The Buzz
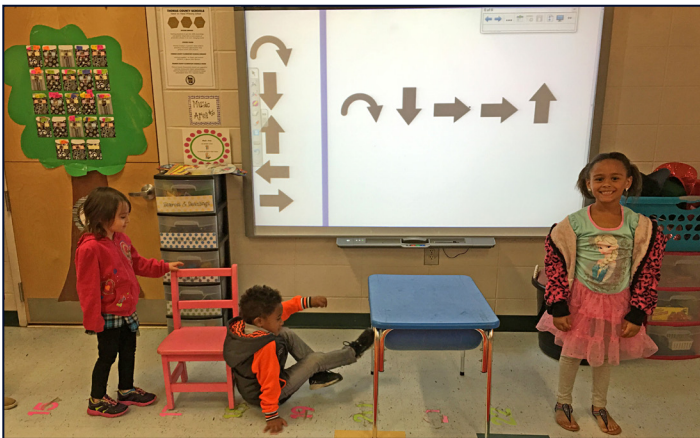
Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

TCS Join Mission to Introduce Students to Computer Science

At HNH, the kids learned what coding is and designed a coding sequence to get a classmate to move through a set of obstacles. Pictured from Mallory Glass' Pre-K class are Memory Chastain, Ian Burgess, and Arriona Smith.

In celebration of Computer Science Education Week (CSEd), Thomas County Schools joined thousands of schools throughout Georgia by participating in a national "Hour of Code," explaining the subject of computer science and hopefully whetting students' appetites to learn more about computer science.

Teachers from Pre-K to twelfth grade spent at least an hour during the week introducing computer science basics in a format that's fun, accessible and relevant to the youngest learners. Students of all ages enjoyed learning these fun and applicable skills.

At Hand-In-Hand, Pre-K students and kindergartners learned what coding is and designed a coding sequence by getting a classmate to move through a set of obstacles.

"Pre-K and kindergarten students participated in the unplugged coding sessions because they don't require a technology device," said Toni Odom, Hand-In-Hand's Instructional Technology Coach. "Teachers used their Smartboards to display the activities as the students stayed engaged through games that kept them moving and learning. Some of the kindergarten students created games on the computer using the Hour of Code. Everyone enjoyed the various coding activities completed through the week."

At Garrison-Pilcher and Cross Creek, all students worked in the computer lab programming and learning coding vocabulary.

Laurie Dawson, Instructional Technology Coach for Garrison-Pilcher and Cross Creek, said, "The students first practiced writing code and then performed the code as if they were robots. The students also entered the code into the Kodable website."

Students at Thomas County Middle School were introduced to coding through tutorials on a website named code.org. Some of the fifth

TCCHS student Ellen Ponder helps Hand-In-Hand student Miranda Bivins, 5, wrap a gift during the annual SWAYJ event. See page 3 for full story and more pictures.

Calendar Highlights

Jan. 21 - TCCHS Football Banquet, 6:00 p.m.

Jan. 23 - Regional Technology Fair

Jan. 25 - Hand-In-Hand Snow Day

Jan. 26 - Thomas County District-Wide Spelling Bee, 4:30 p.m.

Jan. 28 - Garrison-Pilcher Reading Night with children's author Dave Sargent, 6:00 p.m.

Jan. 29 - Hand-In-Hand Jump Rope for Heart

Feb. 1 & 2 - Pre-K & Kindergarten Registration, BOE PLC, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 4 - Cross Creek Jump Rope for Heart

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

grade science classes were particularly interested in learning about code through activities based on popular movies like Star Wars and Frozen. These computer science learning sessions allowed students to design computer applications which also included various math skills.

Computer Science (CS) is the newest pathway offered in the PREP Academy at Thomas County Central High School. Students in Patricia Beach's computer science classes began Computer Science Education week by discussing the purpose of the week and the "Hour of Code" initiatives.

"My students are fortunate that they already have been learning to code in html, Scratch, and Python," said Beach. "During the week, computer science classes explored new programming languages and tools on several new platforms. We tried javascript programming on code.org's Star Wars and Minecraft Hour of Code projects. Students also created art, music, and designs using Google's Made with Code studio."

Computer Science students at TCCHS were also introduced to SQL, a special-purpose programming language, on Khan Academy's Hour of Code site. Students discovered that the same principles that they have learned in class apply to other languages.

Erin Rehberg, Instructional Technology Coordinator for the Thomas County School System, shared that the purpose of Hour of Code week was to expand access to computer science for all students in grades K-12.

"The vision for the Thomas County School System is that every student will have the opportunity to learn computer science," Rehberg said. "According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2020, there will be 9.2 million jobs in STEM fields. Half of those jobs—4.6 million—will be in computing or information technology. Who will fill these jobs if our children are not given the opportunity to gain the skills needed?"
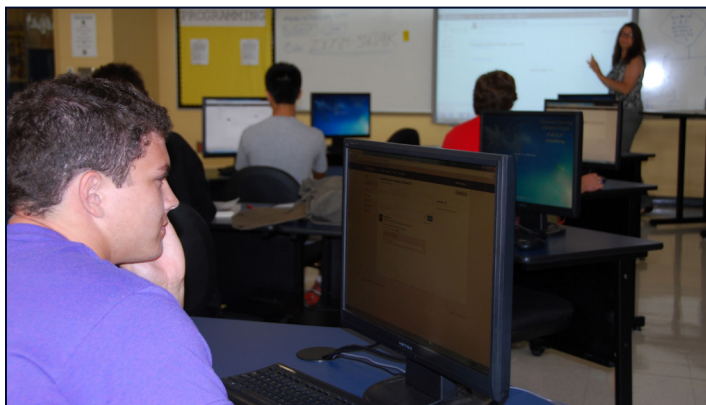
The Thomas County School System plans to go beyond the Hour of Code by continuing to expose students to the benefits of learning computer science skills. Teachers will use tutorials year round that work on browsers, tablets, smartphones or for the unplugged coding sessions.

Patricia Beach's Computer Science at TCCHS explored new programming languages and tools during Hour of Code.

DONUTS FOR DADS AND DUDES AT GP - Garrison-Pilcher recently held its annual "Dads and Dudes and Donuts" school event where more than 300 men participated. Fathers, friends, and men from the community participated in classroom activities that involved reading, art, math, and science. This event is held to promote and encourage men to participate in school activities within their community by recognizing and supporting the importance of fathers and a male presence in a child's development. Pictured above is Donovan Brinson with his father, Frederick Brinson. Pictured below is Don Vinson with his daughter, Kalli Vinson.

FINALISTS NAMED FOR ALL STATE CHORUS - Thomas County Middle School eighth graders Joshua Stephens, Kaleb Ward, and Stephen Sykes and seventh grader Britney White have been named finalists in the 2016 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, audiation test, and a written music vocabulary test. These finalists will spend three days in Athens, Georgia, in rehearsals that will culminate in a concert on February 27, 2016. Pictured are Joshua Caleb Stephens (from left), Britney White, Kaleb Ward, and Stephen Sykes.

Garrison-Pilcher student Austin Mathis, 7, and his shopping buddy, TCCHS senior Jay Densing, make their way to "Candy Land" in the TCCHS cafeteria.

Shop With A Yellow Jacket (SWAYJ) 'Wraps' Up

The Thomas County School System concluded it's annual Shop With A Yellow Jacket, or SWAYJ festivities on Saturday, December 19.

Approximately 80 students from Hand-In-Hand Primary School, Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School, Cross

TCCHS students Faith Miller and Joyia Hough (background) help Hand-In-Hand Primary School student Joshua Smith, 4, find the perfect gifts.

Creek Elementary School, and Pathways participated. The event culminated with a shopping trip to Walmart.

Students met with teams of shopping buddies from Thomas County Central High School, who took them Christmas shopping and then helped the young students wrap their gifts. The TCCHS chorale and TCCHS band students serenaded participants as they either entered the store or shopped.

At TCCHS, where wrapping and other activities took place, the cafeteria and its connecting hallway were decorated in the theme, "Christmas in Candy Land."

Other activities held at TCCHS included coloring and a chance to visit with Santa Claus. All of the younger participants received a manna box filled with food items to take home to their families.

NEED CPR? FIRST AID?

First Aid training will be offered on Tues., February 16, from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Hand-In-Hand. Please sign up on PDExpress to attend the training session.

CPR AND FIRST AID CLASSES

Cross Creek Raises Money for UNICEF to Help End Tetanus

Pictured are De'Andria Daniels, Bailey Maroney, Quincey Hart, Hunter Brogren, Robert Taylor, and Austin Bass from Susan Milam's homeroom.

Once again, the Cross Creek K-Kids Club led Cross Creek Elementary in collecting donations for UNICEF's Eliminate Project. Together, Cross Creek students raised over $1,100. These donations will help end childhood deaths around the world caused by Tetanus.

As an incentive, the Cross Creek K-Kids offered a prize to the class with the most donations. This year, Susan Milam's fourth grade class won. They were treated to a pizza party.

Leslie Aracri, the K-Kids advisor, is so proud of the K-Kids club, as well as all of Cross Creek, for giving to others in need. Part of the mission of the K-Kids club is to find ways to make the world a better place in which to live, and this is a shining example of this mission put into action.

The K-Kids Club would also like to thank Katherine Davidson and Amber Beverly at Farmers & Merchants Bank. They voluntarily helped count all of the coins that were brought in as donations and their support is much appreciated.

MARCH OF THE CANS AT HAND-IN-HAND - Hand-In-Hand collected 3,358 cans for the Thomas County Food Bank in December totaling 1,417 more than last year. Elizabeth Johnson's kindergarten class led the way in the canned food drive with 327 cans. Linda Ivey's class donated the second highest amount of 230 cans.

Teacher Leslie Elkins instructs teachers how to use Google Classroom to help them save time, keep classes organized, and improve communication with the students.

TCMS Science Fair Winners Announced

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

Thomas County Teachers Learn at Third Annual Techno Expo

On January 4, Thomas County Upper Elementary and Thomas County Middle School held its third annual "Techno Expo." On this professional learning day, teachers attended sessions to learn how to integrate technology into their classrooms.

Deann Garcia, Thomas County Middle School Georgia History Teacher, organized the event. "The goal of the Techno Expo is to help teachers feel more comfortable incorporating technology to better connect with students," Garcia said.

"Allowing students to collaborate on projects using technology prepares students for high school, college, and for the workforce. Thomas County has provided us with tremendous access to technology, and the Expo helps teachers utilize technology more effectively in their instruction," Garcia added.

The sessions were conducted by teachers from Thomas County Middle School and Upper Elementary School, Cross Creek Elementary, Thomas County Board of Education and Southwest Georgia RESA.

Sessions included strategies on Creating and Posting Tutorial Videos, Google Classroom, Interactive Notebooks, and SMART Notebook Features.

"It is important to remember that integrating technology into instruction is only one aspect of the learning process," said Erin Rehberg, Instructional Technology Coordinator for the Thomas County School System.

"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," Rehberg said.

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

Laurie Dawson introduces a new research tool on Google Docs.

The Thomas County Middle School Science Fair was held in December. More than 200 projects were entered by sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Winners will compete in the Region Science Fair at ABAC on February 12.

The following students earned awards:

In Chemistry, Meg Harnevious and Danielle Sauls earned honorable mentions. Sydnie Shelton earned third place. Sarah Carnes won second place, and Emma Goff placed first. Emma Goff also won the Overall Physical Science Division Award.

In Physics/Astronomy, William McCorkle received an Honorable Mention. Eden Jones placed third. Claire Pope earned second place, and Joshua Glass won first place.

In Engineering, Benjamin Castillo and Kaleb Ward received Honorable Mention. Joshua Stephens earned third place. Jackson Singletary won second place, and Devon Green won first place.

In Math/Computers, Kaleb Smith won second place, and Col Rewis won first place. In Animal Science, Holly Green earned third place honors. Second place went to Taylor Stegall, and first place went to Bailey Allen.

In Plant Science, Chandler Craven and Devin Vines earned Honorable Mentions. Third place went to TJ Saunders. Leara Jones earned second place while first place went to Ethan Nicoll. Ethan Nicoll also won the Overall Life Science Division Award.

In Environmental Science, third place went to Joshua Sharpe. Bradley Dechman placed second, and Laura Hiers won first.

In Medicine and Health, third place went to Reagan Siddell. Ayden Harrison won second place, and Langley Wooten placed first.

In Microbiology, Taylor Willoughby won second place while Bryan Williams earned first place.

In Behavioral & Social Science, Matt Sherrod earned third place, and Breanna Woods placed second. The first place winner for the category was Emily Johnson.

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 Ethan Nicoll.