



## TCCHS forms esports team



Sam Morrison enjoys team level auditions. Esports is a fun activity students can enjoy. An important caveat is not all video games are deemed esports. Games must be team-based and cooperative.



Esports team coach Mark Thompson instructs Andrew Coleman during auditions.



Stephanie Walden smiles as she takes part in a game.

Thomas County Central High School is promoting teamwork and school involvement through embracing the world of competitive virtual gaming.

Computer science teacher Mark Thompson and Athletics Director Samuel Holland have joined forces to form the school's first-ever esports team.

Superintendent of Thomas County Schools Dr. Lisa Williams approached Holland about checking into starting an esports program.

"After doing the research on esports from the high school to professional levels, I knew this was something we needed here," Holland said. "Not only does this reach out to all students, but it also gives us another way to get athletes in college."

Thompson says esports is the fastest-growing spectator sport in the world and is more than its name

might suggest.

"Esports officially stands for electronic sports, not to be confused with video games," he said. "It's much more than that. What sets it apart is the level of organized competitive gameplay between teams and its own strict set of rules and guidelines.

Esports is about teamwork, communication, strategic thinking and leadership — in all the same ways that traditional sports are and then some."

Players from around the world compete to earn cash, prizes and honors, and postsecondary institutions are also taking notice of esports, he continues.

"Colleges across the country are jumping on board with more than 200 universities offering millions in scholarships for esports," Thompson said. "There are 10 colleges in Georgia alone

that students can sign with to play esports and pay for school. Georgia is one of only five states in the country to offer state-sanctioned esports at the high school level."

Esports is a fun activity students can enjoy. An important caveat is not all video games are deemed esports. Games must be team-based and cooperative, Thompson explains.

"Kids are already playing video games," he said. "Now we can harness that in a positive way. Even kids that have never played can join.

We will find a team or a role for them."

An information meeting was held at the start of the third nine weeks in January.

"I was blown away when we had our first informational meeting, and more than 120 students showed up," Holland said.

Response to the formation of a TCCHS esports team has been so positive the school created two sections, varsity and junior varsity. Auditions were held in late January.

**See Esports on Page 4**

### EXCITING UPDATE ON ESPORTS

With week three results in for Rocket League, the team has a squad ranked number one in the state. The squad consists of Devon Green, Shadrick Hollis, and Jeffrey (Bob) Hendricks. The state has also confirmed that TCCHS has the largest esports program in the state of Georgia. Stay tuned for more updates as they come in!



**HAND-IN-HAND HOMEMADE BUTTER** - Hand-In-Hand three-year olds from Tonia Rowell's class learned about farms and made their own butter from milk. The students learned where milk comes from and how milk is made into many products, including butter. They also had the opportunity to learn first-hand how liquid changes into a solid. Physical activity was encouraged because of students moving around to shake the cream.



**BAND SCHOLARS** - Three Thomas County Central High School musicians are Thomasville Performing Arts Concert scholarship recipients: Michelle Cumbest (euphonium), Caleb Moore (tuba) and Eric Webb (bassoon). Each of these musicians spent hours in preparation and first round auditioning to gain an opportunity to perform in the final scholarship round. Cumbest and Moore received \$500 each. Webb won \$1,000.



**CENTRAL STUDENTS GET A 'HAMILTON' TRIP** - A group of TCCHS students was treated to a performance of the hit Broadway musical 'Hamilton' recently at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa. Through cooperation between the high school and the Gilder-Lehrman Foundation of New York, these students were able to attend a special matinee for high school students for no charge. The TCCHS students were asked to produce historical projects pertaining to the Revolutionary War period, as well as those personalities associated with the founding of our nation. Poems, songs, skits, and music videos based on information from primary sources of the period were submitted by the students, and all students who submitted work were able to attend the show.

## Heart Healthy Jumping at Garrison-Pilcher



Coach Mikeal Lovejoy, from left, Coach Kristy Vann, and Coach Lisa Guyton stand with top contributor Xalen James.

Garrison-Pilcher recently held its annual Jump Rope for Heart to raise money for the American Heart Association. The students raised a total of \$9,661 while learning about the importance of having a healthy heart.

Xalen James, first grade student from Suzanne Barrett's class, was the top contributor donating \$1,635.

"Jump Rope for Heart teaches children they can have fun while having healthy heart habits," Richard Potter, Assistant Principal of Garrison-Pilcher, said. "We are very thankful to have our community contribute and participate in this annual event. All the proceeds help in the fight against heart disease."

# LITERARY VICTORY

Thomas County Central High School contended in the recent Region 1-5A Literary Competition. The event took place March 1 in Hamilton, Georgia. The school had numerous placers in several categories:

## Oral Presentation

Dramatic - Molly Grace White, 2nd  
Comedic - Megan Clark, 4th  
Duo - Stephen Sykes & Cameron Parker, 4th

## Extemporaneous Speaking

Domestic - Shadrick Hollis, 2nd  
International - Norman Desourdy, 3rd

## Essay

Rhetorical - Emma Goff, 2nd  
Argumentative - Kaleb Ward, 2nd  
Personal - Joshua Stephens, 3rd

## Chorus

Girls Solo- Savanna Williams, 4th  
Boys Quartet - Stephen Sykes, Jordan Jones, Kaleb Ward & Jared Giddens, 2nd  
Girls Trio - Jamey Gray, Savanna Williams & Daygiana Davis, 3rd

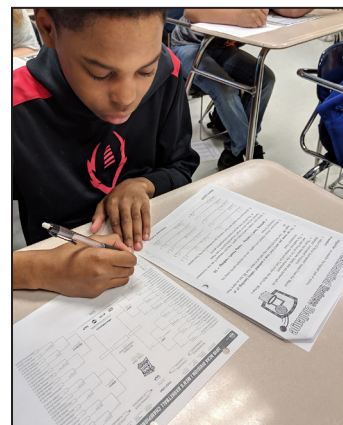


TCCS students Kaleb Ward, Emma Goff and Joshua Stephens placed in the Essay portion of the recent Region 1-5A Literary Competition.



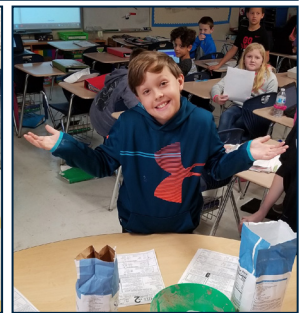
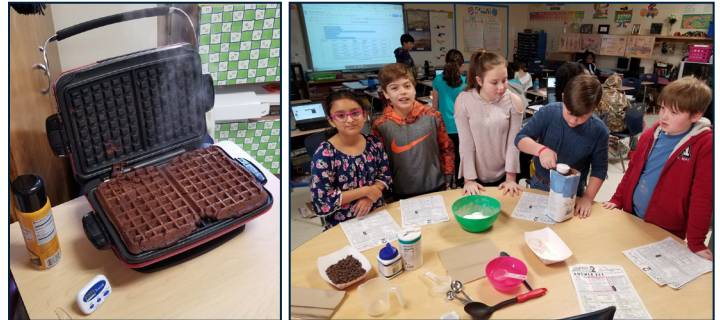
TCCS students who placed in the recent Region 1-5A Literary Competition include (left to right) Daygiana Davis, Kaleb Ward, Molly Grace White, Stephen Sykes, Cameron Parker, Jordan Jones, Megan Clark, Jamey Gray, Savanna Williams and Jared Giddens. Not pictured are Shadrick Hollis, Norman Desourdy, Emma Goff and Joshua Stephens.

# MARCH MADNESS MATH



TCMS students recently reviewed adding and subtracting positive and negative numbers in Coach Ryan Manard's class. With March Madness going on, students selected 10 college basketball teams that they thought will do well in the tournament. Each day, students will use a formula to accumulate points depending on the outcome of their teams' performances. Seventh-grader Bernard Bowdry strategically selects which ten teams will keep him in the winning zone for the March Madness Math Activity.

Who doesn't love waffles and brownies? But wait! A brownie waffle??? WHAT?!



Daneen Ingles' class at Cross Creek created brownie waffles as part of a math lesson. This was a culminating activity where the students multiplied fractions by whole numbers and multiplied fractions by fractions. More, please!

## KIDS @ CROSS CREEK



**HEART HEROES** - Cross Creek Elementary students recently participated in the Kids Heart Challenge (formerly known as Jump Rope for Heart). Students raised \$5,380 for the American Heart Association. Carson Morales was the top fundraiser, and Keya Patel and Karson McCutchen tied for second-place. Cross Creek appreciates all who participated in jumping and raising money for this important cause. Pictured from left to right are Carson Morales, Keya Patel, Karson McCutchen, and Coach Andrew Bower.

### Esports from Page 1

"Tryouts are just to determine skill level for placement on JV or varsity," Thompson said. "To make the team, students must have good behavior and grades. The response has been overwhelming. We have 61 students on the team, one of the largest in the state."

The team is open to all students, whether they are gamers or not, and specifically targets those who could use a positive motivator.

"The program has the multiprong intent to drive student participation from nontraditional athletes," Thompson said. "Most of my kids are not ones who participate in traditional sports or clubs. This gives them something to be a part of. Studies show that students who participate in extra-curricular activities have higher GPAs, better attendance and better self-esteem."

Participant Devon Green likes that esports allows nontraditional athletes to compete and plans to benefit from his participation by earning college scholarships.

"It gives me the chance to show people that video games are not just for fun; that they are competitive," Green said. "I grew up playing video games, and now I can use the skill for something else. I'm excited to be a part of the first esports [team] we have at our school. I feel that if we do well our first year, it will drive students into joining later and the school to invest more money into esports."

Junior Jasmine Gibson, 16, joined the team to try something different that

could also benefit her future.

"It has allowed me to meet new people and get acquainted with people I don't usually see on a regular basis," she said. "I am most excited about learning how to play games. I never really had an interest in the past, but it has been a learning experience and a lot of fun. I think this will benefit me in the future when I begin to apply for college and being able to name this sport as something I did in high school."

Team member Brandon Clark has been a gamer since he can remember – and beyond.

"I've always enjoyed gaming," he said. "I love creating a strategy and finding an easier way to beat the level or game. My brother also loves playing video games, and so we always got together and played games and beat them together. Esports is allowing me to do that with other people. The aspect of getting a team together and building and learning with each other to be better as a team is awesome to me. I feel esports should be offered to students because it allows them to have that team building experience in a whole new way."

A special field trip to Atlanta to watch the first Georgia High School Association Esports State Championship also motivated young players.

"The excitement they had after seeing where we want our program to go was amazing," Holland said. "This is just another case of why Thomas County Central is second to none when it comes to helping

our student-athletes be successful."

Esports' official season kicked off the week of Feb. 25. TCCHS will compete against other schools around the state by playing Rocket League, Smite and League of Legends. This gaming will commence each week in

the school's PREP Academy computer labs.

"The most important element is I want our esports athletes to have fun, make new friends, and learn skills that will make them better students, better people and better prepared for life," Thompson said.

## TCMS students become published authors



Pictured seated on the front row are Aslyn Plymel and Conner Whitfield. Seated on the second row are Myra Williams, Kaylyn Coleman, Nezadriana Lee, and Gracie Moore. Standing in the back are student teacher Alyssa Newsom and eighth-grade Language Arts teacher Mrs. Rhonda Smith.

Students from Rhonda Smith's eighth-grade class at Thomas County Middle School recently became published authors through a national student publishing program. As part of the publishing process, students planned, wrote and illustrated their own books using a free publishing kit provided by Studenttreasures Publishing.

Each class created their

own book with each student contributing a page that he or she wrote and illustrated.

Students brainstormed topics for their books and then held a class vote to make the final decision on the topic which may vary from holidays to music. Publishing a book in the classroom engaged the students through hands-on learning and inspired a love of reading and writing.



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