



## Thomas County Board of Education Newsletter

# Wilhelm named TCCHS 2019 STAR Student

## Senior chooses Kornegay as his STAR Teacher



TCCHS senior and STAR Student Ben Wilhelm with STAR Teacher Laura Kornegay.

To anyone searching for proof that athletics and academics truly can go together, look no further than Benjamin "Ben" Wilhelm.

Wilhelm is the 2019 Thomas County Central High School STAR Student.

The senior is known for his commitment to academics, athletics and school community. Wilhelm is an honor student who has participated in several sports, including football, swim, baseball, cross country

and basketball. The youth is active in his school's Fellowship of Christian Athletes and National Honor Society chapters. He also takes part in the Work-Based Learning Program and works at Hand-In-Hand Primary School a few hours each day.

"Being named STAR student is an honor," Wilhelm said. "The fact that I am a student-athlete and earned STAR Student means more. It shows that just because you play a sport does not mean you cannot be one of the

smartest in your class."

The STAR designation is given to the student in each graduating class with the highest SAT score. Wilhelm says he set out to attain this title.

"Right after I took my first SAT and scored above the average, my goal was to have the highest score in the school," he said. "At TCCHS, everyone pushes you to do your best, and the teachers making me a better student helped me achieve STAR Student."

Laura Kornegay is his chosen STAR Teacher.

"Mrs. Kornegay does every possible thing she can do to make a student

better," Wilhelm said. "She treats them like her own and pushes them to be the best, not accepting any excuses. Mrs. Kornegay has always pushed me to be my best and helped me achieve whatever I wanted."

This is Kornegay's fourth time being named STAR Teacher by one of her pupils. "It is a great feeling to be recognized by Ben as having a positive impact on his education," she said. Wilhelm first became an academic student of Kornegay's his sophomore year when he took honors chemistry and robotics.

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Marnee Stone, Garrison-Pilcher first grade teacher, from left, watches as student Khloe Barrow describes her computer science project to visitors Julie Sharpe, grant evaluator with Sharpe Solutions, Dr. Caitlin Dooley, Georgia DOE Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, and Bryan Cox, Georgia DOE Computer Science Specialist.

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## MEET OUR CHAIRMAN & VICE CHAIR!



**Dan Stewart**  
BOE Chairman



**Charles Evans**  
BOE Vice Chairman



Thomas County Central High School has 17 youth musicians in the Georgia Music Educators Association 2019 Region Honor Bands. Pictured are Joshua Sharpe, Eric Webb, Chelsey Lawler, Will Baillargeon, Isabel Merritt, Joshua Stephens, Lauren McGuire, Megan Clark, Tommy Piland, Caroline Daughtry, Caleb Moore, Meredith Hurst, Michelle Cumbest and Brandon Allen. Not pictured are Kariana Colon, Karsyn Bush and Taylor Stegall.

## Seventeen TCCHS musicians named to GEMA 2019 Region Honor Bands

Seventeen Thomas County Central High School musicians are named to the Georgia Music Educators Association 2019 Region Honor Bands.

"Students make this band based on their all-state audition at the beginning of January," TCCHS Assistant Bands Director Paul Johns said. "Region band consists

of students with the highest all-state scores in all of South Georgia."

Youth performers named to the 9th/10th Region Honor Band are Megan Clark, Kariana Colon, Karsyn Bush, Taylor Stegall, Joshua Sharpe, Brandon Allen and Caroline Daughtry.

Performing with the 11th/12th Region Honor

Band will be Eric Webb (first chair – principal player), Isabel Merritt, Chelsey Lawler, Lauren McGuire, Will Baillargeon, Meredith Hurst, Joshua Stephens, Michelle Cumbest (first chair – principal player), Caleb Moore (first chair – principal player) and Tommy Piland.

Region is scheduled for April 4-6 in Warner Robins.

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He took AP Chemistry and a second year of robotics his junior year. As a senior, Wilhelm is taking AP Environmental Science and AP Physics.

"When I graduate, I will have taken every class she has to offer," he said. "AP Physics is my favorite. I love the way the class is never boring and we are always doing hands-on labs." Wilhelm appreciates how science offers definitive answers.

"Science is different from English class," he said.

"Science is either black or white; there is no in between where you have to explain your answer based on how you feel about some writing." Though Wilhelm is a years-long student of Kornegay's, high school is not the first time the duo met in a scientific or academic setting.

"I first got to know Ben when he was in middle school and a student on the LEGO League team I coached," Kornegay said. "Since then, Ben has taken six of my classes and he was on the robotics and

Science Olympiad teams I coached, so I have had the opportunity to work with Ben in a variety of settings."

Wilhelm is actively engaged in whatever he does and consistently meets high standards of excellence, she adds.

"Whether in the classroom or on the field, Ben does not shy away from a challenge," Kornegay said. "Anyone who knows Ben knows he is very competitive; it shows on the field and in the classroom. At robotics competitions, teams are

judged on showing 'gracious professionalism' to other teams. Last year, Ben's team brought home the top award from region competition and a special award from state for the way they worked together and interacted with other teams. Ben does not let his competitive drive overwhelm his sense of sportsmanship."

Wilhelm intends to continue his appreciation for science in college and hopes to land a job in mechanical engineering as his chosen career.

## Thomas County students medal in technology competition



Pictured on the back row from L-R is Tammy Sharpe, Ethan Mainprize, Caden Reagan, Gavin Melnick, Whitt Finch, Jonathan Strickland, and Mark Thompson. In the middle row is Trace Morales, Luke Pierce, Cadence Allen, and Mallory Bustle. On the front row is Alicia Sholar, Corey Williams, and Natalie Carlisle.

Twelve students from Thomas County Middle School and Thomas County Central High School recently traveled to Bainbridge to participate in the annual Regional Technology Fair. There were more than 100 participants in the fair competing in various technology categories and age divisions from Thomas, Grady, Decatur, and Lee Counties. Students from Thomas County brought home five first-place medals, five second-place medals, and two third-place medals. Every student from Thomas County placed in the top three of their category and division.

For the competition, students are tasked with not only creating a technology project, but also presenting the project to the judges including explaining the process and steps taken to reach the end result. Categories include Robotics, Internet Applications,

Video Production, Digital Photography, Digital Game Design, Device Modification, Graphic Design, Multimedia Applications, and many more. Tammy Sharpe, fifth-grade MERIT science teacher and sponsor of Girls who Code at Thomas County Middle School, attended the fair with the students, along with Mark Thompson, Computer Science teacher at Thomas County Central High School.

"All of our students were excellent representatives of the Thomas County School System," Erin Rehberg, Digital Learning and Media Services Coordinator for Thomas County Schools said. "The hard work of our teachers and the superior quality of our technology programs allowed our students to win many awards at this competition."

All first place medalists will advance to the state competition held in Macon, Georgia, on March 9.

*Computer science education from Page 1*

## Computer science education at Thomas County Schools deemed a model for rural districts

A distinguished group of individuals visited Thomas County Schools recently to explore the system's expanded offerings in computer science education. The visit was part of Thomas County's involvement in a National Science Foundation grant awarded to the Georgia Department of Education and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College.

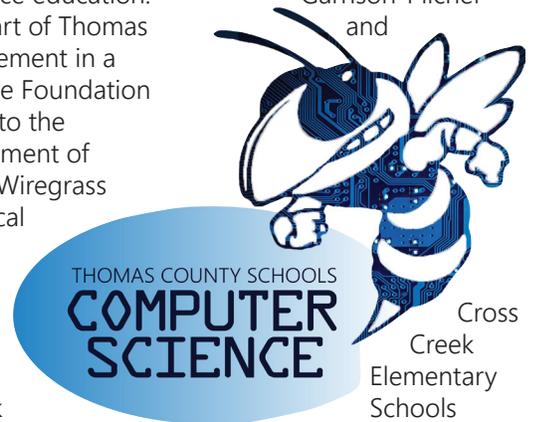
The focus of the National Science Foundation grant is to work with five school districts to expand and strengthen computer science education. The districts have written strategic plans and work with national computer science education experts to determine strategies to increase opportunities for students and teachers.

One of the visitors was Dr. Caitlin Dooley, Georgia Department of Education's Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. This is the second time Dr. Dooley has visited Thomas County Schools to learn more about how the system integrates computer science in all subjects across the curricular scope.

"Thomas County's approach to integrating computer science principles in the daily learning activities of students from Pre-K to twelfth grade is exemplary," Dr. Dooley said. "Their efforts to provide students

and teachers with devices, support, and resources is a model for rural districts."

The team completed classroom tours at both Garrison-Pilcher and



where they were able to see students working on computer science projects including coding using ScratchJr. and Dash robots.

Thomas County Schools Associate Superintendent Melanie Chavaux said, "By providing coding to all students at the elementary level, students are better prepared to make career decisions along a computer science pathway as they enter high school. Exposure to coding at an early age isn't just about math and science. Coding develops and strengthens the ability to problem solve, adapt to new situations and to keep information organized."

Following the tours, the group had a discussion with district leaders about the future of computer science education in Thomas County Schools and in the state of Georgia.

## Cross Creek teachers have plans for Envision Grant



Cross Creek teachers and administrators display the \$2,000 check from Envision Credit Union for the school's outdoor classroom.

A desire to make a functional outdoor classroom a reality fueled some teachers' interest in applying for a grant from Envision Credit Union. Envision recently awarded a \$2,000 grant to Cross Creek Elementary School that will give teachers and students the opportunity to engage in lessons across the curriculum and conduct experiments in an outdoor environment that is conducive to hands-on activities.

The Envision Outdoor classroom grant money will be used to erect a gazebo to house picnic tables, a podium, and weather station that were purchased with the funds from previous grant money. More than 800 third and fourth grade students at Cross Creek will be able to utilize the space at different times during the school day. Outside of the regular routine, the outdoor classroom will also serve as a peaceful place where students will be able gather and enjoy reading in a relaxing environment.

Six teachers from Cross

Creek Elementary submitted the grant proposal for an educational project that included specific goals as to how the project could impact the critical learning skills of students. The team from Cross Creek included Julie Atkinson, LaSaundra Cohen, Pamela Hoge, Lacey Howard, Katherine Lattay and Joy West.

"We want to build an outdoor classroom where our students can have a hands-on learning environment consistent with the new Georgia Standards of Excellence for science," Howard said. "These standards require a great deal of active experimentation, often done outside the classroom. An outdoor curriculum evolves from and changes with students' changing needs and interests."

By integrating nature education into the school grounds, students gain an enhanced appreciation for the outdoors through interaction with nature. Outdoor experiments create increased learning experiences for tactile,

kinesthetic, and experiential learners. Increased interest in science and math often occurs through connecting with nature; often in a cooperative environment. Additionally, hands-on outdoor experiments in a natural setting increase retention for subject material.

"In order to best enable teachers to effectively incorporate these standards and allow students to gain a deeper understanding of scientific standards and principles, an outdoor classroom is invaluable," added Howard.

The outdoor classroom will be available to both grade levels for every subject area: reading, language, math, science, and social studies including special area classes like music, art, physical education, health, STEM and coding. Teachers will occupy the classroom at different times of the day by reserving their space.

"It is our goal that the outdoor classroom will allow increased involvement in improving and protecting the Thomas County, Georgia, area," Cohen said. "With the help of our School Council

business partners, it is anticipated that students will learn more about environmental awareness and become involved in community-wide efforts to improve our community."

Cohen added, "Our county-wide grant that enables each student to have a Chromebook encourages Cross Creek students to incorporate technology into each learning experience. The effective use of technology enables learning to take place outside of the classroom and the library. This can be done in an outside classroom just as easily as inside. Our school system's wireless network will support the outdoor classroom where students may use their wireless devices for outdoor classroom activities."

Envision has been instrumental in improving education through grants to local schools. The credit union has donated more than \$60,000 in classroom grants since the program's inception, and teachers from Thomas County Schools have been fortunate to benefit from Envision's commitment to education.

**CPR and First Aid will be offered from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. at**

**Hand-In-Hand Primary School on the following dates:**

**February 19, 2019**

**CPR**

**March 19, 2019**

**First Aid**

**Please sign up on PDExpress to attend!**



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