



The Buzz

SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER 2015



Thomas County Board of Education Newsletter

Hand-in-Hand Named Top Pre-K Program in Georgia



Pre-K teacher Erin Wright guides Ariana Andres on proper handwriting techniques.

Hand-in-Hand Primary School was recently named "Program of the Year" by the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC). The GAYC Program of the Year award is presented to an early learning program that has made significant and innovative contributions to the welfare of young children and is recognized state-wide as a leader in early childhood education.

Last spring, Hand in Hand became the first Pre-kindergarten program in the area to receive the AdvancED (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) "Quality Rated Program" designation.

Thomas County School System Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay nominated Hand-in-Hand for top program honors due to its comprehensive and innovative programming that meets the needs of all students. "Hand in Hand Primary School establishes a strong foundation for our youngest students

and helps them learn to love learning," Kornegay said. "Our outstanding teachers, dedicated leaders, modern facility, and latest technology provide every young student the perfect start for an outstanding experience in our school system," he added.

Hand-in-Hand Primary Schools houses three distinct programs. The school operates 13 Georgia Pre-kindergarten classrooms, 18 kindergarten classrooms, and a reverse inclusion program for three-year old students with special

needs.

The reverse inclusion program is the only one of its kind in South Georgia. The program is for students with identified developmental delays. Students attend a full day at the school which offers special services for physical, occupational, and speech therapies along with a child-centered learning atmosphere. Young students engage in technology (computer stations, iPads, and SMARTBoards),

GAYC Award Continued on Page 2

Hand-in-Hand's Esra Named Early Interventionist of the Year



Hand-in-Hand Principal Jeanna Mayhall, left, and Hand-in-Hand Assistant Principal Dee Gaines, congratulate Susan Esra, center, on being named Early Interventionist of the Year.

Hand-In-Hand Special Education Teacher Susan Esra has been chosen as Early Interventionist of the Year by the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC). Esra has been teaching at Hand-In-Hand for 10 years.

Esra was nominated by Hand-In-Hand Principal Jeanna Mayhall.

"Susan Esra is an exceptional teacher of students with special needs," said

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

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Oct. 2 - Varsity Football vs. Monroe at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Oct. 5 - Oct. 9 - Fall Break

Oct. 9 - Varsity Football vs. Albany in Albany, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 15 - GP Open House

Oct. 16 - Varsity Football vs. Cairo at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Oct. 15 - CC Parent Conference Night, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Oct. 15 - TCCHS Senior Night, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Oct. 22 - TCCHS Chorus Concert

Oct. 23 - Varsity Football vs. Crisp County in Cordele, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 24 - Jack O'Lantern Jog, TCMS/HNH Campus

Oct. 16 - Varsity Football vs. Worth County at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Oct. 31 - TCCHS Homecoming Dance, 8:00 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.

“Teachers who inspire know that teaching is like cultivating a garden... those who would have nothing to do with thorns must never attempt to gather flowers.” - Author Unknown

GAYC Award Continued from Page 1

music, movement, and academic learning centers daily.

“Hand-in-Hand staff is extremely honored to receive this prestigious award,” said Principal Jeanna Mayhall. “We work very hard to challenge our students academically while maintaining a developmentally appropriate philosophy. This award validates our hard work that goes into our youngest. As a principal, I’m blessed to have such a dedicated, hard-working staff that puts students first.” Mayhall added, “We have weekly professional learning planned for staff to collaborate on innovative learning strategies, looking at achievement data, and

planning for instruction. I’m pleased to say that through our professional learning, our entire staff has completed CPR and First Aid Training.” In addition to the exemplary programs, Hand-in-Hand offers many opportunities for parental involvement throughout the year. The school also participates in numerous community events during the year.

Assistant Principal Dee Gaines and Susan Esra, recently named Early Interventionist of the Year by GAYC, will attend the 49th Annual GAYC conference at the end of September to receive recognition for these top honors.

Best in the Region: TCCHS Wins All Sports Title, Director’s Cup

Thomas County Central High School Athletics program has won prestigious recognition for its efforts during the 2014-2015 season.

TCCHS has been awarded the All Sports trophy from Region 1AAAA and the Regions Director’s Cup from the Georgia Athletic Directors Association for its exemplary achievements in sports programs last school year.

“The All Sports trophy is awarded to the best overall athletic program in Region 1 AAAA,” TCCHS Athletic Director Sam Holland said. “We had five region champions last year: boys and girls golf, girls soccer, softball, and girls swimming.”

Both awards are based on

points given for first, second and third places in the region, Holland explained.

“It means, to me, that across the board we have a great athletic program,” he said. “It means the pursuit of

excellence that I talk about is the standard all our coaches hold themselves and their programs to. I think it motivates all the coaches

to know they are the best in the region and this part of Georgia. There are very few places in the country where you have such a high level of competition week in and week out. So, to stand tall in this area says a lot about what is going on here at Thomas County Central.”



HOW HOT IS IT? - Sandy Fitzgerald’s third grade science class at Cross Creek Elementary performed an experiment to see how heat moves and how it affects objects. Students learned that an egg will actually cook on a hot day, and that crayons and cheese will melt. Pictured from left to right are students Ameriyah Kimmons, Shelby Daughtry, Decameron Duncan, and A.J. Clark.



FUN WAY TO LEARN SIGHT WORDS - Students in Leigh Pollock’s kindergarten class at Hand-in-Hand Primary School recently enjoyed playing a modified game of Twister, identifying sight words as they stepped on them. This is a learning center activity where students are engaged following direct reading fluency instruction. Sight word fluency is a fundamental skill for developing young readers.

4th Annual



THOMAS COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

JACK O' LANTERN JOG
5K & FUN RUN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2015

TCMS Students Receive Environmental Education



Lead Environmental Educator Mike Klenke leads the large middle school group at the Wednesday night Camp Fire activity.

Sixty fifth grade MERIT students of Thomas County Upper Elementary recently participated in the Burton Center Environmental Education Experience. Located on six acres of Tybee Island, the Burton Center utilizes the entire 3 mile x .5 mile barrier island near Savannah for day and evening classes. Students were surrounded by biologically diverse tidal marshes and were within a short distance of the Atlantic Ocean.

During the three-day trip, students took part in various classes related to the environment including Beach Ecology, Marsh Ecology, Maritime Forest Ecology, Invertebrate Studies, and a Fort Pulaski Tour. These classes are aligned with the Georgia Learning Standards for Science, English Language Arts and Social Studies.

MERIT teacher Harold Singletary coordinated the trip to provide a hands-on learning experience for his fifth graders. Many parent chaperons accompanied the group.

"This is our second year

taking students to the Burton 4-H Center and I can honestly say the trip is the best field trip I have taken," Singletary said. "The amount of hands-on learning that takes place without students even realizing that they are learning is phenomenal. Science comes alive for the students as they walk through the marsh and see the marine life and can reach out and touch these creatures."

Singletary added, "Fort Pulaski brings the Civil War era to them in a way that they can identify with and relate to as I begin my Civil War unit. Each of the staff members brings a love of learning and sparks embers of interest in the children that we will see glow all through the year. Tybee Island and the Burton Center are treasures, and I so enjoy getting to share the treasure with my students."

One of Singletary's students, Caleb Kinneer, enjoyed all of the classes, but recalled his favorite day.

"I cannot decide on just one class as my favorite, but I can tell you the day that was

my favorite," Kinneer said. "It was Thursday because we went to Fort Pulaski and to the maritime forest. We had a kind of scavenger hunt to identify things in the forest, then we went to the fort and had another scavenger hunt to find stuff from the Civil War."

One experience that the students enjoyed was Wednesday night's "Beach Walk," where students learned about nocturnal adaptations of humans and animals through active games and sensory activities. During the dark night walk, students discovered bioluminescent plankton at

the water's edge, and students developed an awareness of how rods and cones are used to produce night vision for humans.

"All the classes were fun, and I loved all of them," said Lilly Stone. "My favorite was the Beach Walk because we got to go to the beach at night. We spread out from each other and sat quietly listening to the sounds of the beach. We also played a guessing game to guess smells just using our nose. Then we played a game to see if our eyes had adjusted to the dark of the beach. I hope I can go back!"



MERIT students study the ecology of the marsh.

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Mayhall. "Susan has the most patience and empathy of any special education teacher that I have worked with over my career. I'm very impressed with the repertoire that Susan is able to establish with families. The parents of her students love and respect her. Susan is also well respected by her peers."

Esra has served as a pre-k inclusion teacher working full day as a co-teacher in a pre-k classroom, and currently serves as the special education teacher for students with autism. She also serves as Hand-In-Hand's lead special education teacher.

Mayhall added, "As an administrator, I rely heavily on Susan to make sure that we are meeting timelines. She is well-versed in special education law, rules, and regulations and assists our teachers in getting the paperwork correct and ensuring that all special education timelines are met."

"I am thrilled to be selected for this honor," Esra said. "I am so fortunate to work with fantastic administration and colleagues who value special education. It feels wonderful to know that the work we are doing makes a difference in the lives of our students."

Cross Creek Fourth Graders Receive Copies of U.S. Constitution



Cross Creek Principal Clay Stanaland (Benjamin Franklin) and Assistant Principal Brecca Pope (George Washington) talk to Delisa Barrow's fourth-grade class before signing the "Constitution." Students pictured left to right are Mackenzie Hudgins, Audrey Joiner, Aaliyah Raddar, Amari Evans, and Rodney Edwards.

On September 17, each of Georgia's fourth graders – more than 120,000 students – received a copy of the United States Constitution and other founding documents.

In honor of Constitution Day, every fourth-grader at Cross Creek Elementary had the opportunity to sign a replica of the Constitution with a quill pen. The students were surprised to be greeted by Principal Clay Stanaland and Assistant Principal Brecca Pope, who were dressed up as Benjamin Franklin and George Washington.

Stanaland said, "It brings a part of history to life and helps children understand what really took place back in 1787. Having a copy of the U.S. Constitution will encourage the students to learn more about our country's foundation."

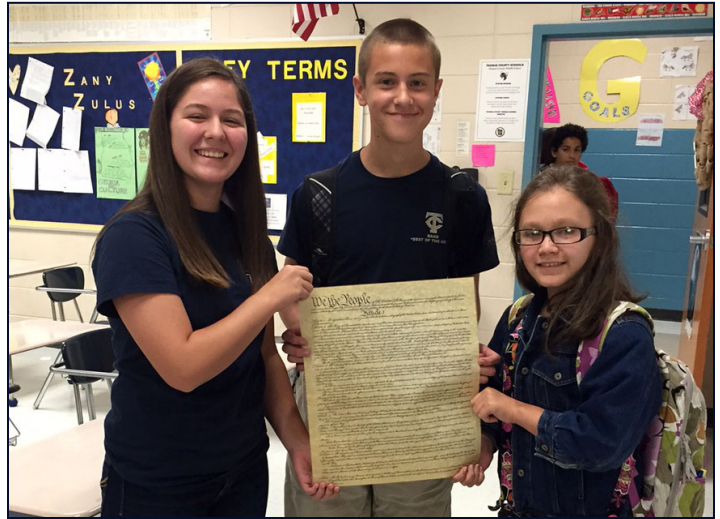
Activities were planned in each classroom throughout the day for students to learn more about how the Constitution was created and how it has been amended.

"America has grown and

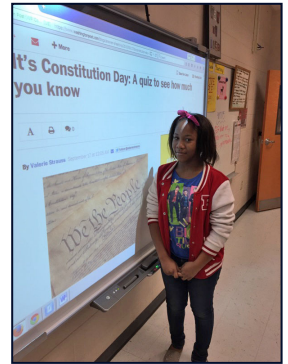
changed during the last 228 years, and so has the U.S. Constitution," said Delisa Barrow, fourth grade teacher. "I explained to the students that the document may seem like a dry piece of paper to them, but it was designed to live and grow as the nation grows."

William Johnson, a student in Barrow's class, said, "Signing with a quill pen made it seem realistic. I learned a lot about the history of the Constitution through the activities."

In an effort to increase civic awareness, State School Superintendent Richard Woods and the Georgia Department of Education distributed pocket copies of the Constitution to every fourth grader in Georgia. All funding for the project was donated – no taxpayer funds were used to purchase or distribute the Constitutions. The pocket Constitutions also included the Declaration of Independence, the lyrics of the national anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance.



CONSTITUTION DAY AT TCMS - Constitution Day is celebrated on September 17 across the United States as a way to commemorate the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787. Students and teachers at Thomas County Middle School recognized Constitution Day by completing assignments in order to help them better understand the importance of this document. Rachel Singletary's sixth grade social studies students completed an interactive quiz from *The Washington Post's* website. Students in Mrs. Deann Garcia's classes watched Stan Deaton's "Top 10 Reasons to study the U.S. Constitution," and studied the meaning of the Preamble. Lexi Knapp, Owen Watson, and Kenzie Gilbreath (pictured above left to right) hold up a replica of the U.S. Constitution after studying the Preamble in Deann Garcia's class. Pictured at right is Ja'Rie Guilford using *The Washington Post's* website to complete a quiz about Constitution Day.



LEARNING INCH BY INCH - Students in Mallory Glass' Pre-K class at Hand-In-Hand Primary School enjoyed using worms to learn about units of measurement. Pictured are students Laderrick Godbolt (L-R) and Arriona Smith.

Thomas County Students Exceed State and National Averages on College Board exams



To determine the best substance to use in a handwarmer, Lauren Pearson and Vince Wynn are measuring a volume of water to find out the enthalpy change when lithium chloride and other substances dissolve in water.

Students enrolled in Thomas County School System's Advanced Placement program exceeded state and national average scores on the rigorous College Board exams. Thomas County students scored six percentage points above the state average and two percentage points above the national average according to data released by the College Board.

One hundred eighteen Thomas County students participated in Advanced Placement courses. When combined with college dual enrollment credits, more than 200 Thomas County students earned over 800 college credits during the 2014-2015 school year at Thomas County Central High School.

"Four years ago, we made a concerted effort to raise the academic rigor of our secondary program beginning in fifth grade through the implementation of the MERIT program. Since that time, we have seen many students reach national levels of competition in numerous

fields, record numbers of students named Advanced Placement Scholars, record numbers of Duke TIP students, and more students than ever earning college credits on AP exams and through the Move on When Ready Program," said superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay.

"We have become the area's 'hands down leader' in pre-engineering preparation combining digital information and computer programming with highly successful Advanced Placement Physics and Advanced Placement Calculus programs. No other school in the area, public or private, matches our pre-engineering program," Kornegay said.

"Our pre-medical program is equally impressive with a package of courses including highly successful Advanced Placement Biology, Advanced Placement Chemistry, Advanced Placement Calculus and honors anatomy courses," Kornegay added.

Thomas County students had 100% pass rates in

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition and AP Music theory and pass rates above 90% in several other areas

To achieve this level of results, academic acceleration cannot begin at the high school level. Students begin preparing early in their school careers. Thomas County Middle School offers seven high school level courses designed to help prepare students for advanced work at Thomas County Central High School.

The seven high school credits available to Thomas County Middle School students are ninth grade literature,

Algebra I, high school physical science, two years of high school Spanish, ninth grade agriculture, and Introduction to Digital Technology, a prerequisite course for Advanced Placement Computer Programming.

During 2014-15, 21% of Thomas County Middle School students completed a high school course. Thomas County Central High Schools' 2015-2016 freshman class includes 184 students who earned high school credits while they were in middle school; 79 of those students entered high school with two years of high school foreign language credit.

Meet Our New SRO's!

A school resource officer is more than just a uniform on campus.



Deputy Darrell Colvin, school resource officer at Thomas County Central High School, talks with students in the cafeteria.



Deputy Alfredo Banos is new on campus at Bishop Hall Charter School, The Renaissance Center, and Pathways.



Quendasia Harris, author Lois Ruby, William Summerlin, Brentson Moncrief, Josh Lashley, and Dylan Bailey had the opportunity to chat about her novels after she spoke to their classes.

Author Lois Ruby Speaks to Fifth Graders at TCUE/TCMS

Thomas County Upper Elementary fifth grade students welcomed author Lois Ruby to their media center on Wednesday, September 23. Fifth grade students have been reading Ruby's novel *Steal Away Home* during their first unit of study in language arts this school year. For the fourth consecutive year, students were able to meet with Mrs. Ruby in the school media center in an event hosted by Erin Rehberg, Library Media Specialist at TCUE/TCMS.

During the meetings with Mrs. Ruby, 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. Mrs. 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 of the challenging process 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. Mrs. Ruby introduced students to some of her other novels as well.

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 Kayla Mattingly said, "It was amazing to meet her because I'm a really big fan of her books! I wrote her a note to tell her I thought she was one of the best authors ever. I love how she told us about some of her other books, too. She made me want to read all of them!"

Another student, Easton Meador, commented, "I loved meeting her and now I want to meet more authors and read more of her books. Her book called *The Secret of Laurel Oaks* is the one I want to read next. I like how she helped me better understand *Steal Away*

Gainey Ready for Challenges Beyond the Regular Classroom



TCCHS eleventh grade counselor Richard Gainey helps student Reese Smith figure out his schedule and examine his GPA.

By Avery Barrett, TCCHS student reporter

Richard Gainey is the new 11th grade counselor at Thomas County Central High School.

"I wanted to be a counselor to help students in ways that go beyond the walls of a regular classroom," Gainey said.

Gainey is from Warner Robins and currently lives in Havana, Fla. He graduated from West Florida University with a bachelor's degree, and then Albany State University for his master's degree. He heard about the TCCHS job from a school system employee.

"I came in to visit the school for an interview and the rest is history," Gainey said.

Before coming to TCCHS, he worked in the social studies department at Cairo

High School.

"This is the first time that I have been out of the classroom in 20 years," Gainey said. "I look forward to the unexpected surprises that come through the door each day."

His daily work includes directing juniors down the right academic pathway and organizing schedules.

"Only being here for a short time, all the students I have had the opportunity to talk to or work with have been great," he said.

The rest of the year Gainey will continue to help students make the best of their high school careers.

"I look forward to a successful first year at TCCHS with many more to follow," he said.

Home and why she chose that title for the book."

Kasey Cooper, fifth grade language arts teacher, said, "By giving the students the inside scoop about her books, Lois Ruby inspired the students to want to read more. She

also gave the students tips on how to become a good writer. This made them eager to give writing their own book a try."

Lois Ruby is the author of *Steal Away Home* as well as several other popular novels written for young people.