



The Buzz

OCTOBER
2014



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter



Wright Named Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year

Hand-In-Hand Pre-Kindergarten teacher Erin Wright has been chosen as Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year by the Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children (GAEYC). Wright received the award at a banquet in Atlanta at the end of September.

"I was honored to accept this award on behalf of the Thomas County School System and Hand-In-Hand Primary School," said Wright. "It's a privilege to work with so many outstanding educators, and to work in a community where education is valued."

Wright has been teaching Pre-K at Hand-In-Hand for 7 years. For the majority of these years, she has taught in an inclusion Pre-K classroom.

"The special education teachers love working with Erin because she has natural co-teaching ability," said Hand-In-Hand

Thompson Assumes Assistant Principal Position at TCCHS

By Erin Pearson, TCCHS student reporter

A familiar face to Thomas County Schools has now assumed a leadership position at Thomas County Central High School.

Jamie Thompson has been hired as an assistant principal. Thompson, originally from Ochlocknee, is no stranger to the Thomas County School System.

"I have worked 11 years in Thomas County, at TCCHS, Hand-N-Hand and TCMS," he said. "This is my home and it will always be a special place."

After working more than 15 years in education, Thompson is looking forward to his next year at TCCHS.

Thompson said his "beautiful, supportive wife" and two sons are also excited for his return to TCCHS. He plans to



Jamie Thompson is no stranger to Thomas County Schools. His new position is that of an assistant principal.

accomplish much this year.

"I will assist Mrs. Jones in our pursuit at TCCHS to be the best," he said.

His favorite thing about his new position, thus far, is "working with faculty, students and parents."

Principal Jeanna Mayhall. "Erin is extremely intuitive with little children and makes modifications and accommodations naturally."

As an inclusion teacher, Wright effectively keeps baseline data on academics and behaviors, and schedules meetings with parents.

Mayhall added, "As an administrator, I rely on Erin's knowledge of Pre-K to assist with training and mentoring new Pre-K teachers. Erin has had the opportunity to move to a higher grade but has chosen to remain in Pre-K

because of her passion for this age group. She serves as my Pre-K team leader and assists me in weekly collaborative professional learning with the other Pre-K teachers."

Wright also assists in professional learning with the assistant teachers. Mayhall often video-tapes her teaching large-group literacy, large-group opening, small-group, music with movement, etc. and uses these videos for professional learning for the other Pre-K teachers.

Wright and her husband, Kevin, have four children.

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

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Oct. 17 - Varsity Football vs. Cairo in Cairo, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 18 - Jack O'Lantern Jog Fun Run, 6:30 p.m.
5K, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 20 - QR Code Training for Teachers at Thomas County Middle, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Oct. 21 - Board of Education Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Oct. 20 - Oct. 31 - TCMS Fall Book Fair

Oct. 27 - Nov. 14 - Open Enrollment

Oct. 27 -STEM Family Science Night at Cross Creek, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Oct. 28 -STEM Family Science Night at Garrison-Pilcher, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

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.

“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”
- B.B. King



TCMS ZULU COMPANY VISITS KOLOMOKI MOUNDS - Zulu Company from Thomas County Middle School visited the Kolomoki Mounds in Blakely, Georgia, in September. The students learned about the Woodland and Mississippian Native Americans living in Georgia. The trip reinforced what the students are learning of these prehistoric Indian cultures living in Georgia prior to European contact. At Kolomoki, the eighth graders were able to hike the Temple Mound, see various mounds, view an excavation of one of the mounds, and see a weapons demonstration. The students enjoyed a picnic lunch by Lake Kolomoki.



SECOND GRADERS LEARN THROUGH LEGO LEAGUE - Garrison-Pilcher students are learning more about science and engineering by participating in the Junior First Lego League. Under the direction of teachers Topreka Hayes and Vicki Warren, two teams of second grade students have been formed to participate in this first year of the program. Pictured above from left are Heali Patel, Jackson Nestale, Joshua Bone, Carson Creech, Lydia Glass and Dolan Cleveland. More information on the Junior First Lego League may be found at <http://www.juniorfirstlegoleague.org/>.

TCCHS and Barberitos Team Up for Annual “Pink Chip” Day

By Mikayla Fillyaw, TCCHS student reporter

The war against breast cancer is being “kicked” by Barberitos and local students.

Barberitos teams up annually with the TCCHS yearbook staff to raise both funds and awareness for local breast cancer survivors by selling pink chips and breast cancer awareness T-shirts.



take place Thursday, Oct. 30. Barberitos breast cancer T-shirts will be sold by TCCHS yearbook staff until Tuesday Oct. 14 in preparation for the event. This year’s shirt is a “soft blend vintage charcoal” and can be purchased for just \$10. Checks should be written out to Barberitos and given to a VESPA (yearbook) staff member.

“The yearbook staff gets involved with Barberitos each year to raise funds for local breast cancer patients,” said TCCHS teacher and VESPA staff leader Laura Parkerson. “The students post flyers, sell T-shirts, and paint windows to help advertise the event. It is always a special time for my yearbook kids because they enjoy the activity and they are raising awareness with the youth of Thomasville.”

This year the celebration, known as “Pink Chip” day, will

All donations and profits on Oct. 30 will be given to the local organization, Kickin’ Cancer.

“We are excited to be part of this wonderful cause,” said Jessica Jones, owner of Thomasville’s Barberitos. “We’ve done this for a few years now and we hope to make this the best year yet. We look forward to teaming up with the community to raise money for Kickin’ Cancer of Southwest Georgia.”



THANKFUL FOR BUS DRIVERS - TCCHS student Dwayne Harrell presents Thomas County Schools Transportation Director Robert Young with 85 handwritten thank you notes. These notes are for the system’s bus drivers and thank them for safely transporting students. Harrell wrote the notes on behalf of the TCCHS Key Club, sponsored by Amy Ponder (also pictured). The club also gave the bus drivers a basket of goodies.



Cross Creek teachers Kathy Thompson, from left, Holly Hurst, Sandy Fitzgerald, and Lasandra Cohen work as a team to develop a project under a time limit with limited resources.

Teachers Receive STEM Training in Two-Day Workshop

Thomas County School teachers recently participated in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) training sessions. The teachers, ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade, learned creative ways to get their students interested in the STEM fields.

Some of the training for the teachers included competitive projects engaging the teachers and allowing them to work as a team.

"Competition drives creativity," said Betsy Green, executive director of Georgia Youth Science & Technology Centers, Inc. (GYSTC). GYSTC is the organization that provided the training for the two-day sessions held at the Professional Learning Center at the Board of Education.

Green explained that their goal for the day was to get teachers interested in STEM so that they can in turn get their students interested. The teachers listened to presentations and participated in several hands-on design projects. Those design projects will be

taken back to their classrooms for students to recreate.

One such project involved taking 20 index cards and tape and building a tower as tall as they could, with each table of teachers competing against each other. One Garrison-Pilcher teacher, Forrest Love, said these projects will "definitely get the kids excited."

"These workshops bring activities to the classroom that make sure kids understand the principles of science, math, and technology as they are being taught," Love continued.

Teachers at both Garrison-Pilcher and Cross Creek will become STEM certified. In October, each school will host a family science night for students and parents.

Melanie Chavaux, associate superintendent for Teaching and Learning, said, "We want all of our elementary kids more efficient in STEM fields to develop knowledge that will provide them an advantage when they advance in school and eventually to the job market."

**includes excerpts from Thomasville Times-Enterprise*

Author Lois Ruby Visits TCUE Students



Author Lois Ruby speaks to fifth grade students at TCUE.

Thomas County Upper Elementary students recently welcomed author Lois Ruby to their media center. Fifth grade students read Ruby's novel *Steal Away Home* during their first unit of study in Language Arts this school year. For the third consecutive year, students were able to meet with Ruby in an event hosted by Erin Rehberg, Library Media Specialist at TCUE/TCMS.

During Ruby's visit, students were able to learn how authors create characters, stories, conflicts, and plot lines. She explained to students that many times she begins a story with a character and lets the story flow from that character. Ruby discussed the central theme of courage in *Steal Away Home* and helped students think about how different characters in the novel are courageous in their actions.

Students also learned the challenges of getting a book published.

"I had to write the book twelve times," said Ruby as she encouraged students to listen to their teachers when asked to revise their own writing. She even told students that one publisher sent the book

back with 150 sticky notes containing suggested changes to her work.

In leading up to the author's visit, many students prepared comments and questions to ask Ruby. After listening to her speech, fifth grade student Cason Dennard said, "I was encouraged to write and she made me want to use my creativity." Another student, Marshadron Hollis commented, "She was so nice and her books are encouraging."

Courtney Warner, fifth grade language arts teacher, said, "It was great for Lois Ruby to visit with the students. They got to interact with a real author and understand how she came up with the characters in her story. In the process of reading *Steal Away Home*, the students started to feel like they knew the characters and were eager to ask questions about her novel. The kids truly loved listening to her and it was a great experience for everyone!"

Lois Ruby is the author of *Steal Away Home* as well as several other novels. She makes her home in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Students Win in "Plains, Peanuts and a President" Postcard Contest

Two budding youth artists have been recognized for their work in celebrating Georgia's only president.

Thomas County Central High School had two students place in the "Plains, Peanuts and a President" postcard contest. Ninth grader Zion Jackson won first place for his grade division, and sophomore Derrick Brock placed second in his.

"I feel kind of surprised that my artwork was picked because there were a lot of great postcards that other people drew," Zion Jackson said.

The contest is sponsored by the Jimmy Carter NHS Education Program. This year's theme was "Celebrating 90 Years" in honor of Georgia's only President, Jimmy Carter's, 90th birthday.

The idea Jackson used for his card centered on one item: a birthday candle.

"The item that inspired me was a mere birthday candle," he said. "I thought to myself, 'nothing is more fun than having your birthday.'"

Derrick Brock said he knew how to draw peanut plants because "I have seen them growing in Metcalf."

"The house in my postcard is Jimmy Carter's farm house," Brock said of his



Freshman Zion Jackson won first place for his grade division. His design inspiration came from a birthday candle.

design. "I went on a field trip there in eighth grade. I made the house red instead of white for a bright color."

The contest had more than 13,000 entries for grades K-12 with 29 winners, according to Director Annette Wise.

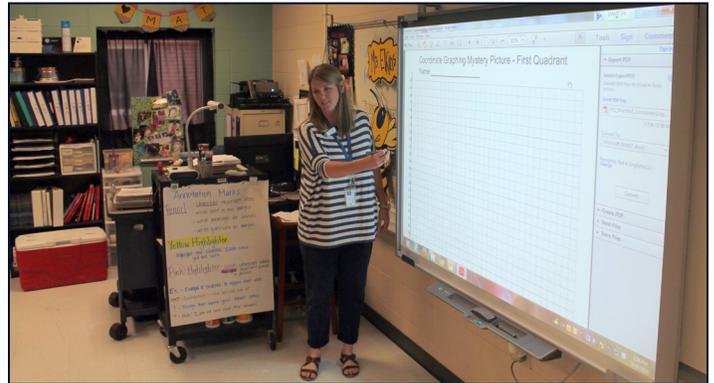
A parade and awards ceremony was held Sept. 27 during the annual Plains Peanut Festival. Jackson, who attended, said Carter told him "he liked my cake."

The first and second place winners are currently on exhibit at Plains High School Museum in Plains.

"We are very proud that the efforts of these artistic young men have been acknowledged at the Jimmy Carter NHS Foundation," TCCHS Art Teacher Jocelyn Rivard said. "Both boys spent a great deal of time on their imaginative concepts and color pencil shading."



Sophomore Derrick Brock placed second in his division for his depiction of Carter's farmhouse and peanut plants.



Sixth grade math teacher Leslie Elkins uses her SMART Board to record an instructional video for her webpage.

Videos Used to Enhance Learning Experience for TCMS Students

Thomas County Upper Elementary teachers are using the video recording abilities of Smart Boards to develop instructional videos that are designed to remediate and accelerate standards-based instruction. Parents and students now have the ability to review and practice a lesson presented by the teacher as videos are uploaded to teachers' individual webpages.

Students use the videos at home as a guide for homework or review for an upcoming test. Kristi Wilhelm's son is in Lindsay Thompson's eighth grade math class. Thompson often posts videos to her webpage.

"Having a video as a guide is extremely helpful to me as a parent," said Wilhelm. "I have to confess some of the items covered in class are different from my experience in school. The videos help me to remember the skill or concept that my child is learning in class."

TCUE/TCMS Instructional Technologist Matt Casper has provided support for teachers as they begin posting instructional videos to their teacher webpages.

Casper said, "This is actually our second year of posting instructional videos to teacher

webpages. We have a number of tech-savvy teachers who feel the videos enhance the learning experience for students."

Teachers have responded well to the expectation of including instructional videos on their webpages. The videos only record the teacher's voice and the content presented on the Smart Board.

According to TCUE math teacher Debbie Lasseter, "It is hard hearing your 'digital voice.' I had to practice several times before I posted the video. However, I feel it will contribute to students' comprehension of remediated and accelerated content."

Teachers will be posting videos throughout the school year. The intent is to provide digital resources for students and parents to use as needed.

TCUE Assistant Principal Melvin Hugans is excited to see the "flipped" model of instruction become an option for students.

"It is important to take advantage of the digital options provided for teachers," Hugans stated. "Technology is an extraordinary tool which opens a number of viable options for accelerated and remediated student instruction."