools, more in health care

and culinary), the partnerships with community colleges, the innovation (such as adding another period to the day when students show they need it, allowing students to work at their own pace – an Algebra 1 student was already in Geometry by January), the sacrifices that educators make to improve their effectiveness in the classroom – such as pursuing National Board Certification, a highly rigorous endeavor.

From your perspective as a college professor, how important is a solid K-12 foundation for students, and how well is Alabama providing that?

The foundation that K-12 provides is essential to success in college. Solid math, writing, reading comprehension, and analytical skills are key for college success. Although the college remediation rate is slightly lower, it is still too high. We currently have a pilot program in place in a few schools (although none in my district) that allows high school seniors to address their weaknesses so that they will not need remedial courses. We are hoping to analyze the results this summer, improve it as needed and take it to more schools.

You are a proponent of technical-career training and dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. Why are those important?

Career tech and dual enrollment are very important. Many of our children plan to work upon high school graduation. We must give them the skills they will need to earn a decent living in a career. We can do this if we offer relevant, quality career tech courses--often partnering with community colleges when the cost of the equipment is excessive.

Even for those who plan to enter college, having a certified skill will allow them to work while in college, saving thousands of dollars on student loans. And there are many high-quality, well-paying jobs in Alabama that require a credential or associates degree. A solid salary can be earned if one has the right skills and a strong work ethic. I have witnessed some students achieve their associates degree and their high school diploma during the same week. I'd like to see more of this.

Dual enrollment is beneficial because it allows high school students the opportunity to enrich their high school courses by taking college level ones--at a highly reduced cost. Although many of the career tech courses are free for the students. Even the academic ones are at greatly reduced cost. Dual enrollment allows students of all incomes to try college. Some of those who had never considered it soon learn that they can excel in that environment and continue on.

So whether dual enrollment leads to a credential or allows a student to knock out some college courses, it is beneficial.

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FULL STEAM AHEAD

Talladega County Schools have busy 2016, focusing on STEAM for 2017

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

TALLADEGA COUNTY -- The Talladega County Schools System takes great pride in preparing its students to be college and career ready, while instilling a curriculum centered in leadership. 2016 was a year of many accomplishments and challenges for the school system.

Within the last 12 months, the school system has completed multiple capital improvements, partnered with local non-profits and mourned the loss of a beloved board member.

School property tax for Winterboro District

Earlier this year, members of the Talladega County Board of Education unanimously approved submitting a request to the Talladega County Commission for a referendum be held Tuesday, March 14, to allow Winterboro residents to vote on a 5 mill tax for schools. If approved, the money from the tax would directly fund capital improvement projects for Winterboro schools.

“The board passed a similar request last January for a levy increase for Childersburg schools,” Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey said. “The money collected from the tax would go directly towards funding for a new school building.”

Lacey noted the building would ideally be used for meeting and conference space.

“We have invested a lot into the Winterboro building and would like to continue using it,” she said.

The Talladega County Commission approved the request. This is the first school tax for the Winterboro community.

Last year, Childersburg residents increased their tax to 5 mills from an initial 3 mills, and have since benefitted from the “yes” vote.

“We are very proud of the progress that Childersburg has made with its capital improvement projects,” Lacey said. “The new stadium is moving right along.”

Lacey noted the Central Office staff is working on releasing an estimation of how much money the tax could bring for Winterboro.

The communities of Childersburg, Lincoln, Fayetteville and Munford already have a school tax in place.

Talladega County schools partner with Alabama Childhood Food Solutions

Throughout 2016, Talladega County Schools have partnered with local nonprofit Alabama Childhood Food Solutions Inc. (ACFS). Last summer the partnership implemented a summer food program for students from low-income families or who may be considered food insecure.

The “Summer Food Service” program is a federally-funded, state-administered program under which meals are served in low-income areas at no charge to the students. The program was established to ensure children will receive nutritious meals during the summer vacation months.

The three feeding sites included: Munford Elementary, for Munford students; Lincoln High, for Lincoln students; and Winterboro High for students from Winterboro schools, Sycamore Elementary, Childersburg schools and Talladega County Central High.

The countywide program served breakfast and lunch, Monday through Thursday. Talladega County Schools con-



County voters will decide next month whether to approve a 5-mill tax increase to fund capital improvement projects for Winterboro schools.

tinues to strengthen its partnership with the Alabama Childhood Food Solutions Organization, which donates food to students in more than 40 area schools and Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the school year.

Each Friday, ACFS donates food bags to students living in low-income households or families in poverty. The bags contain items such as bread, peanut butter, crackers and fruit. The bags add up to about 3,000 calories.

TCBOE says goodbye to board member, longtime educator Beulah Garrett

Last October, the Talladega County Schools community mourned the sudden loss of board of education member Beulah Garrett.

Garrett had represented District 1 on the school board since she was elected in November, 2006. She was previously a member of the board from 1988 through 1994. In 1988, she retired after almost 30 years as an educator in the Talladega County School System (24 years at Phyllis Wheatley and 4 years at Childersburg High).

The board has since appointed former educator Sandra Tuck to serve the remainder of Garrett’s term.

Outlook for 2017

Talladega County Schools plan to focus heavily on the STEAM (science, technology, art and mathematics) initiative for 2017.

The system plans to continue the use of project-based learning (PBL) assignments to aid students in becoming college and career ready.

“When students are able to apply what



Talladega County Schools supported Alabama Childhood Food Solutions (ACFS) during 2016. From left are Childersburg High School senior Annie Ozment, ACFS founder Linda Jones, Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey and Assistant Student Services Coordinator Eric Lavender.

they are learning to actual real-world scenarios, we have found that they are more engaged and willing to learn,” Lacey said.

The system serves 18 schools, including three near the city of Sylacauga -- B.B. Comer Elementary, B.B. Comer Memorial High School and Sycamore Elementary.

Talladega County Schools include: A.H. Watwood Elementary, B.B. Comer Elementary, B.B. Comer Memorial High School, Childersburg Elementary, Childersburg Middle, Childersburg High, Lincoln Elementary, Drew Middle, Lincoln High, Munford Elementary, Munford Middle School, Munford

High, Sycamore Elementary, Stemley Road Elementary, Winterboro Schools, Fayetteville Schools, Talladega County Central High and Genesis Alternative Education Center.

The county school system at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year recorded a student enrollment of 7,737. The system employees 502 teachers.

The Talladega County Central Office is at 106 South St. W. in Talladega.

The Board of Education meets the last Monday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Central Office.

For additional information, visit www.tcboe.org, or call 256-315-5100.

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Talladega City School system has year of twists and turns

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home staff writer

It would be something of an understatement to say the past year or so in the Talladega City School system has been turbulent.

By the end of 2015, there were two new members elected to the city board of education, and there were serious tensions between the new board and Superintendent Donna King. Former Superintendent Tommy Bice had put the system on notice that a state takeover was possible if certain long-term planning, staffing and infrastructure improvements were not taken up, and several parents had become regular fixtures at board meetings bringing in other complaints. Bice had sent former Pell City Superintendent Bobby Hathcock as an observer, and former Tuscaloosa Superintendent Frank Costanzo was brought aboard to develop a five year plan.

In February of 2016, the board voted unanimously to suspend King with pay and to name Costanzo as interim superintendent. Costanzo continued to serve in that capacity until the end of May, when the board hired former Lincoln High School Principal Terry Roller as the permanent superintendent.

In the meantime, a vision statement and mission for the system was developed with the help of a citizen committee and questionnaires filled out by employees and

other stakeholders, work was done to upgrade technology infrastructure, and vacant staff positions were filled. Toward the end of Costanzo's watch, in April, Graham Elementary School had to be shuttered briefly due to a bat infestation, but the problem was remedied fairly quickly.

During the summer, the board also addressed another long-running controversy by creating an alternative school for students that have been suspended or expelled for disciplinary reasons. Students in the school will be able to keep up with their classes via distance learning, while still being physically removed from the other students in school, and the board must vote to allow them back into their regular schools after the students have served their punishment.

But perhaps the most easily visible change coming to the system is the construction of three new gymnasiums at Graham, Houston and Salter Elementary Schools. R.L. Young, the system's other elementary school, already has a gym.

The board has approved some changes to the project since it first came up, which has delayed the start. As of the most recent meeting, the board had decided to merge all three projects into one and bid them all out at the same time. Bids for that project have not been let as this goes to press.

Although the board did make progress on sev-

eral fronts during the past year, there was also controversy to spare, particularly between Chairman Jake Montgomery and Board Member Mary McGhee. McGhee leaked the board's intention to suspend King before this intention had been publicly announced, let alone voted on, and McGhee has complained often that Montgomery is breaking with standard practice by not relinquishing the chair to the other board members at equal intervals.

Matters came to a head in the fall, when McGhee made a statement saying that Talladega High School Assistant Principal Chucky Miller was getting paid for a job he was no longer doing (athletic director) and that, in any case, he was overpaid in

the position.

Miller and Montgomery demanded an apology from McGhee, which was not forthcoming.

They then brought an action against McGhee before the board for unprofessional conduct under a relatively new statute. The board would not have the power to do anything other than censure her, but the state board can, at the local board's request, disqualify her from seeking office again and prevent her from enjoying any of the privileges of being on the board.

Board members heard evidence from witnesses during a lengthy hearing in November, but as this edition goes to press had not decided whether or not to censure McGhee.

TALLADEGA CITY SCHOOLS UPDATE


Enrollment: 1,981

Schools: Four elementary, one junior high, one high school/career tech

The board generally meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at a different school or the central office.

The Pearino Gaither Central Office Building is at 501 South Street, and can be reached by phone at 256-315-5600.

Terry Roller is the superintendent. Board chairman is Jake Montgomery, and board members are Shirley Simmons-Sims, Mary McGhee, Chuck Roberts and James Braswell.



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Submitted Photo

Alabama-produced satsuma oranges are making their way into school cafeterias throughout the state.

Farm-to-School program is a success story in Alabama

Staff Report

The federal Farm-to-School program “is something we’re doing a good job with here in Alabama,” according to John McMillan, the state’s commissioner of agriculture and industries.

Still, the commissioner said he hopes to see more schools and farms participating in the program during the coming year. “We might see some legislation to make it a little more flexible at the state level, but we expect it to continue growing. It’s super.”

The purpose of the Farm-to-School program is to provide school meals that include foods that are produced locally. Administered

through the Department of Defense – the agency that was able to provide transportation to deliver produce from farms to schools at the inception of the program – Farm-to-School is a partnership involving the federal and state departments of agriculture, the Alabama Department of Education, the Alabama Farmers Federation and the state Farmers Market Authority.

Alabama received \$2 million in federal funds to administer the program during 2016.

“Here in Alabama, each public school student is provided farm-fresh produce as it becomes available,” McMillan said. “We’ve had some great success stories getting products from local farmers into

our school nutrition programs. Apples are always popular, and we have some great apple orchards in Alabama. We’ve also had locally-grown sweet potatoes and collard greens go into our schools, but the satsumas have probably been the most popular. They’re easy to peel and have a sweet flavor, and we’ve recently started producing those here in Alabama.”

The commissioner said “it really makes a difference” for students to have access to locally-produced fruits and vegetables.

“It’s amazing how much better the flavor is when produce hasn’t been on a truck from California for three or four days. It makes a big difference in taste.”

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Accomplishments made at every St. Clair County school

By **GARY HANNER**
Home staff writer

Jenny Seals is starting her 11th year as Superintendent of St. Clair County Schools. In the 10 years prior, she has seen growth in the school system as St. Clair County continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the state.

The 2000 Census reported 64,742 people living in the county. By 2010, that had increased to 83,593. As of 2014, there were 86,697 living in St. Clair County.

Seals said there are a little over 1,100 employees and about 9,200 students (Pre-K through 12th grade) 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.

BOE MEMBERS

The seven-member board who make up the St. Clair County Board of Education consist of Scott Suttle, who is president; Marie Manning, vice-president; Randy Thompson, Allison Gray, John DeGaris, Angie Cobb and Bill Morris. These terms are staggered so all seven seats are not up for a vote all at the same time.

After serving 18 years on the board, Terry Green decided not to seek re-election. Former Moody mayor Bill Morris ran unopposed during the election for Green's seat, and officially took over in November.

To get in contact with Scott Suttle, email him at scott.suttle@sccboe.org or call him at 205-640-1455. Suttle serves the Moody district.

To get in contact with Marie Manning, email her at marie.manning@sccboe.org or call her at 205-884-0383. She represents the Ragland district.

To get in contact with Angie Cobb, email her at angie.cobb@sccboe.org or call her at 205-629-5288. She represents an At-Large district.

To get in contact with John DeGaris, email him at john.degaris@sccboe.org or call him at 205-594-4369. He represents the Springville district.

To get in contact with Randy Thompson, email him at randy.thompson@sccboe.org or call him at 205-594-7370. He represents the Ashville/Steele district.

To get in contact with Allison Gray, email her at allison.gray@sccboe.org or call her at 205-629-7026. She represents the Odenville district.

To get in contact with Bill Morris, email him at bill.morris@sccboe.org or call him at 205-640-4128. He represents an At-large district.

To get in contact with Jenny Seals, email her at jenny.seals@sccboe.org or call her at 205-594-2282 or 205-337-0468.

BOE meetings are generally held once a month, and are held at the Central Office that is located at 410 Roy Drive, Ashville, AL 35953.

SEALS COMMENTS

"As a school administrator for 15 years, I felt like I could bring experience to the table, work well with the BOE to bring out the best in St. Clair County," Seals said. "Being superintendent has been a great experience, and I enjoy what I do. It's wonderful to see a team that's working for the betterment of the school system. This seven-member board really cares about the students of St. Clair County."

Seals said the challenging part of her job has been funding.

"When the economy took a turn for the worst, school funding took a hit," 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

Seals said accomplishments have been made at every school. For instance:

MOODY JR. HIGH SCHOOL

Moody Jr. High School offers an enrichment period to help students on every academic level. It offers free after-school tutoring every week for students. It has honors classes in every subject area to challenge students. The school offers a variety of activities such as fishing, archery and tennis, along with all the traditional sporting venues. The school saw increased scores on standardized testing this past academic year.

ODENVILLE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Thanks to help from the school board, OIS was able to:

- Increase the playground area of two playgrounds and fence them in for the students;
- Serve families with the implementation of the food bank and lunchroom programs;
- Paint a majority of the school hallways and will finish the project soon;
- Provide more classroom computers so students have more access to them during the day;
- Experience noticeable growth from one year to the next on the ASPIRE scores;
- Update some doors to make the school more secure.

MOODY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Moody Elementary was able to:

- Increase security measures including Raptorwear visitor security system, front door camera and school-wide entry fob system, and newly constructed foyer security door;
- Have monthly parent and community meetings and forum through the MES Monthly Minute highlighting personnel, programs, and procedures;
- Have weekly grade level meetings to provide collaboration and professional development for staff;
- Incorporate Art, Music, Computer, and Library classes weekly for students;
- Provide two Pre-K classes (possibly four for the upcoming school year pending grant approval);



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

From left, Superintendent Jenny Seals, Board President Scott Suttle and Vice-President Marie Manning consider the agenda during a regular meeting of the St. Clair Board of Education.



Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

The newest member of the St. Clair County Board of Education is Bill Morris, who took office in November. Beside him as he was sworn in is his wife Doll Morris.

ing school year pending grant approval);

- Have a new renovation and playground for the school's pre-K Academy;
- Hire three intervention teachers and two instructional partners to address and collaborate to develop strategies for students struggling in math and reading in kindergarten through third grade;
- Incorporate a chime choir, art club, library club, and morning news crew chosen from third grade;
- Form a partnership with the Community Food Bank to provide free, healthy groceries monthly for school families in need;
- Form a partnership with the Backpack Buddy program to provide students in need with easy to prepare food for weekends and holidays;
- Start a teacher mentor program to assist new teachers and provide guidance concerning curriculum, policies, and procedures.

MARGARET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Margaret has had several technology enhancements this school year. The school has placed eight interactive projectors in classrooms and purchased two additional Stream carts. The technology infrastructure has also been updated

to accommodate this increase in technology.

In addition, Margaret received a \$10,000 pre-K playground enhancement grant to purchase a new piece of playground equipment for pre-K students.

SPRINGVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Accomplishments at SES include:

- Student led yearbook;
- Successful theater program impacting the school and community;
- Partnership with Technology in Motion to increase student use of technology;
- Partnership with community to purchase new computers for classrooms and computer labs.

ASHVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Accomplishments at AHS include:

- Student Haleigh Warren was an Area and Regional AHSAA Bryant-Jordan Achievement winner;
- AHS Scholar's Bowl were undefeated champions of the Small School Region;
- Three senior students, Chase Roberts, Jesse Fitts and Matt Lowe, took second place in the state Stock Market Games;
- AHS has a graduation rate

of 94 percent.

ODENVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Accomplishments at OMS include:

- Beta Club National School of Distinction 2016-2017;
- St. Clair County Math Initiative hosted a Celebration of the Mind by the Alys Stephens Center;
- Jim Wilder and students presented at the McWane Center on dominoes and menger sponge;
- St. Clair County Football Champions 2016;
- St. Clair County Runner-up Girls Basketball 2016-2017;
- Placed first at the Middle School Speech Competition 'Emmy Rains' in April 2016, at the Alabama State Student Council Conference on the campus of the University of Alabama;
- Placed first at the Leadership and Service Project in April 2016 for the Anti-Bullying Program "Stand for the Silent";
- Placed first at the Best Middle School Leadership Project for the Anti-Bullying Program "Stand for the Silent". It was held in October at the Southern Association of Student Councils Conference at Wilson Central High School in Lebanon, Tennessee.

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Submitted photo

Michael Sentance, Alabama's new superintendent of education, speaks during a meeting of the state school board.

State schools start 2017 with new leadership

STAFF REPORT

The past year has brought new leadership to the Alabama Department of Education.

Last August, Michael Sentance was hired as the state's superintendent of education. He was one of six finalists considered for the post by the Alabama Board of Education.

"I believe it is a moral imperative that standards be internationally benchmarked and the best public schools educators working with the best available academics from the state's universities should be responsible for this endeavor," Sentance

said. "Academic standards constitute the covenant with the future of the state to raise achievement and create opportunity."

An education consultant who has worked with state, federal and local officials and advocacy groups to develop strategies to improve education, he began work as Alabama's superintendent in September. Previously, Sentance served as president of education reform strategies for Tribal USA, New England regional representative for the U.S. Department of Education and senior education advisor to the governor

of Massachusetts. A graduate of Georgetown University, he holds law degrees from Duquesne University of Law and the Boston University School of Law.

"I want to thank the board for their vote," he said. "I hope to worthy of their confidence. I know there is a great deal of work that I have to do in the state in order to earn the trust and respect of educators. My goal here is to raise the level of achievement for students in Alabama. I want people to know that Alabama's schools are good and improving."

Sentance has named Dr. Dee Fowler chief of staff to the state superintendent. Formerly superintendent of Madison City Schools, Fowler has worked in education for more than 40 years and was one of the six finalists for the state superintendent's post.

"We are very excited that an educator as distinguished and accomplished as Dr. Fowler would agree to assist in our efforts to improve public education in Alabama," Sentance said. "We are looking forward to his experience and wisdom guiding our work."

As chief of staff, Fowler oversees many of the department of education's day-to-day operations, coordinates departmental sections and handles financial and legislative dealings. Previously, he served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, director of administration, operations and personnel, assistant superintendent and superintendent. His holds an undergraduate degree from Lipscomb University and graduate degrees from Vanderbilt University and Alabama A&M University. His earned his doctor-

ate in education at the University of Alabama.

Sentance also named two educators to fill what he described as "key state department positions." Late last year, Dr. Barbara Cooper, formerly deputy superintendent of Huntsville City Schools, was named deputy state superintendent of teaching and learning and chief academic officer. At the same time, Chasidy White, a veteran educator and policy expert from Brookwood Middle School in Tuscaloosa County, was named state director of strategic initiatives.

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Photo by Austin Nichols

Voices of St. Clair, a storytelling performance, closed the successful 2016 fall season at Pell City's CEPA.

access to professional theater training will likely help many "come out of their shells," according to Warren.

"Aspects of theater often involve doing what are usually considered silly things," she said. "When you learn to embrace it and know that that's okay, especially when you're young, it builds confidence. Things you can learn from theater pretty well prepare you to do well in whatever career you choose. The lessons you learn from it are invaluable."

Theater became Warren's career, after she earned degrees in drama and English from Jacksonville State University and a graduate degree in theater from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She's worked as an actor, director, member of an improv troupe and as part of an educational theater group, eventually

Theater partnership puts CEPA, Jeff State and St. Clair schools in the Spotlight

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

PELL CITY — The resurgence of the Center for Education and Performing Arts has been one of the past year's most significant success stories.

"As we move into 2017, our goal is to continue the momentum built in our 2016 fall season," said Jeff Thompson, the center's executive director. "Coming this spring, we will once again invite the community to experience exceptional performing artists at their best, but we're also bringing new county-wide educational drama programs into the mix."

CEPA's fall season brought the long-sought-after Alabama Symphony Orchestra to the Pell City stage, as well as Confederate Railroad, illusionists and a well-received locally themed storytelling performance. While preparing for the spring season to begin next month, the center has partnered with Jefferson State Community College's Pell City campus to foster high school drama programs that offer a dual enrollment opportunity for students.

"CEPA's board of directors has always sought to grow arts education programs in St. Clair County," Thompson said. "Now, thanks to our new relationship with Jefferson State, we are confident that the Spotlight program can accomplish that and more. It will make a tremendous impact on the lives of local residents from day one."

"We are really excited about this partnership," said Dr. Nicholas Kin, Jeff State's associate dean overseeing academic and student services at the

Pell City campus. "Our mission is to provide academic and workforce training opportunities, so we've never been able to offer theater here before. Leaders in our collegiate system are ecstatic about this. We firmly believe theater and others arts education programs are vital to a student's development, which better prepares them for leadership roles in today's society."

The partnership is called Spotlight St. Clair, aimed at launching drama programs in area schools and communities.

"We were surprised to find that outside of Pell City High School, other high schools in St. Clair County did not have drama programs," Kin said. That's a situation that Spotlight has since been changing, according to Lesley Warren, who

serves as CEPA's program coordinator and theater instructor at Jeff State.

"It's still in the developmental process," she said last month, "but our attempt is to reach out to all county schools — Ragland, Moody, etc. — and invite their students to perform on the CEPA stage so that the entire county, not just Pell City gets involved in theater here."

Warren became involved in theater while she was a high school student, and she's a firm believer in the value of theater as an educational experience.

"My first performance was in a Christmas play at the Anniston City Theater, which no longer exists," she said. "When the show ended, I cried for about a week. It was the first time I felt a part of something, and my

experience is not unique. Many young people feel that way when they discover theater, whether their part is performing or working behind the scenes, building sets or working the sound and lighting."

Spotlight's efforts to create high school drama clubs and to give students

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2017 OBJECTIVES

- Produce three plays with three performances each (nine performances total).
- Hold one children’s drama camp and one adult/young adult drama workshop each summer.
- Hold one adult acting or improvisational class per year or semester (depending on demand).
- Enroll 25 St. Clair County high school students in dual enrollment theater classes.

Source: Pell City CEPA and Jefferson State Community College

returning to teach drama at Jacksonville State and now at Jeff State through the Spotlight initiative.

“It’s a great arrangement,” Kin said. “CEPA needed a theater director, and we at Jeff State couldn’t offer enough classes to have a full-time drama instructor, and now here we are. This is an example of why partnerships are great.”

Spotlight will serve as “the banner organization for CEPA to expand drama education in the schools and community at-large,” Thompson said. “Through this partnership, we will widen access to the performing arts throughout the county using clubs, classes, camps and more. CEPA is literally stepping into your school and your community on a mission to assist in making drama education a reality everywhere it’s sought. We’re excited about seeing students from all across St. Clair County performing on the CEPA stage.”

That’s a sentiment Warren shares. “I want to see good theater here, and I want people in Leeds and Trussville to be jealous of what we have here in Pell City,” she said.

Raising CEPA’s profile has been Thompson’s mission since he took helm of the center last summer, and he has big plans for



The Alabama Symphony Orchestra performed on the CEPA stage last year.

2017.

“This year, we are working to raise \$50,000 that will help us launch and stimulate regional drama programs,” he said. “It will help us bring more nationally recognized artists and acts to Pell City, and it will help us continue to provide support for our community-centric endeavors. Our primary capital needs this coming year include a significant sound system upgrade in the theater. The addition of hanging microphones will make it easier to hear young performers on the stage.”

Donations to the nonprofit center may be made online at www.pellcitycepa.com or pledged by calling 205-338-1974. New CEPA Society memberships are now available at the following levels.

- Friend (\$50).
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- Director’s Circle (\$1,000).
- Founders Circle (\$2,000+).

For more information about the benefits of each membership level, visit the website or call the center. “Becoming a CEPA society member is a statement to the community that you support arts and cultural programming in Pell City,” Thompson said.

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Community college consolidation postponed

Central Alabama campus, center remain in Childersburg, Talladega

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

The announced consolidation of Central Alabama Community College (CACC) with two other schools has been postponed, according to the Alabama Community College System (ACCS).

“At this time, the ACCS Board of Trustees is asking the colleges to focus on efficiencies within the colleges,” said Annette Funderburk, director of external affairs. “Once this has been accomplished, they will assess where the system of colleges is and determine if anything needs to be changed.” Early last year, ACCS officials were preparing for the merger of CACC with Southern Union State and Chattahoochee Valley community colleges, a move aimed at helping the system develop more educational and training opportunities, ACCS Chancellor Dr. Mark Heinrich said, adding that creating larger institutions would also save money in the long run.

No details about why the consolidation has been postponed or whether the issue will be revisited later this year have been released.

Besides its main campus in Alexander City, CACC maintains a campus at 34091 U.S. Highway 280 in Childersburg and a center at 1009 South St. E. in Talladega. A two-year college with an enrollment of more than 2,000 students, it has been accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools since 1969.

It opened as Alexander City State Junior College in 1965. The following year, Nunnally State Technical College opened in Childersburg. Both schools merged in 1989, and CACC offers associate degrees in science, applied science and occu-

pational technology, as well as several short-term certifications.

During 2016, Gov. Robert Bentley announced the receipt of a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to benefit the Childersburg campus.

“Bridging the gap between the education system and the private sector is prioritized in my Great State 2019 Plan,” the governor said. “Grants like this one are crucial to providing our students with the training and skills they need to compete in today’s evolving workforce. The benefits from these grants will be realized here in Childersburg and across the state throughout our leading industry sectors.”

Bentley’s Great State 2019 plan is his legislative agenda for the remainder of his term in office, which expires in 2019. It calls for greater fiscal investment in education and workforce development.

The ARC grant CACC received was for \$696,894, with matching sources providing \$298,669, for a total of \$995,563. It was awarded to replace the roof on an existing building that houses the Childersburg campus’ machine shop training program and to upgrade the shop’s electronics, automation, programmable logic controllers, robotics, 3-D printing and motor controls equipment.

According to the governor, the grant has allowed CACC to offer more courses that prepare students to work in automobile supplier manufacturing jobs.

“By gaining the skills needed for careers in high-demand occupations like welding and automotive manufacturing, Alabamians can secure a job and a brighter future for themselves and their families,” said Jim Byard Jr., director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community



Tucker Webb/The Daily Home

Besides its main campus in Alexander City, CACC maintains a campus at 34091 U.S. Highway 280 in Childersburg and a center at 1009 South St. E. in Talladega. State officials have said that a planned consolidation of CACC with two other community colleges has been postponed.

Affairs. “(Our department) is pleased to play a role in a partnership with Gov. Bentley, the ARC and CACC to establish and expand valuable programs that will teach many central Alabama students the skills needed by employers.”

Also during the past year, CACC joined the state’s other community colleges in joining the 1:2:7 Imperative, a new workforce development initiative.

“The 1:2:7 Imperative addresses the role Alabama community colleges play in preparing the workforce so critical to the state’s economy,” Chancellor Heinrich said. “This proposal provides data-supported recommendations and specific strategies designed to address workforce development needs. The Alabama Community College System stands ready to collaborate with political and business

leaders to meet the challenges of providing better jobs for its citizens, better workers for its businesses and improved economic development for the state.”

The initiative takes its name from the ratio of one graduate degree holder to two bachelor degree holders to seven associate degree or industry-recognized certification holders that make up the 21st century workforce, according to Alabama Workforce Council.

“It addresses the increasing challenge of providing opportunities and support for the ‘seven’ students in the ratio who must graduate high school or obtain equivalency diplomas and subsequently acquire education and training leading to employment in high-growth, high-demand occupations,” Heinrich said. “The goal is for regional institutions to create multiple access points to provide edu-

cated, skilled workers reflecting the needs of regional businesses, thus improving both the local and state economy.”

According to the Alabama Department of Labor, the state has need for workers in the following 20 jobs that do not require a four-year degree.

- Physical therapist assistant (median salary \$53,714).
- Construction and extraction supervisors (\$55,989).
- Dental hygienist (\$46,531).
- Computer user support specialist (\$45,150).
- Registered nurse (\$55,869).
- Engine and other machine assembler (\$35,687).
- Diagnostic medical sonographer (\$47,758).
- Industrial machinery mechanic (\$48,790).
- Licensed practical/licensed vocational nurse (\$35,178).
- Medical secretary (\$29,313).
- Carpenter (\$32,267).
- Team assembler (\$33,751).
- Personal care aide (\$17,830).
- Home health aide (\$19,206).
- Computer controlled machine tool operator (\$33,367).
- Medical/clinical laboratory technician (\$35,849).
- Electrician (\$43,197).
- Emergency medical technician/paramedic (\$29,374).
- Welding, soldering and brazing machine setter/operator (\$34,727).
- Occupational therapy assistant (\$55,187).

The proposal calls for a \$100 million budget request for improved facilities and equipment at the state’s career and technical education institutions, as well as investments in workforce training, dual enrollment, adult education and prison education, toward the goal of “preparing ready-to-work employees,” Heinrich said.

“By design, the Alabama 1:2:7 Imperative initiative is creatively constructed to navigate us toward individual and college economic success. It takes local partners and influences into consideration to close middle-skill employment gaps. It is as the intersections of these partnerships that ACCS and CACC believe real change will occur to move Alabama forward.”

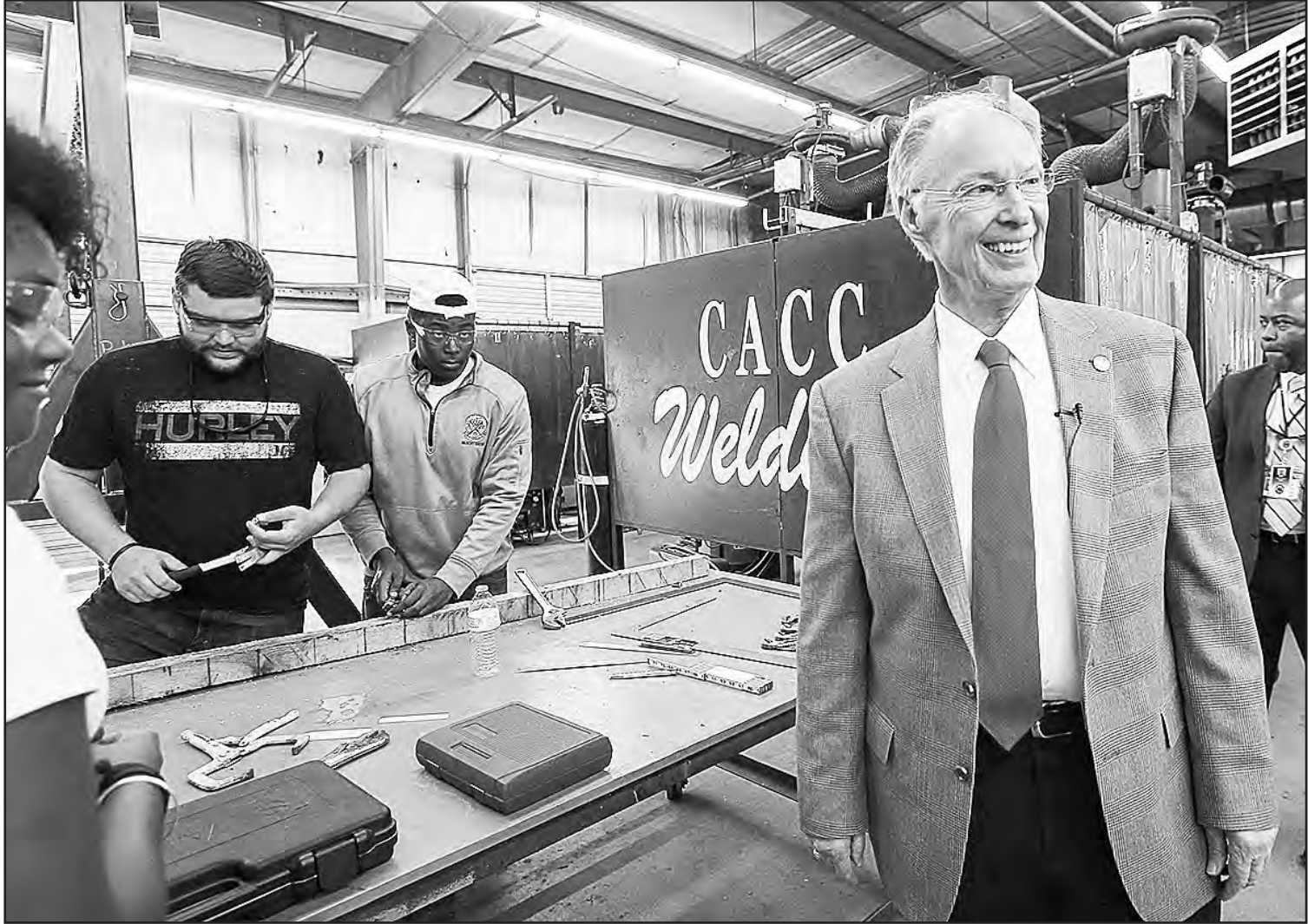


Photo by Jamie Martin/Governor’s Office

Gov. Bentley visits Central Alabama Community College last fall, when he announced that the school would receive a \$696,894 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission with matching sources providing \$298,669 for roof replacements and upgrades to the machine shop training program at its Childersburg campus.



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Projects, upgrades, improvements continue in the Sylacauga school system

By DENISE SINCLAIR
Home staff writer

SYLACAUGA – The Board of Education saw a change in its membership in 2016 with the appointment of two new members. Previously, the panel was comprised of three women and two men.

At the start of the new year, the board is comprised of four women and one man. This is the first time the BOE has four women serving at one time.

The City Council had to replace longtime board member Jennie McGhee after 15 years of service on the board.

Replacing McGhee was Janean Crawford. Crawford will serve a five-year term. She is employed as human resource manager for Coosa Valley Medical Center, where she has been an employee since 1993.

The second appointment was made when BOE member Scott Stewart resigned to take a job out of state.

Dr. Rekha Chadawalada was appointed to replace Stewart for a 10-month term on the board. Chadawalada is a pediatrician in Sylacauga where she has been practicing since 1999.

In addition to the two new members, the board's president is Amy Price, Dr. Steve Marlowe serves as vice president and Melissa Garriss serves as a board member.

A top priority for the school system during 2016 and into 2017 is completing the largest construction project in its history.

The project included a new central office downtown, renovations and additions at Sylacauga High School and the renovation of Legion Stadium. Over a more than five-year period, the school system will have spent more than \$26.5 million on building

or upgrading facilities.

Funding for the project started in 2000. City residents approved a 24-year, 9.5-mill tax for use in capital projects at the schools.

In February 2015, residents approved another bond issue that extended the mill tax. The extension allowed Sylacauga City Schools to refinance its 2005 bond issue, which school superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman said saved the system \$1 million.

And since B.B. Comer uses the stadium for football games, the Talladega County School System helped with that renovation.

Other completed projects include classroom additions at Sylacauga High School, a new entrance and additional front office space at the high school, new gyms at Pinecrest and Indian Valley elementary schools, renovation of the cafeteria and gyms at the high school.

The soccer, baseball and softball fields were also upgraded. The total cost of improvements to the athletic facilities was \$6.2 million.

One area the school system is focusing on for students is Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers. These careers are growing at a face pace, Freeman said. The Department of Commerce estimates that the number of STEM-related jobs will grow 17 percent by 2018 compared to 9.8 percent for all other fields. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has concluded that "STEM occupations are ... viewed as having some of the best opportunities for job growth in the future."

"In Sylacauga City Schools, we are determined to make this happen with engaging STEM opportunities," Freeman said.

In a State of the

Schools Address on Jan. 26, Freeman said this 2016 graduation rate was up to 94 percent compared to the state's average of 90. The score also improved over last year's seniors' score of 90.

Freeman also discussed college readiness, advanced placement, early college and dual enrollment.

The school system has started a pilot program where every student will get a ChromeBook. Seventh graders have them this semester. Eventually all students will have one, which Freeman said means every child will be exposed to the world-wide web. "This is going to be a big change and it certainly can help with the disparities in our schools," he said.

The superintendent said the system is looking at strategies to retain teachers. "Teaching should be financially attractive. Since 2009, there are 35 percent fewer college students declaring education as a major. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the primary fact is the wages and benefits for teachers, which is 11 percent less than other comparable jobs and credentials," he said.

On funding, Freeman said 63 percent of the system's funding comes from the state; 11 percent from federal; and 25 percent local.

He addressed the challenges faced by the system in the fall when a high school student was attacked at night away from the campus. The student was white, while his alleged attackers were black.

Freeman showed a photograph of students of all races crossing the street to Sylacauga High School. "We believe in loving each other, and we're not perfect. I can tell you the best investment you will make is in public school."



File photo

Significant renovations to Sylacauga High School and Legion Stadium have been made during the past year.

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At the start of 2017, the Sylacauga Board of Education consists of Amy Price, Dr. Steven Marlowe, Janean Crawford, Melissa Garriss and Dr. Rekha Chadawalada.

ABOUT SYLACAUGA CITY SCHOOLS


The school system has 279 full-time employees in four schools: Pinecrest and Indian Valley elementary schools, Nichols-Lawson Middle School and Sylacauga High School. It is one of the city's top 5 employers.

The system's enrollment is 2,296 students, from pre-K to high school. Half of those students are transported to and from school by buses using 15 different routes.

For more information, call 256-245-5256 or visit www.sylacauga.k12.al.us. The central office address is 43 N. Broadway Ave., Sylacauga, 35150.

Regular board of education meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the central office. Work sessions are scheduled as necessary.

8



Effects of Non-Aggregating Chemically Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes on the Morphology and Proliferation of D54 Human Glioma Cells

Seantel Hopkins¹, Vedrana Montana², Manoj K. Gottipati², Elena Bekyarova³, Robert C. Haddon³, Vladimir Pappura²

Department of Biology, Jefferson State Community College, Birmingham, AL¹

Departments of Neurobiology and Biomedical Engineering, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL²

Department of Chemistry, University of California, Riverside, CA³

Summary

Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) have shown much promise in drug delivery and neural prosthesis applications. When added to culture media, single-walled carbon nanotubes covalently linked to poly(ethylene glycol) (SWCNT-PEG) were able to make astrocytes larger and stimulate proliferation. However, SWCNT-PEG aggregate (shown in figure 1C) over time (~6 months) and could have differential effects on the cells. So, we have developed SWCNTs functionalized with tetrahydrofuran-terminated poly(ethylene glycol) (SWCNT-PEG-THFF) to prevent this aggregation. Experiments were conducted to compare the effects of SWCNT-PEG-THFF on the morphological and proliferation characteristics of the D54 human glioma cell line.

Materials and Methods

A

B

C

Figure 1: A) Image of a vial containing SWCNT-PEG solution. B) Images of schematics for the synthesis of SWCNT-PEG (Adapted from N. et al., 2005) and SWCNT-PEG-THFF (Adapted from Kalinina et al., 2010). C) Bright-field images showing the aggregation of SWCNT-PEG (left) over a period of 6 months after synthesis. Scale bars, 50 μ m.

A

B

C

Figure 2: A) Image of a D54 cells expressing enhanced green fluorescent protein (EGFP). B) Schematic of the objective used to image D54 human glioma cells. C) Experimental design: timeline.

Results

a)

b)

c)

Figure 3: Algorithm used for the morphometric analysis of EGFP expressing D54 human glioma cells. Scale bar, 20 μ m. Adapted from Gottipati et al., 2012

a)

b)

c)

Figure 4: Effect of the functional groups (FG) PEG and PEG-THFF on the morphology of D54 human glioma cell line in culture. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of cells analyzed in each condition. Scale bars, 20 μ m.

a)

b)

c)

Figure 5: Effect of SWCNT-PEG and SWCNT-PEG-THFF on the morphology of D54 human glioma cell line in culture. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of cells analyzed in each condition. Scale bars, 20 μ m.

a)

b)

c)

Figure 6: Effect of SWCNT-PEG and SWCNT-PEG-THFF on the proliferation of D54 human glioma cell line in culture. Red represents cells at the 2 hr time point and green represents cells at the 2 day time point. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of coverslips imaged in each condition. Scale bars, 50 μ m.

a)

b)

c)

Figure 7: Effect of SWCNT-PEG and SWCNT-PEG-THFF on the proliferation of D54 human glioma cell line in culture. Red represents cells at the 2 hr time point and green represents cells at the 2 day time point. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of coverslips imaged in each condition. Scale bars, 50 μ m.

Conclusions

D54 cells show a decrease in the form factor when treated with SWCNT-PEG-THFF when compared to the control.

D54 cells show a significant decrease in the form factor of cells treated with the functional group PEG-THFF. This indicates that the morphological changes are induced by the FG and not the SWCNT backbone itself.

D54 cells show a spike in proliferation between the 2 hr and 2-day time point in all cells treated with SWCNT. However, there was a significant decrease in the number of live cells treated with SWCNT-PEG-THFF when compared to the control. D54 cells treated with SWCNT-PEG-THFF also showed a significant increase in the percentage of dead cells between the 2 hr and 2-day time point. However, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of dead cells at the 2-day time point when compared to SWCNT-PEG but not with the control group.

D54 cells, treated with the FGs alone showed a spike in proliferation between the 2 hr and 2-day time point in the control group and cells treated with PEG but not with cells treated with PEG-THFF. Also, D54 cells treated with PEG and PEG-THFF showed a significant decrease in the percentage of dead cells between the 2 hr and 2-day time point. However, cells treated with PEG-THFF showed a significant decrease in the percentage of dead cells at the 2hr time point when compared to cells treated with PEG. While cells treated with PEG-THFF at the 2-day time point showed a significant decrease in the percentage of dead cells when compared to both the control group and cells treated with PEG. This suggests that the functional group PEG-THFF stabilizes the cell cycle of D54 cells.

Submitted photo

Jefferson State student Seantel Hopkins received the Blazing to Biomedical Careers Best Presentation Award for her project Effects of Non-Aggregating Chemically Functionalized Nanotubes on the Morphology and Proliferation of D54 Human Glioma Cells.

Jeff State offers biomedical partnership with UAB

Staff Report

PELL CITY – The Blazing to Biomedical Careers (BBC) program is one of several “new and exciting things going on here” at Jefferson State Community College at the start of 2017, according to the school’s associate dean.

A partnership between the college and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the program is available through a grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH) that funds a minimum of 10 Jefferson State students who are interested in pursuing careers in biomedical and behavioral sciences.

“It’s a five-year grant that is allowing our students to get experience and training while working in a UAB research lab during a 10-week paid internship,” said Dr. Nicholas Kin, who serves as associate dean of Jefferson State’s Pell City campus. “They get an advisor who follows their progress until they graduate from Jefferson State, a mentor for their final two years at UAB and scholarship opportunities upon transferring there through the Bridges

to Baccalaureate Degree Program.”

The BBC program assists students in earning undergraduate degrees toward the goal of pursuing advanced education and entry to a biomedical career. It has a particular mission of serving groups that have typically been underrepresented in science professions, such as racial minorities, women and rural students.

Kin, who also teaches biology at Jefferson State, said it offers students a practical understanding of their field of study they otherwise might not have. “In class, I can talk about all these great research opportunities and facilities, but now they have the opportunity to go to UAB and see them and work with internationally known researchers.”

January saw the beginning of a new partnership between Jefferson State and Garrison Steel Erectors in the Pell City Industrial Park. The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Ironworker Training Program is a one-semester course offering a certificate in ironworker training.

“We have about 20 students taking it,” Kin said. “They attend the classroom portion of the course here, and Garrison Steel provides hands-on training at their facility. They’ve even taken field trips to construction sites, like at Northside Medical, so the students can see things being built.”

Representatives of Garrison Steel said the company views the partnership as “a commitment to ourselves, our employees, our community and our industry. We want to guide our current work force and also the next generation of ironworkers toward success. Garrison Steel prides itself in being a leader in our community when it comes to hiring high school graduates and preparing them for a career.”

The ironworker training course concludes in May. According to labor statistics, the median annual salary for ironworkers is \$53,000.

Also new this year is Jefferson State’s Automotive Apprenticeship Program with WKW, an auto parts manufacturer in Pell City. “With manufacturing

methods shifting toward a more automated focus, this is a workforce training ‘earn-as-you-learn’ program through which students can earn a degree in robotic manufacturing and then get hired by WKW when they’ve completed it. In effect, WKW is paying for its own workforce.”

Participating students are offered the opportunity to work as many as 24 hours per week at WKW while earning semester credit hours toward an associate in applied science degree. Upon successfully completing the apprenticeship, graduates may advance to a full-time production or higher-skilled position at WKW.

“The program started this past fall semester, and it’s working very well,” Kin said. “Today, you can’t just walk in and turn a screwdriver in a factory like you used to, and this is giving our students real, in-demand training for current automated manufacturing jobs.”

In another new development, Jefferson State now offers a welding degree program.

“We’ve always offered welding classes, but now

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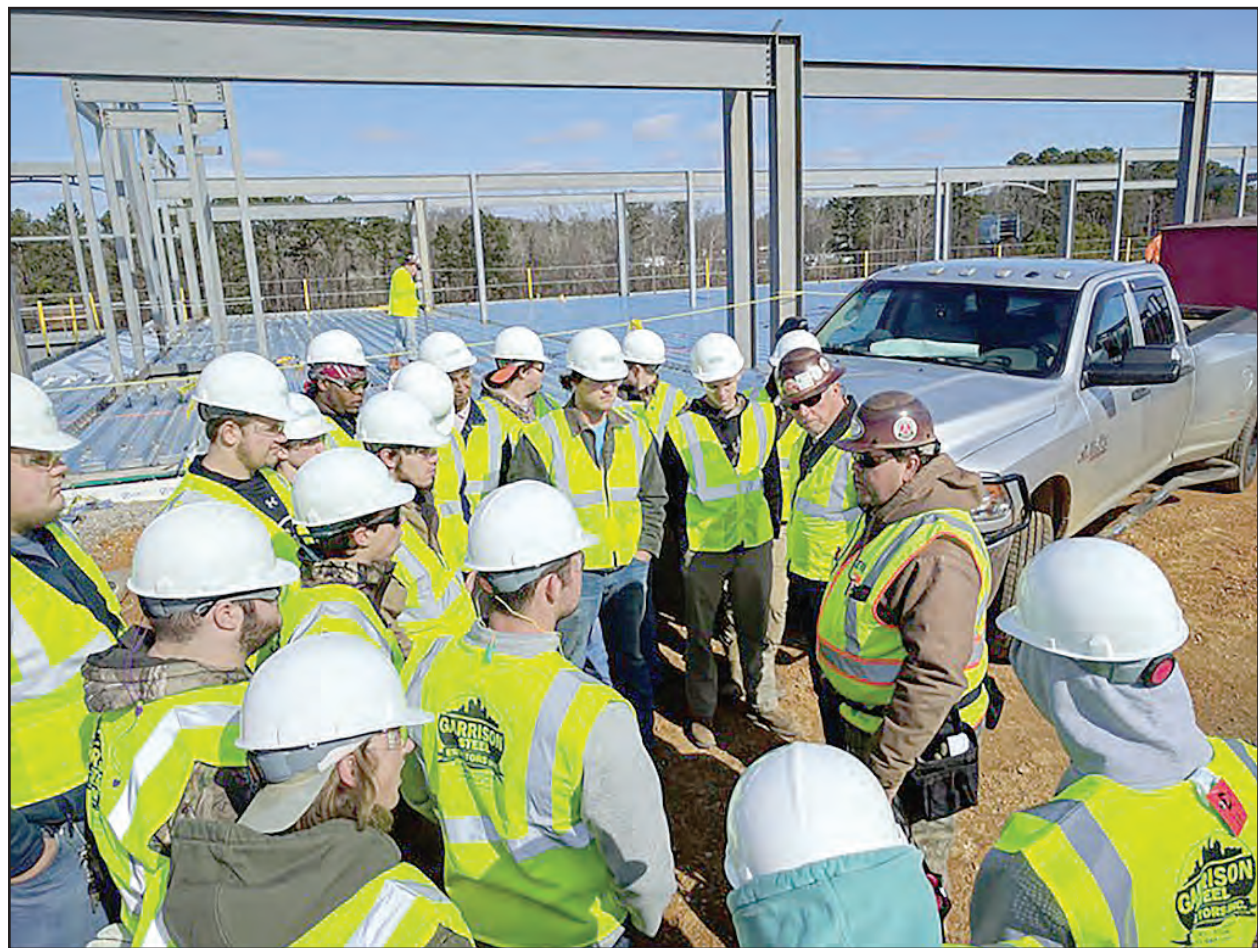
we offer a degree,” Kin said. “Our students can now earn industry-recognized degrees and certificates through the NCCER welding curriculum, which correlates to the American Welding Society (AWS) standards and guidelines for entry level weld-

ers. Upon completion of the program, students can obtain AWS welding certificates.” Also during 2016, athletics returned to Jefferson State with the formation of men’s and women’s golf teams. “Everybody is really excited

about this,” Kin said, who serves as athletics director. “Jefferson State used to have some really strong athletic programs before budgetary reasons forced cut-backs. We started back with golf – and full scholarships for golf team members – and folks are

already clamoring for baseball, softball, tennis and other sports. We’re working on those and hope to bring them back too.” Three members of the golf teams are from St. Clair County: Jacob Box of Odenville, Jagger Phillips of Ragland and

Morgan McKinney of Moody. Applications for the 2017-18 golf rosters are now being accepted online at www.jeffersonstate.edu. Prospective team members must be full-time students enrolled in a minimum of 12 hours.



Submitted photo

Garrison Steel has partnered with Jefferson State’s Pell City campus to offer ironworker training. Here, students participating in the course visit a construction site at what will be the new Northside Medical facility.

ENROLLMENT RECORD AND CONTINUED DUAL ENROLLMENT SUCCESS

Jefferson State Community College’s Pell City campus set an enrollment record during 2016, with 750 students enrolled for the fall semester.

About 200 high school students currently participate in dual enrollment options at the local campus, earning both high school and college credits in such fields of study as English, history, theater, speech, psychology and manufacturing.



Submitted photo

Members of Jefferson State’s 2016-17 men’s golf team are, from left, Daviston Payton, Britton Proper, Dalton O’Rear, Jacob Box, Jagger Phillips and Caleb Noles.



Submitted photo

Members of Jefferson State’s 2016-17 women’s golf team are, from left, Alexis Burnett, Rylee Beck, Hannah King and Morgan McKinney.

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More educational opportunities coming for students in Pell City Schools

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

Dr. Michael Barber said the school system has and will continue to work to provide more educational opportunities for students in the upcoming year.

“Many existing successful programs will be strengthened and built upon, while seeking new opportunities which engage students in their desired learning pathway,” Barber said.

He said several events impacted the Pell City School System during 2016.

“One of the most impacting was the re-election of the Pell City School Board,” Barber said.

All but one seat was challenged in last year’s municipal election, but the original board remains intact for the next four years, providing experience and a continued direction for the school system.

“Each Board member has had opportunities in developing and supporting the direction of the school system,” Barber said. “Their knowledge and experience have helped move the Pell City School System forward during the past year.”

Barber said the school system worked with stakeholders last year to develop a five-year strategic plan.

As part of that process, we defined our core values or what we believe,” he said.

Core values include exemplary character, academic excellence, partnerships between home, school and community, preparing students to be college and/or career ready, and identifying and fostering students’ individual gifts, talents, and abilities.

“When we reflect on our system’s accomplishments last year, we are proud of the progress we made in regard to our core values,” Barber said. “For example, we fully implemented Core Essential Values in grades K-12. This character education curriculum emphasizes one character trait each month and provides local schools with multiple resources for teachers, students, and families. So, in each school at every grade level, students focus on developing a particular character trait.”

For the 2016-17 academic year, school officials are focusing on three different areas in regard to academic excellence.

Barber said at the kindergarten through second-grade levels, teachers and administrators are refining the reading program in an effort to ensure younger students master the beginning reading skills necessary to become proficient, independent readers as they move to third grade.

“To strengthen students’ reading comprehension and mastery of content in grades 7-8, we are providing Architecture of Learning training for our junior high teachers,” Barber said. “This research-based training helps teachers design learning units that promote student engagement and standards mastery by implementing practices that correlate with how the brain processes and retains information.”



Dr. Michael Barber

He said the school system continues to strengthen its partnership with AMSTI (Alabama Math Science and Technology Initiative) by becoming part of a grant opportunity designed to improve students’ math skills.

“This two-year OGAP (Ongoing Assessment Project) training helps teachers understand how students learn mathematics and how to use tools, practices, and resources to aid students in this process,” Barber said. “Rather than solely teaching computational skills, teachers participate in in-depth training that equips them to help students develop number sense and an understanding of the “why” behind the mathematical practices.”

He said the school system continues to provide more opportunities so high school students are college and/or career ready.

Kim Williams, the curriculum Coordinator for the Pell City School System, said the system’s Advanced Placement program, where students can receive college credit, has grown.

“We currently offer 13 AP classes,” Williams said. She said students can take AP program classes in English, history, science, math and art.

Williams said the total enrollment of for AP classes is 261. Some students may be enrolled in more than one class, and the number doesn’t reflect the total number of students actually participating in AP program classes.

She said there are also students in the dual enrollment program, to complete college courses while still in high school.

“This semester, we began offering Dual Enrollment in Theater for the first time,” Williams said. “We are continuing to offer Dual Enrollment opportunities in English, math, history, speech, psychology, sociology, art,

and applied engineering.”

She said the school system’s Project Lead The Way program offers both engineering courses and biomedical science courses for students.

School officials said students a Pell City High School earned \$4.1 million in scholarships in 2015-16.

Barber said the school system also made great strides last year in the area of the system’s Workforce Development Program.

“Through this program, students are exposed to real work settings, better understand the connections between the school and work environments, and determine if they want to commit to the career path in which they have been interested,” he said. “We had 128 students working as interns or apprentices throughout our community. Students had this opportunity because of the commitment of 60 business and industry partners. In total, our students earned almost \$110,000.00 during the 2105-16 academic year.”

Barber said three new programs were this year for high school students, computer science, an advanced police patrol course, and an ironworker training program.

He said the ironworking training program is a partnership between K-12, Jefferson State Community College, and Garrison Steel.

“Students earn dual enrollment credit while learning to become ironworkers through classes led by Mr. John Garrison,” Barber said.

He said students also have the opportunity to participate in the Academy of Craft Training in Birmingham. The program enables students to take courses taught by industry leaders on the ACT campus Monday – Friday mornings. Students learn trades like electrical, welding, masonry, plumbing, HVAC, industrial maintenance, and building construction through the program.

Barber said in 2016 the Pell City School System was recognized by the State Department of Education and the Alabama School Board Association as an innovative leader in developing opportunities for students.

“The Pell City School System is very thankful for the existing partnerships and friendships and has set as a goal to strengthen and increase each for 2017,” he said.



Submitted photo

Pell City students now have the opportunity to participate in the Academy of Craft Training in Birmingham. The program enables students to take courses taught by industry leaders on the ACT campus Monday – Friday mornings. Students learn such trades as welding, electrical, masonry, plumbing, HVAC, industrial maintenance and building construction through the program.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

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File photo

For many years a valuable resource for Talladega and surrounding communities, AIDB remains an important local institution.

AIDB continues to provide quality education for the deaf, blind, multi-disabled community

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind continues to strive for perfection in providing quality education and services for the deaf, blind and the multi-disabled community. During the last year, the institution proposed plans for a new student agriculture center, continued to provide community outreach with local nonprofits, and solidified plans to partner with a national technical institute.

Student agriculture center

Land clearing has started for AIDB's Joe Tom Armbruster Agricultural Center. The facility will be on 30-plus acres behind the Helen Keller School campus. "Preliminary design drawings are being drawn up with the architect, and there are high hopes for the bid process to start building will occur sometimes this March," said Patti Anne Chastain, assistant director of Foundational Giving Programs for AIDB. "It's exciting times for new beginnings this new year, and we have high hopes for the center."

The agricultural center, which is set to be completed by the 2017-18 school year, will be home to multiple gardens, orchards and a pasture.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn more about where their food comes from," Chastain said. "Over the last several months, our staff has toured multiple schools in the area, including Munford, to learn more about their project-based-learning."

The center will help provide a curriculum that focuses on hands-on skills, giving students with basic agricultural knowledge needed in modern practice. It will also provide work experience for the entire AIDB family.

"We are so excited

because everything at the center will be accessible for our deaf, blind and multi-disabled students," Chastain said, adding that she hopes the center will be something the entire community can enjoy.

"It is our goal to share the center with our community, so we can all learn from one another," she said.

Last summer, an anonymous donor gave the AIDB \$1 million to help establish a new agricultural center at the institution.

The center will be named after the late Joe Tom Armbruster, who was an avid farmer in the area. His wife, Jan, served as the Alabama School for the Deaf's art teacher for many years.

"He always talked about wanting to do something for the children here, and we are so proud to be able to honor him in this way," Chastain said.

AIDB President Dr. John Mascia announced plans for the development of the new agricultural center during the 2016 fall convocation.

"We are so excited to be able to do this and we appreciate the donor's generosity and trust in AIDB to do something great for our students," he said. "I want to thank Patti Anne Chastain, the assistant director of our foundation giving programs, for her efforts in making this dream a reality for our students."

Nonprofit work

Members from Lake Logan Martin's Pier 59 presented AIDB with a donation of \$21,522 in 2016.

The donation was the result of the group's "Christmas in July" annual fundraiser. Money raised from the event is divided equally among the Alabama School for the Blind, the Alabama School for the Deaf and Helen Keller School, to purchase Christmas gifts for students.

Pier 59 staff noted that

July marked their seventh year to host the event.

Looking ahead

Mascia noted that he is extremely proud of AIDB's accomplishments, but that there is always room from improvement.

"AIDB's graduation rate and employment rate is above the national average for the deaf and blind community," he said.

Mascia also said he's excited about the recent partnership with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York. The partnership will aid in providing rigorous hands-on training opportunities for AIDB staff and students.

"We grow when we can learn from one another," he said.

According to Lynne Hanner, AIDB director of institutional advancement, 48 percent of the deaf community in Alabama is employed, and 64 percent of AIDB deaf workers are employed.

Hanner added that 70 percent of the blind community in the state is unemployed, while around 70 percent of AIDB's blind community has jobs.

"We take pride in helping provide workforce opportunities for those that we serve," Mascia said, "but those numbers still aren't good enough."

AIDB has five campuses in Talladega, including: Alabama School for the Deaf, Alabama School for the Blind, Helen Keller School, the E.H. Gentry Facility and the Alabama Industries for the Blind. The institution also has eight regional centers across the state. AIDB serves 24,215 people statewide and employs around 1,200 in Alabama.

"We look forward to strengthening our community outreach to our local community and all across the state," Mascia said. "It is our mission to be able to serve everyone that can benefit from our programs."



Submitted photo


The Joe Tom Armbruster Agricultural Center provides a curriculum that focuses on hands-on skills, giving students a basic agricultural knowledge needed in modern practice.

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Talladega College marches into history, plans 2017 improvements

By LACI BRASWELL
Home staff writer

The new year appears promising for the oldest private historically black liberal arts college in Alabama.

Talladega College gained national attention when its band marched in the Presidential Inauguration Parade, implemented a FastTrack program and welcomed multiple nationally recognized guest speakers for its convocations.

In early 2017, Talladega College President Dr. Billy C. Hawkins confirmed that he met with President Donald Trump during the school band's trip to Washington, D.C., to participate in the inaugural parade. "It was a grand experience to be able to march down Pennsylvania Avenue, to be part of a moment in history and to be greeted with such positivity," Hawkins said. "As the band approached the presidential viewing stand, President Trump smiled and gave a thumbs up (and) thanked us for participating as we passed by." Hawkins noted the response was so positive he was granted the opportunity to visit the White House and tour the West Wing.

"I did get the opportunity on Sunday to meet with the president and members of his staff," Hawkins said.

Without elaborating on the specifics discussed at the meeting, Hawkins said he left the White House feeling "very encouraged about a positive future for HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) all across the country. We didn't get to discuss specifics, but the president gave us much praise. I plan to take many more trips back to D.C."

A gofundme account with a \$75,000 goal was set up to help with the expenses for the trip. After Hawkins made appearances on national TV news outlets, the account has grown to more than \$676,000. Add that to the individual pledges made

apart from the gofundme, and more than \$700,000 has collectively been raised. The gofundme goal has been re-set for \$1 million.

"The support not just in the state, but nationally and internationally has been overwhelming," he said. Hawkins has stressed that "leftover funds will be used to benefit multiple capital improvement projects, including new band uniforms, structural improvements and band scholarship money."

Initially, the college faced a heavy backlash from alumni for its decision to take part in the inauguration.

"Many tried to politicize our decision, but it was about the experience, and for our students, to have a chance of being a part of history," Hawkins said.

"The whole experience taught me to be more open-minded about things," senior Antonio Rucker said. "After seeing the band march down Pennsylvania Avenue, my whole mindset changed. It was incredible experience, and I just want to say thank you to everyone that helped make it possible." Hawkins noted the band is not slowing down anytime soon.

"We will be participating in the nation's largest Mardi Gras Parade, which goes through the Superdome in New Orleans," he said. "I know the students will be greeted with an eruption of applause and I'm so excited for what the future holds for our college and band program."

The Talladega College marching band is under the direction of Miguel Bonds.

To donate to the college and the Marching Tornados, go to www.gofundme.com/great-tornado-to-inaugural-parade.

Former ITT Tech students Talladega College announced in September 2016, that it's offering admission to any former student of the ITT Technical Institute. ITT Tech closed its doors last year after filing for bankruptcy. The institute had

three locations in Alabama and served approximately 1,600 students.

Talladega College plans to assist any past ITT Tech student through its "FastTrack" program. The program offers online courses, which caters to adult learners and their busy schedules.

Former ITT Tech students who enroll at Talladega College will receive a \$1,500 scholarship during their first academic year.

Talladega College will provide six-week online sessions in the fields of criminal justice, psychology and business administration.



File photo

Talladega College gained national attention when its band was invited to march in the Presidential Inauguration Parade. College president Dr. Billy C. Hawkins addressed the media and a crowd of well-wishers as the band prepared to leave downtown Talladega for Washington, D.C.

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