



The Buzz

JANUARY
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Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Bishop Hall Charter School Opens New Facility



The front entrance of the new Bishop Hall Charter School is located on Pinetree Boulevard facing the current board office.

The New Year brought many new things to students enrolled at Bishop Hall Charter School. Students arrived at the new school location on Tuesday, January 6, to have breakfast for the first time in the school's new cafeteria.

The 22,300 square foot facility was completed at a cost of \$3.1 million by Culpepper Construction Company. The entire project was funded by proceeds of the Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax passed by Thomas County citizens in 2012. The building was designed by Jinright, Ryan, and Lynn Architects of Thomasville with Leon Lynn being the principal architect.

The new building includes school offices, a spacious indoor commons area, a fully equipped science lab with exhaust hood, a 28-station computer lab, a cafeteria and

kitchen, and seven classrooms. The building adjoins the fully renovated former Central High School gymnasium which will serve as a physical education facility for the charter school. The gym includes a full basketball court, a renovated classroom for health and personal fitness, locker rooms and a weight room.

Each classroom is equipped with an interactive SmartBoard and Wi-Fi internet access. A nearly \$1 million grant provided by the State of Georgia will equip the building with the latest technology and will provide every student the use of a netbook which will provide students access to their electronic textbooks, the school's new electronic library, and dozens of on-line courses that are supported by fully certified teachers.

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Governor Awards \$958,000 Grant to Bishop Hall

On December 15, 2014, Governor Nathan Deal awarded Thomas County's Bishop Hall Charter School a grant of \$958,000 to implement a "blended learning" model for high-risk students. The Thomas County School System was one of only three systems in the state to receive the highly competitive technology implementation grant. Other grant recipients were Gwinnett County Public Schools and Fulton County Schools.

"Blended learning refers to a model of instruction in which students complete a portion of their instruction online and at least part of their instruction in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home," Thomas County School Superintendent Dusty Kornegay explained.

The implementation of blended learning is designed to enable Bishop Hall to raise its graduation rate, provide an even wider array of opportunities for students to complete college courses while enrolled at Bishop Hall, and prepare high-risk students for continued growth and enrichment through college, career and post-secondary readiness.

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The Thomas County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, sex, or disability.

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Jan. 12 - March 13 - "Yishu - Art of the Far East" on display at Thomasville Center of the Arts; featuring student art from GP, CC, TCUE & TCMS

Jan. 13 - Board of Education Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Jan. 16 - TCMS Honor Roll Assemblies

Jan. 19 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Jan. 20 - First Aid Class, Cross Creek, 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Jan. 27 - System Technology Meeting, 1:00 p.m.

Jan. 31 - Region Technology Fair

Feb. 5 - Progress Reports

Please visit the school websites for a complete calendar of events.

The Buzz is a monthly publication of the Thomas County Schools. Send suggestions or comments to Melanie Hester, 200 North Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville, GA 31792; 229.225-4380, ext. 115; mhester@thomas.k12.ga.us. *The Buzz* is available online at www.thomas.k12.ga.us, News and Events tab.



Bishop Hall students Haylie Brown, from left, Starr Wyche, Bryana Howard, and Kayla Cohran enjoy breakfast for the first time in the school’s new cafeteria.

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The school kitchen will also provide meals for Thomas County’s Pathways Program and the Renaissance Center. The school has an opening enrollment of approximately 175 students with an anticipated maximum enrollment of 200.

Bishop Hall Charter School was founded on the campus of Vashti in 1999 by the Thomas County School System.

Dr. Terrel Solana who was superintendent of the Thomas County School System at the time that Bishop Hall was founded and who now serves as chair of the Bishop Hall board reflected on the history of the school: “Some fifteen years ago we had the idea that by providing a nurturing, caring environment, individualized instruction and attention, and utilizing as partners, the resource agencies in our county; students who had not been successful in traditional programs would flourish. Through the efforts of the Thomas County School System, an extremely dedicated Bishop Hall staff, and a wealth of community support this has, indeed, happened. This

vision has remained the same, but with the opening of the new Bishop Hall School, the facilities, technology, and opportunities have far surpassed what anyone could imagine. Through the vision and resourcefulness of those in charge, this school is really ‘cutting edge,’ and I am just pleased and proud that they have allowed me to stay connected in a small way. I would like to commend the administration, staff, and faculty for this wonderful addition to the educational opportunities for the children of Thomas County.”

Since its founding in 1999, more than 415 students who would likely not have graduated from a traditional school have been able to graduate due to the unique curriculum design and wrap-around services that are offered to students through the charter school.

The school’s mission statement is to offer educational and social opportunities through traditional and non-traditional approaches that assist high-risk students who are not

succeeding in the traditional high school setting to realize their greatest potential.

Bishop Hall is a well-established charter school in its 16th year of providing non-traditional educational opportunity for high-risk students in Thomas County. The school has the distinction of being the only charter school in Georgia with Title I Whole School status. Bishop Hall has always strived to create a learning environment that embraces the entire student, not just the academics. Social, cultural and emotional issues often compound student academic issues.

The key to Bishop Hall’s success has been its leadership and faculty. Founding Principal Rich Johnson who retired in 2014 had a leading role in the planning and design of the new facility.

“Several local foundations have been essential to the mission of Bishop Hall, allowing the school to offer smaller class sizes, social support services, and unique experiential learning opportunities that have truly set the Bishop Hall experience apart from traditional schools,” Thomas County Schools Superintendent Dusty Kornegay said.

“We also wish to thank the wonderful leadership and staff of Vashti for providing a home to Bishop Hall for its first fifteen years. Without Vashti, there would be no Bishop Hall. Our system has forged a close relationship with Vashti over the last fifteen years, and even though we are relocating our charter school, we intend to remain good friends and strong partners in fulfilling our mutual mission of improving the lives of young people,” said Kornegay.



FINALISTS NAMED FOR ALL STATE CHORUS - Thomas County Middle School seventh grade students Kaleb Ward (pictured from left to right), Megan Schminky, and Joshua Stephens have been named finalists in the 2015 Georgia Music Educators Middle School All State Chorus. Approximately 4,500 middle school students auditioned from across the state of Georgia. Auditions consisted of a prepared solo and scales, sight-reading, an audiation test, and a written music vocabulary test. Finalists will spend three days in Athens, Georgia, in rehearsals that will culminate in a concert on March 7, 2015.



Bishop Hall Social Studies Department Chair and Technology Coordinator Jeremy Rich (standing) teaches students Jordan Stewart, from left, Jordan Smith, Antonzio White, Bo Willis, and Colby Shiver how to access a learning module.

GRANT continued from page 1

Since its inception, Bishop Hall Charter School has utilized a performance-based system for awarding academic credits, allowing students who have fallen behind academically to work at their own pace in order to complete courses in a compacted time period. Over the last three years, on-line courses and hybrid courses that combine traditional face-to-face instruction with on-line instruction have allowed students the flexibility to complete high school courses on-line with the support of local teachers based at Bishop Hall.

This program has allowed students who must work during the day to be able to complete classwork in the evenings or on weekends. It has also been beneficial for young mothers who do not have daycare for their children during the school day to be able to take courses on-line in order to complete their high school education.

The grant will allow Bishop Hall to expand on-line offerings and fully align its curriculum with state standards by implementing Georgia Virtual School content using the

Desire2Learn platform. The grant will equip a computer lab in the all-new charter school facility and will provide a netbook to every Bishop Hall student. The grant will also provide the school a virtual library consisting of thousands of “e-books” that can be checked out on the students’ individual netbooks.

The grant will also fund a full-time technology specialist and several part-time teaching positions so that the school can be open in the evenings several nights per week for students who wish to work during the day and complete their high school education in the evenings. Evening classes will also be available for students who have fallen behind academically and who wish to complete evening classes in order to get back on track for graduation.

“We believe that an array of services and supports underpinning a flexible academic schedule that meets the needs of non-traditional students provided by effective educators using innovative instructional practices and state-of-the-art e-learning solutions will result in students

who have an increased sense of ownership in their education and in their future which will yield better assessment scores that result in improved graduation rates. Our theory of change will be measured and monitored using a continuous quality improvement cycle of “test/learn” so we capture and incorporate findings at every step of implementation,” Kornegay said.

Southwest Georgia Technical College partnered with the school system on the grant effort. SWGTC has worked closely with the Thomas County School System and Bishop Hall on a variety of college and career initiatives. As a partner in the grant, SWGTC will facilitate dual enrollment of Bishop Hall students via its high school coordinator and provide COMPASS testing for potential students. In addition, SWGTC will facilitate student academic success by offering students access to its learning support programs, providing loaned books at no cost to students, providing access to its on-campus licensed counselor, and including high school students in its Lunch-and-Learn series designed to help students prepare for career success.

“The grant was a team effort, and I wish to thank Associate Superintendent Melanie Chavaux, Assistant Superintendents Lisa Williams and Joey Holland, Technology Coordinator Aaron Stolarik, Principal Chris Huckans, and Julie Sharpe of Sharpe Solutions for their tireless efforts to complete the successful grant application,” Kornegay said.

“The Innovation Fund award gives us an opportunity to equip the new Bishop Hall Charter School building with the latest technology for online learning. With the state

transitioning standardized testing from paper to online, this grant will provide the school system with a model and a testing ground that will be beneficial as we replicate it throughout the Thomas County School System,” said Joey Holland Thomas County School System’s assistant superintendent for finance and Bishop Hall’s Chief Financial Officer.

“This grant, in addition to the completion of our new complex, opens up a vast array of opportunities for the students at Bishop Hall to grow academically and become even more competitive in their future educational and career pursuits. As a founding member of Bishop Hall Charter School’s staff, there is a tremendous feeling of satisfaction that our hard work and commitment has been recognized by the Governor and the State Department of Education mixed with excitement for the evolution of the school that is now possible due to the awarding of this innovation grant,” said Bishop Hall Principal Chris Huckans.

“It is an honor for Bishop Hall Charter School to be awarded this technology grant. This grant will bridge the technological divide that exists between many of our students and their counterparts. Bishop Hall began with very limited and outdated technologies. Today the faculty and staff proudly embrace and utilize the latest technologies to better facilitate the learning process. Every classroom is a Smart Classroom engaging students in 21st Century learning with state of the art equipment,” said Bishop Hall Charter School Social Studies Department Chair and Technology Coordinator Jeremy Rich.

**FIRST® LEGO®
League**



Thomas County Schools Win at Regional Competition

Most people would see the building bricks known as LEGOs as toys for children, but students and coaches from Thomas County see them as way more than that. They see them as an amazing, competitive learning opportunity involving robotics, engineering, science, math, and fun.

Four teams from the Thomas County School System recently attended the FIRST® LEGO® League Regional Competition in Dublin, Georgia. The FIRST LEGO League engages students in real-world engineering challenges by building LEGO-based robots to complete tasks while applying real-world math and science concepts. Three teams from Thomas County Middle School and one fourth grade team from Cross Creek Elementary School competed. Every team received an award, and two of the teams will advance to the Super Regionals in January.

The first team from TCMS, named Block Busters, won first overall in the competition and will advance to super regionals.

Coached by Mrs. Kimberly Simmons and Mrs. Dana Studdard, the team had a project design named the Braille Buster. The product

was a teaching tool, designed and created by the students, to teach visually impaired learners how to read braille. They actually used LEGOs to make each braille letter and then placed them on an alphabet board. The students then visited the Georgia Industries for the Blind in order to present and receive endorsement for their product. They toured the plant and met with visually impaired employees in order to assess their learning needs.

Studdard, a LEGO league coach for the team, said, "The collaboration with the Georgia Industries for the Blind was priceless for the kids. They will forever see people with disabilities differently. They came away from the experience with a passion to make sure that their project was taken seriously and that it was relevant. They succeeded."

Jeremy Simmons, an 8th grader and lead programmer for the team, said "The day of competition is very challenging, but exciting. You're never sure what your robot will do. You have to be prepared to solve problems and do your best."

The second of the three teams from TCMS,

coached by Mr. Michael and Mrs. Lisa Stephens, won the programming award and is advancing to super regionals. Known as the A+ Team, this team, worked on a project to help students with different learning styles become engaged in learning about social studies. Students created a "Race to the Museum" board game using the Georgia Department of Education's Online Assessment System (OAS) and benchmark questions for the first half of the year. The game engages audio, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learners through its technology.

Coached by Mr. Ashley Palmer and Mrs. Michelle Brinn, the third team from TCMS won the Project Award in Research. The team created a video to help with the language barrier in Africa when sending supplies for the Ebola outbreak.

"Our team created a kit that had all of the supplies needed to help the communities contain the disease along with a portable DVD player to play the instructional video," said team leader Michelle Brinn. "The video gave the residents visual instruction when there wasn't an interpreter available."

Cross Creek's first LEGO League Team (called Thomas County Purple # 9520) brought home the Presentation Award. This award recognizes the team that effectively communicates the problem they have identified and their proposed solution to both the judges and other potential supporters.

Their presentation included team members performing a skit entitled "Oobleck and the Three States of Matter." The team's project involved learning about the properties of the three states of matter in a fun, hands-on method using oobleck. Oobleck comes from the book by Dr. Seuss entitled *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. Oobleck is made by mixing corn starch, water, and green food coloring. Over one hundred individual containers of oobleck were distributed at the Lego League competition this past Saturday. Everywhere you looked, people were playing with oobleck.

Fourth-grade teacher and team leader, Kathy Thompson said, "Since our team was the first Cross Creek LEGO League team, the coaches and team members definitely had to learn together, and throughout the entire experience, we had fun!"



Teachers Rebecca Gaskin (L-R), Kathie Craven, and Cammie Anthony learn how to navigate Quizlet, a free website providing learning tools for students, including flashcards, study and game modes. The class was taught by teachers Courtney Warner and Gail Trotter.

Thomas County Teachers Learn at Second Annual Techno Expo

On January 5, 2015, Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School held its second annual "Techno Expo." On this professional learning day, teachers attended sessions in order to learn how to integrate technology into their classrooms.

The sessions were conducted by teachers from TCUE/TCMS, Cross Creek Elementary and Thomas County Central High School. Sessions included strategies on the use of Quizlet, Plickers, Kahoots, paperless assessment, posting instructional videos to teacher webpages, Turn It In, creating and using QR codes, and how to find information using GALILEO. Presentations also included

instructional strategies such as Close Reading and Formative Assessment.

Melvin Hugans, TCUE assistant principal, organized the event for the second year. "It is important to remember that integrating technology into instruction is only one aspect of the learning process. Technology cannot be a substitute for well-trained teachers. However, this event allowed teachers in our system to share their knowledge of various instructional technology tools so that fellow educators will be able to use more engaging strategies during instructional opportunities," said Hugans.

The event was open to all teachers in the Thomas County System.

NEED CPR? FIRST AID?

First Aid will be offered on Tuesday, January 20, at Cross Creek from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Please sign up on PDEExpress to attend the training session.



CPR AND
FIRST AID
CLASSES

TCMS Science Fair Winners Announced



Pictured are the Thomas County Middle School Science Fair winners with their awards and ribbons.

The Thomas County Middle School Science Fair was held recently. There were more than 200 projects entered by 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Judges came from Florida State University, Thomas University, Thomas County Central High School, Scholars Academy, and Law Enforcement as well as retired teachers.

The Overall TCMS Science Fair winner earns the Jackie Winchester Award. This award, donated by Sunnie Wynn, honors the late Mrs. Jackie Winchester who taught for over 40 years and was a great advocate of the Science Fair. This year's winner of the Jackie Winchester Award was Andrew Baugh.

The following students earned awards:

CHEMISTRY

- ♦ Sydnie Shelton- 1st Place & Overall Physical Science Division Award
- ♦ Meg Harnevious- 2nd Place
- ♦ Lexi Knapp- 3rd Place
- ♦ Jackson O'Neal and Maggie Simmons- Honorable Mention

PHYSICS/ASTRONOMY

- ♦ Anthony Herring- 1st Place
- ♦ Nathan Gibson- 2nd Place
- ♦ Brook Beasley- 3rd Place
- ♦ Brandon Hopper- Honorable Mention

ENGINEERING

- ♦ Autumn Tew- 1st Place
- ♦ Kaleb Ward- 2nd Place
- ♦ Javasse Thomas- 3rd Place

ANIMAL SCIENCE

- ♦ Kealie Bennett- 1st Place
- ♦ Katelyn Hancock- 2nd Place
- ♦ Holly Green- 3rd Place

PLANT SCIENCE

- ♦ Danielle Sauls- 1st Place
- ♦ Harrison Owens - 2nd Place
- ♦ Aubrey Miller- 3rd Place
- ♦ Jeremy Simmons and Elizabeth Nix- Honorable Mention

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

- ♦ Andrew Baugh - 1st Place & Overall Life Science Award
- ♦ Nick Herndon - 2nd Place
- ♦ London Weier - 3rd Place
- ♦ Jared Russell- Honorable Mention

MEDICINE AND HEALTH

- ♦ Kaylee Ingram - 1st Place
- ♦ Bryce Herring - 2nd Place
- ♦ Ivoree Scott - 3rd Place
- ♦ Megan Stewart & Nick Blanchard- Honorable Mention

MICROBIOLOGY

- ♦ Lexie Redfearn - 1st Place
- ♦ Zach Goff - 2nd Place

BEHAVIORAL & SOCIAL SCIENCE

- ♦ Stephen Sykes - 1st Place
- ♦ Hannah Whittle - 2nd Place
- ♦ Morgan Ward - 3rd Place
- ♦ Jolie Napier - Honorable Mention



GARRISON PILCHER HOLDS “DONUTS FOR DADS AND DUDES” - More than 150 “Dads and Dudes” were honored at Garrison Pilcher’s annual event in December. The men participated in various activities including reading to the students and participating in math games. Sylwasky Lomax (parent) is pictured with students from Jennifer Braswell’s class including Eli Thornton, from left, Xavier Lowe, and his daughter, D’Tra Lomax.



STUDENTS ENJOY SANTA SHOP AT GARRISON PILCHER - Students from Mrs. Rebecca Kent’s class at Garrison Pilcher shopped for the special people in their lives at the annual Santa Shop. The shop offered low-cost items for the students to purchase for family members and friends. Pictured above from left to right are Sarah Stolarik, Kaitlyn Helms, Shyona Crimley, Yahri Harrison, Jayla Williams, and Kalob Greene.



MAKING AN ICICLE TREE AT HAND-IN-HAND - A Hand-In-Hand Primary School class created an icicle tree during the recent freeze. Shelly Wilson’s class (shown) brought in an icicle to study and explore the state of matter.



PROVIDING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES - Hand-In-Hand Primary School students and their families “GIVE BACK” to the community by supporting the local Salvation Army. Students, staff, and families chose 100 Angels from the Salvation Army Angel Tree this Christmas. Pictured with Scott Reardon from the Salvation Army are: (left to right) Ashley Sellers, Hand-In-Hand counselor, Colton Phillips, Kenneth Cooper, Ty’Niria Pickett, Christopher Scream, Kaylen Hale, Laney Guy, and Jeanna Mayhall, Hand-In-Hand principal.



Cross Creek Canned Food Drive

Cross Creek Elementary School recently held its canned food drive to benefit the Thomas County Food Bank. The generosity of Cross Creek students and their families helped donate more than 3,100 items to help those in need. Delisa Barrow’s, Kari Holm’s, and Lauren Stewart’s classes donated the most and won a party for their classrooms.