



The Buzz

DECEMBER
2015



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

A time for

J O Y

The Christmas season marks the halfway point of our academic year, a time to look back at what we have accomplished and to look ahead at the opportunities of the New Year. I am so appreciative of our family of dedicated educators who have already accomplished a great deal this school year. Hundreds of youngsters who entered our primary grades have already begun discovering the wonder of the gift of learning to read, a gift that will transform their lives. Our school system was blessed with a \$2.7 million grant which will modernize many aspects of our instructional program

over the next three years. Dozens of our students have captured regional and state recognition in academic and extra-curricular events, and we beat RESA averages in 75% of the areas tested on the Georgia Milestones Assessments. The second half of the year will be filled with even more exciting challenges including the E-SPLOST referendum and opportunities for success in our classrooms and on our athletic fields. It is a great time to be a Yellow Jacket!

As we have time this December to pause from our routines to celebrate the **Joy** of the Christmas season, I encourage you to think about

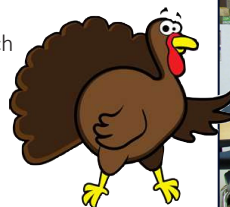
why we equate **Joy** with the Christmas season. In the frailty of our humanity, we all sometimes fail. We fail at our work, and we fail our students, families, and friends. The true gift of Christmas is Grace, total and free forgiveness, the opportunity for a new beginning. We never feel greater **Joy** than when we forgive or when someone we love forgives us. Greater than any gift that can be purchased or unwrapped is the gift of **Joy** that comes from a restored relationship or a forgotten grudge. This type of **Joy** is not of this world. It is supernatural. It came to earth the first Christmas and triumphed the first Easter as a promise that extends beyond eternity. I hope that the **Joy** of Christmas is yours this season and always.

I wish each of you a joyful and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Dust

Gobble Gobble

TCCHS welding teacher Travis Barrett was the winner of this year's Turkey Teacher contest. TCCHS Key Club hosts the contest each year in order to raise money for the Georgia Sheriff Youth Homes, a goal for Key Clubs throughout the state. Three teachers were nominated and graciously volunteered to participate. The three educators competed for the honor of wearing the Turkey Teacher outfit on Friday, Nov. 20, the last day of school before Thanksgiving break. The effort is spearheaded by club president and senior Dawayne Harrell. Barrett won and spent the day dressed in the suit in fun support of a good cause.



Pictured is TCCHS Turkey Teacher Travis Barrett visiting Todd Wilson's classroom in his suit, much to the amusement of the students (L-R) Colby Fletcher, Joy McCullers, Barrett, Jalisha Cox, James Rutherford and Tim Skinner.

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

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Dec. 8 - Christmas Chorus Concert, Cross Creek, 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 10 - Joy of Christmas "Kicking Cancer" Fundraiser, Bishop Hall, 6:00 p.m.

Dec. 13 - 6th Grade Band Concert, TCMS, 3:00 p.m.

Dec. 13 - 7th & 8th Grade Band Concert, TCMS, 4:30 p.m.

Dec. 15 - TCCHS Winter Choral Concert, Board of Education Auditorium, 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 17 - Christmas Band Concert, TCCHS, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 19 - Shop with a Yellow Jacket (SWAYJ), TCCHS, 9:00 a.m.

**merry
CHRISTMAS
and
happy
new year!**

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.

New Technology Prepares Students to Meet Higher Academic Standards



Jayla Rivera, pictured in the front, researches her National History Day topic on a Chromebook in Amanda West’s sixth-grade MERIT class.

Technology has changed teaching and learning in a number of ways for Thomas County School teachers and students— including how knowledge is taught and digested in the classroom. The county school district is integrating new technology to allow teachers to collaborate with students, share documents with students, and to better prepare them for the high-tech world they will face beyond high school.

Every classroom in every school in the county has a Smartboard, an interactive whiteboard, and Thomas County Schools has recently deployed more than 1,400 new Chromebooks and plans to add at least 1,100 more over the next year.

A Chromebook is a laptop designed to be used primarily while connected to the Internet, with most applications and data residing in “the cloud.”

According to Thomas County Schools Technology Director Wes Davis, the demand is high for Chromebooks in education. “Chromebooks are attractive

to school systems, especially because of their low cost, low maintenance, and ease of management,” said Davis. “Adding hundreds of devices at one time would have been nearly impossible in the past. Google has created a centralized management system that allows for rapid changes with no re-imaging, and controls that allow a school system to add applications and bookmarks, manage printing, and restrict website and network access on these devices from one cloud-based console,” Davis said.

Getting a Google domain was the first step in the process. Employees now have a new email address and access to Google Apps for Education through the new Google domain.

“The Google domain we created is the tcjackets.net domain,” Davis said. “All students from third through twelfth grades also received tcjackets.net email addresses for educational use.”

“Since our students now use Google apps, we also decided to subscribe to Gaggle Safety Management (GSM)

for Google. GSM monitors all e-mails and documents used by the students to protect against inappropriate behavior, bullying, etc. Providing this extra safety net in technology was one criteria we had to meet,” Davis explained.

In the past, it was the goal to have desktop computers for students. Instead of 440 desktops, more than 720 Chromebooks were ordered for the elementary and middle schools. Thomas County Middle School received 16 carts of Chromebooks – four carts for each grade. Last week an additional 728 Chromebooks were ordered thanks to the Striving Readers Grant that Thomas County

Schools was awarded. There will be approximately 400 more coming in January. The Chromebooks will allow for two grades at the middle school and one grade at Cross Creek to take the Georgia Milestones test online.

“Using technology in the classrooms has many benefits,” added Davis. “The digital tools available to teachers and students today are endless, and these innovations are important in reaching today’s students who have grown up with most of these digital devices. It helps keep students focused for longer periods of time, makes students more excited to learn, and it enables students to learn at their own pace.”



K-KIDS DONATE TO OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD- For the second year in a row, the K-Kids at Cross Creek have brought in donations for Operation Christmas Child. Two classroom teachers, Michele Dechman and Jennifer Mobley, also invited their students to participate. Once again, the project was a success! Altogether, enough items were donated to fill about 25 boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Leslie Aracri, the K-Kids advisor said, “I was blown away again by the generosity and care demonstrated by the students. They truly seem to understand that it is better to give than to receive!” Pictured from left to right are: Riley Fisher (Kathy Thompson’s class); Brooklyn Paschall (Kari Holm’s class); Paige Parkerson (Jennifer Mobley’s class); Maddison Dickerson (Angela Hutchings’ class); Mac Mobley (Kathy Thompson’s class); and Griffin Prince (Jordan Taylor’s class).



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Cover Jackets by Yellow Jackets



TCCHS Assistant Principal Lamar Matthews, Macie Wheeler, Riley Singletary, Sophie Anderson and TCCHS Principal Trista Jones pose after presenting the winning artworks for the annual holiday CD.

Sweaters, snowflake wings, mittens, and hats were among the many accouterments that inspired Thomas County Central HS students to compete in a school-wide art contest that placed “Buzz,” the school mascot, in wintry garb or setting.

TCCHS administration, led by Assistant Principal Lamar Matthews, sponsored the event whereby students designed cover art for their 2nd Annual Yellow Jacket Christmas CD. The proceeds support the Shop with a Yellow Jacket (SWAY-J) event and other worthy projects. The \$10 CD features the music and voices of Thomas County School System students mixed by the high school broadcast video lab. Songs and instrumentals come from Garrison-Pilcher Elementary, Thomas County Middle School,

and Thomas County Central High School.

“We are so excited to showcase our school and school system,” Matthews said. “We have so many talented students here, and I thought this might be a great way to do just that.”

Media included, but was not limited to, collage, paints, pencils, computer art, and charcoal.

In short, anything two-dimensional that included Buzz was fair game.

Chick-fil-A gift cards in the amounts of \$25, \$15, and \$10 were awarded to the top three artworks selected by the high school administration.

All three artworks will appear on the Christmas CD whether on the cover, back, or the CD itself.

“I was so pleased that art students had the school spirit to create such joyful pieces,”

said Jocelyn Rivard, TCCHS art teacher. “I love that the media are so different – acrylic painting, collage, watercolor, and marker.”

Sophie Anderson, 17, earned first place for her painted wintry scene of the front of the school. Buzz appears twice in the piece: in the triangular tympanum space above the school’s entrance; and in leading Santa’s sleigh overhead posing as a red-nosed Yellow Jacket.

“I came up with the idea when I saw a Christmas card of Santa flying over a tower,”

stated Anderson. “I used acrylic paint, colored pencil, and pen.” As to earning first place, Anderson said she felt “very happy that my work is being recognized.”

Second place went to Riley Singletary, 16, for her intricate collage of various solid and printed papers she entitled “Happy Holidays.” The windy snow-filled sky undulates much like a van Gogh painting while Buzz gleefully sports a white-trimmed Santa jacket.

In choosing media, Singletary said that she “just took paint chips and cut them into what I wanted.” She depicted Buzz as Santa and placed him in a “winter wonderland.”

“Buzz Stringing Tree Lights” was the theme for third place winner Macie Wheeler,

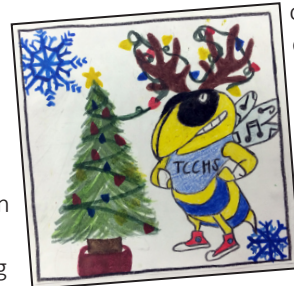
16. Lights get tangled in antlers while Buzz comically celebrates the season. “I wanted to incorporate some of my favorite things about Christmas,” stated Wheeler. “Buzz was getting in the Christmas spirit by decorating the tree.” Media included watercolor, colored pencil, and markers.

“When left to their own devices, our students are well-equipped for applying their creativity and good skills to just about any theme,” Rivard added. “It is fascinating to watch such pieces

unfold while having little idea as to what the students envision.”

Matthews acknowledges that it was through the support from TCCHS Principal Trista Jones and the administration from the other schools, that “we were able to put together a pretty good CD that our schools and community stakeholders can be proud of.”

The Yellow Jacket Holiday CD is available for \$10 starting December 7 through December 18, the last day before winter break for Thomas County Schools. Anyone wishing to purchase one should visit any of the schools or the Thomas County Board of Education. There are a few CD’s remaining from last year’s collection for \$5 each from TCCHS.



NEED CPR? FIRST AID?

First Aid will be offered on Tues., Dec. 15, at Hand-In-Hand from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. CPR training will be offered on Tues., Jan. 19, 2016, also at Hand-In-Hand. Please sign up on PDEExpress to attend the training sessions.



CPR AND FIRST AID CLASSES

Rogers Inducted Into VSU Educator Hall of Fame



Nancy Rogers stands next to her picture in the VSU Educator Hall of Fame.

Thomas County Middle School MERIT Teacher Nancy Rogers was recently inducted into the Valdosta State University Educator Hall of Fame. Rogers has been teaching for 16 years, serving 10 of those years in Thomas County Schools.

Rogers was inducted into the VSU Educator Hall of Fame because she is a VSU alumni and was a finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year. Along with 30 other educators from Georgia, Rogers will have her picture and biography displayed permanently in the lobby of Jennett Hall in the

James L. and Dorothy H. Dewar College of Education and Human Services at the College of Education at VSU.

"I was humbled and honored to be inducted into Valdosta State's Educator Hall of Fame," said Rogers. "It is awesome to be recognized for doing something that I love. To me, teaching is a calling, not a job."

Rogers holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Education in Secondary Education, both from VSU.

"I love what I do and hopefully that permeates my classroom and the lives of my students," Rogers added. "I consider it a blessing to be able to work with young people each day, and I am especially thankful that I work in a school system like Thomas County where excellence is a way of life."

The Valdosta State University Educator Hall of Fame was established to recognize and highlight the service and accomplishments of the university's alumni. Current Educator Hall of Fame inductees are teachers, counselors, and school leaders.

VETERANS DAY HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



MARCH OF THE CANS

Hand-In-Hand Primary School held their annual "March of the Cans" where all of the classes took their donations from the food drive to the front office. Elizabeth Johnson's class brought the most canned food items to donate to the Thomas County Food Bank. Mrs. Johnson's class brought in 327 cans alone! Linda Ivey's class collected the second highest amount of cans with 230 cans. The school collected a total of 3,358 cans.





TCCHS Math Competition team members (L-R) Jacob Hancock, Brett Hendricks, C'lee Kornegay, and Guanghui Li after their third place finish at VSU.

Math Competition Team Finishes Third Place Overall at VSU

Four budding mathematicians plus one high school tournament equaled a win for the Thomas County Central High School Math Competition team.

Members of the team placed third overall (out of 14 teams) in the Valdosta State University High School Mathematics Tournament. Also, team sponsor and TCCHS math teacher Darrin Minns said member Guanghui Li finished fifth individually and received a \$1,000 scholarship to VSU, a school Li hopes to attend next fall.

"I'm very proud of the overall team performance," Minns said. "The team score is a composite of the four individual scores. To place this highly means that each individual did very well. Each student, regardless of grade level, takes the same test which makes the result doubly impressive when you consider that two of the four students to compete are 10th graders."

The school could only take four students to the competition. Minns said these students were "individually selected because of competition experience and practice performance."

Member Jacob Hancock, a senior, said the competition

was an "enjoyable experience." He enjoys math because "it is not only difficult and complex" but also "exciting."

Tenth grade member C'lee Kornegay likes math because she likes "being able to take the different formulas and equations I know" and "apply them to more complex mathematical scenarios."

Kornegay said such competitions "challenge you to learn and think of things that you wouldn't normally learn in a classroom."

Hancock agrees participation in competitions like the one at VSU is important.

"It helps improve your mathematics knowledge, and uncover hidden information that a person may not have previously known," he said.

Minns said these competitions are important because they provide challenges to students.

"It's not just a $a + b = c$, but rather they have to use skills learned in the classroom and apply them to problems and situations they may have never considered," he said. "Through this kind of academic practice and competition they become better thinkers and problem solvers which will serve them well in both their academic and professional lives that follow."

Farm2School Provides Gardens at Cross Creek Elementary



Cross Creek's cafeteria manager Marie Johnson helps students pick collard greens from the school garden with Cayden Singletary (L-R), T.C. Cone, Mackenzie Hudgins, Maranda Coleman, Meredith Knight, and Caleb Anderson.

Through Thomas County School Nutrition and Georgia Shape Grant, Cross Creek was able to have two school gardens installed where students can understand nutrition and acquire knowledge of how various fruits and vegetables are grown.

This fun, interactive, and educational activity allowed students to learn more than just about nutrition. Garden activities incorporate math, science, language arts, social studies, and visual arts with hands-on learning.

"We have worked closely with the Small Farmer Distribution Network and Farmers Organics to provide these gardens and local produce to our schools," Thomas County Schools Director of Nutrition Katie Eidson said. "We were able to provide

our school system with Farm2School collards, sweet potato chunks, and sweet corn through these organizations in October and November. Cross Creek students also had a chance to taste the produce that was grown in their school garden through the School Nutrition Department."

Farm2School focuses on enriching the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and preschools. The mission is to increase students' access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips.



STEM Skills Taught at TCMS Through In-Class Field Trip



Fifth grade students Adam Tanner and DeNariah Guion work to create a closed circuit through hands-on learning activities relating to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

Students at Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School have been learning a lot about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) through special projects with their classes.

On November 18 and 19, Crystal Godfrey, representative from Georgia Power, teamed with fifth grade teachers to provide hands-on learning activities related to standards students have been studying in science concerning electricity and magnetism.

The students tested different items to determine whether they were insulators or conductors using an energy stick. Some of the items used included paper clips, erasers, aluminum foil, and silly putty. Students learned by making predictions about the conductivity of the items and noticing the similarities and differences between the insulators and conductors.

Godfrey also provided batteries, wires, and lights for

students to build circuits.

Valarie Williams, sixth grade science teacher, said, "This in-class field trip is an exciting way to make learning fun and connect what they are learning in the classroom with the real world."

Clayton Woodfin, eighth grade science teacher, and Lindsay Thompson, eighth grade math teacher, also teamed up to conduct a STEM lab in their classes. Students investigated the height a golf ball bounced off of a hard surface when dropped from various heights. They had to engineer ways to make accurate measurements with technology. Students analyzed their data, graphed it and wrote explanations for the patterns they found supported by their evidence.

Thompson said, "Students benefit from hands-on learning and STEM activities provide that opportunity. Activities that incorporate all four areas of STEM challenge students to think in new ways."



TCCHS Student Council representatives on the staircase at the state capitol: (left to right, front row) Logan Herring, Jordan Bush, Hannah Dixon; (middle row) Katie Simmons, Beth Sharpe, Rhonda Jackson, Riley Jones; (back row) Kacy Jones, Natalie Smith, Reshad Daniels, Justin Barfield, and Conley Wilhelm.

TCCHS Sends Twelve to Leadership Summit at Georgia State Capitol

Twelve members of Thomas County Central High School Student Council attended the Georgia Association of Student Council's Leadership Summit, in November at the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta.

Students who attended were: Riley Jones, Rhonda Jackson, Justin Barfield, Reshad Daniels, Conley Wilhelm, Logan Herring, Jordan Bush, Hannah Dixon, Katie Simmons, Natalie Smith, Kacy Jones, and Beth Sharpe. The TCCHS student council advisor is Teresa Carver, AP U.S. History teacher.

The theme for the annual Leadership Summit was "Liberty and Leadership." Delegates were seated on the floor of the Georgia House of Representatives for three general sessions.

During General Session 1, delegates heard from Rep. Joyce Chandler, who challenged delegates to never become so involved in the job

associated with leadership that they forgot to care and serve others. The highlight of Session 1 was a video link with Sen. David Purdue and representing him personally at the conference was the Greater Atlanta office staff member Mark Smith.

General Session 2 was devoted to Gov. Nathan Deal, who, in addition to encouraging leadership, accepted questions from student delegates.

During Session 3 student council delegates were addressed by Richard Tucker, member of the Georgia Board of Regents, and the keynote speaker was Rep. Brooks Coleman.

During breakout sessions, students were challenged to develop service projects, increase voter registration, developing leadership skills, and were provided information on specific student council projects and conferences available throughout the year.