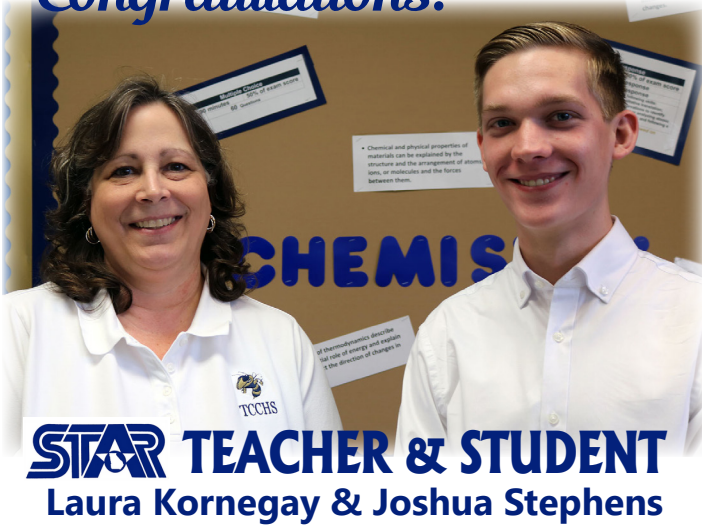




Thomas County Board of Education Newsletter

Congratulations!



STAR TEACHER & STUDENT
Laura Kornegay & Joshua Stephens

Garrison-Pilcher Lands on State's 'Reward Schools' List



Principal Sharonda Wilson, from left, and Superintendent Dr. Lisa Williams serve cake to faculty members Audrey Harper and Windy Sullivan during a celebration for Garrison-Pilcher being named a Reward School.

Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School saw its College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) scores increase from 2018 to 2019 and was named a Reward School by the Georgia Department of Education. Garrison-Pilcher teachers recently enjoyed a celebration planned in their

honor. "I am extremely proud of our students, teachers, and staff," Garrison-Pilcher Principal Sharonda Wilson said. "We are dedicated to providing quality educational experiences and opportunities to all of our

See Reward School on Page 3

Governor Kemp names Cross Creek "Gold Award Winner"



Clay Stanaland, L-R, and Ashley Lane, who were administrators at Cross Creek last year, stand with Superintendent Lisa Williams, Cross Creek Assistant Principal Amy Robinson and Cross Creek Principal Jamie Thompson.

Governor Brian Kemp, along with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), has named Thomas County's Cross Creek Elementary School as a "Gold Award School" for being a highest performing elementary school for the 2018-2019 school year with a student academic growth rate as measured by standardized tests in the top 97th percentile statewide.

The school awards, developed by GOSA and approved by the State Board of Education, are part of Georgia's Single Statewide Accountability System.

The "Gold Award" designation indicates that Cross Creek students exhibited high growth in student achievement by earning a three-year average growth score in the 97th percentile in the state, meaning that Cross Creek

scored better than 97% of the other elementary schools in the state.

The Governor's awards help parents, students, educators and communities have clear and concise information about school performance to better understand the strengths and challenges of their local schools.

Thomas County School Superintendent Dr. Lisa Williams recently surprised Cross Creek's faculty with the announcement, and she along with school board member Charles Evans helped to distribute golden covered chocolate coins for the teachers in recognition of the "gold" award. The teachers were also treated to cake and punch. Dr. Williams expressed great pride in the accomplishments of the students, teachers,

See Gold Award on Page 4

TCCHS FBLA retains hold on its region title



TCCHS FBLA celebrates its ninth consecutive Georgia FBLA Region One championship.

For the ninth consecutive year, the Thomas County Central High School Future Business Leaders of America chapter is the Georgia FBLA Region 1 champ.

Region 1 Future Business Leaders Region Leadership Conference and Competition took place Friday, Jan. 17 in Moultrie. TCCHS took 68 students and returned with 93 medals, 40 state qualifiers and another region title.

"FBLA Region 1 consists of 16 counties," TCCHS FBLA adviser Nicholas Haskin said. "No other school in the state of Georgia has won more region sweepstakes. We are especially proud because our chapter is so young (meaning grade levels of members). Our officer team, especially our seniors, encourages our members to prepare and study so that TCCHS can remain number one."

Members are equally excited about this ninth consecutive region title.

Each year, it's harder to

retain the trophy because other chapters are growing and achieving as well, Haskin adds. But no one wants to be the first to break the streak, either.

"This streak of wins can be an intimidating motivator to our chapter as each class does not want to be the first class to lose," Haskin said. "These students worked very hard to ensure that they would bring home the title. As advisers, there is no better moment than watching our students walk across the stage and earn honors for their continued hard work."

The 2020 FBLA State Leadership Conference and Competition is March 19-20 at the Atlanta Hyatt Regency.

Qualifying students will study, fine-tune presentations, and perfect their projects to prepare for state competition.

Members aim to continue enjoying their time in FBLA while honing their skills concurrently.

TCMS High Techs advancing to state competition



Pictured on the front row from left to right are Lindsey Norman, Quincy Hart, Mackenzie Smith, Zach Williams, and Jaida Pinkins. On the back row from left to right are Coach Ashley Palmer, Cody Barrentine, Coach Sarah Rigdon, Anna Catherine Duplantis, Kason Reynolds, Connor Reagan, and Coach Will Hanna.

The Thomas County Middle School High Techs Lego League Team competed on Saturday, January 27 at the Columbus State Super-Regional at Columbus State University. The team won the Champions Award for being the best overall and for the highest robot performance out of 32 teams.

The theme this year is City Shapers, where teams have to address a problem with a building or public

space in their community.

The High Techs chose to address the lack of equipment and activities for people with special needs at local parks. These students developed an outdoor sensory wall in collaboration with multiple local experts and are exploring ways to implement their solution.

The team is advancing to compete at the Georgia 2019 State Championship hosted by Georgia Tech in February.



ROBOSTINGERS WIN FIRST PLACE - Several middle school teams competed at the Columbus State Super-Regional including a couple of students from Cross Creek Elementary. The RoboStingers won first place in Core Values which is all about teamwork. Teams have seven values that they must know, and they also have a challenge that there is no practice for. They are given the task and they must complete it cooperatively. Cross Creek students included Celia Perry, Lenorius Davis, and Clay Johnson (not pictured). Congratulations to all!

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 18 First Aid
March 17 CPR

Please sign up on PDExpress to attend this class or to see others offered!



Reward School cont. from Page 1

students. I appreciate our students, parents, teachers, and staff for their hard work, persistence, and love shown to the students of Garrison-Pilcher and Thomas County Schools."

The CCRPI is the state's measuring stick for Georgia public schools, and does so by weighing certain metrics such as performance on state-mandated assessments and attendance rate. Reward Schools are among the greatest-improving 5% of Title I Schoolwide schools and Title I Targeted Assistance schools. Reward Schools also have to maintain the performance of their economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners to be recognized.

"We are very proud of our team at Garrison-Pilcher Elementary for earning

the distinction as a Reward School," said Superintendent Dr. Lisa Williams. "The students, teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents have worked hard to reach great heights, and we take enormous pride in the fact that they are being recognized for their academic excellence."

"While we are focused on continuous improvement for all schools, it's also essential that we recognize when schools are doing well," State School Superintendent Richard Woods said in a GaDOE press release. "These schools are overcoming barriers, meeting challenges, and producing great gains for their students. I commend the school leaders, teachers, parents and communities in our 2019-20 Reward Schools who are opening up opportunities for their students."



Anaya Patel, fifth grader at Thomas County Middle School, survived 24 rounds of competition to win this year's spelling bee for the county schools.

Patel spelled "duopoly" correctly to win the competition consisting of 13 students. She will compete in the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) District Spelling Bee on February 22 in Bainbridge. Congratulations!



PATEL

Evans and Streets to Lead County Board of Education

The Thomas County Board of Education held its first meeting of the new calendar year Tuesday night. After the invocation, outgoing chair Dan Stewart declared the positions of chair and vice chair vacant and asked for nominations.



EVANS

Board member Nancy Hiers made a motion that Charles Evans be elected chair and that Kay Streets be elected vice chair. Leah Smith seconded Hiers' motion. Stewart called for any additional nominations. There were no additional nominations, so Evans and Streets were elected to their respective roles with no dissenting votes.

Evans has been a member of the board since 2007. He served as vice-chair during 2014 and 2019. He retired from the Department of Natural Resources as a Conservation Ranger after 30 years. He currently serves part-time as a bailiff for the court system.

"I am humbled and honored to serve as chair alongside a great group of board members," said Evans. "I feel that my position as chair is dignified by the fact that we have the best school system, administration, teachers, and superintendent that I could ask for. I also appreciate Mr. Stewart's guidance and leadership during his term as chair. I'm looking forward to working closely with Mrs. Streets, the rest of the board and Dr. Lisa Williams for a successful year."

Streets began her service on the board in 2004.



STREETS

She said, "I am excited to continue serving Thomas county and district seven with Chairman Charles Evans and the other board members. Serving alongside the faculty and student body that we have been blessed with is an honor. I am looking forward to the year ahead."



ACADEMIC COMPETITION EXCELLENCE - Academic excellence propelled numerous Thomas County Central High School students to victory in a recent competition. A group of TCCHS students competed in the 16th annual Frances S. Kelly Academic Competition at Andrew College in Cuthbert. Competitors divided into divisions based on school classification. TCCHS was in Division C with other 5A or higher schools. Because the limit was 20 students, five students per grade level attended and competed. In individual awards, numerous TCCHS students earned first or second place designations. In these categories, all students took a timed multiple-choice test. Pictured above, TCCHS students who competed in the 16th annual Frances S. Kelly Academic Competition enjoy their successes.

Gold Award cont. from Page 1



Superintendent Dr. Lisa Williams, left, talks with Cross Creek staff Jen Mobley and Austin Futch at the school celebration.

administrators, and staff. "It is a great honor for Cross Creek to be designated as a "Gold Award School," stated Dr. Williams. "This distinction validates the quality of our instructional program and the dedication and hard work of our students, teachers, administrators, and staff along with the continued support of our parents and community stakeholders. Because Hand-In-Hand Primary and Garrison-Pilcher Elementary schools are feeder schools for Cross Creek, their teachers and administrators share in this recognition, also. They help to lay the foundation for our students for which the Cross Creek teachers are able to build upon."

Cross Creek Elementary School Principal Jamie Thompson said, "It is an honor to work with the talented and dedicated staff at Cross Creek. Our teachers take every step possible to ensure that our students are able to pursue their educational dreams."

Thomas County Middle Schools Principal Clay Stanaland was serving at Cross Creek last year.

Stanaland commented on the award, "This award confirms that our system and school offer a quality educational program that promotes the academic achievement of all students. The efforts of our staff and the implementation of research-based intervention strategies that help close learning gaps as well as the acceleration of those ready to move on are key factors to our success."

Curriculum Director Robin Cartright said, "When the three-year average of students making typical or high growth places a school in the 97% of elementary schools in the state, it ensures that the students at Cross Creek Elementary School are receiving sound instructional practices on a daily basis that builds the foundational skills needed for the middle and high school years."

"Congratulations to the teachers and administrators at Cross Creek for having consistent and high expectations for all students and spending countless hours learning about how to improve instruction," added Cartright. "We are very proud

of all the students at Cross Creek Elementary School and appreciate the support we receive from parents and the community."

Following the announcement, Daphne King, who teaches fourth grade at Cross Creek, got emotional. "The entire staff at Cross Creek Elementary School, including custodial and lunchroom staff, have played a pivotal role in affecting the positive climate, attitude, and reputation of Cross Creek," King said. "These factors are the cornerstone on which learning communities function and grow. Because of everyone's commitment here to maintain such a positive learning

environment, Cross Creek continues to be an effective incubator of learning. Students are not only educated, but challenged, nurtured, and encouraged on a daily basis."

Third grade teacher Jen Mobley said, "I'm so excited about our Gold Award! We deserve it. All of our teachers and students work so hard to excel, and our hard work is paying off. Sometimes my students will moan and groan because it is hard, but now they know that always trying their best is worth it. It makes me so proud to be a part of a school family that scored higher than 97% of the elementary schools in Georgia!"



Laura Daughtry serves cake to Rhonda Melton to celebrate Cross Creek being named Gold Award Winner.

ESRA NAMED GA²PMT PRESIDENT - Billy Esra, Bishop Hall Charter School's Math Department Chair and teacher, was confirmed as the new President of the Georgia Association of Advanced Placement Math Teachers (GA²PMT) at this year's Georgia Math Conference. Esra has been a member of the GA²PMT organization for almost 10 years. As a member, he has been a Regional Representative, Vice President of AP Information, and the President-Elect. Esra will serve as President until 2021. The main focus of GA²PMT is to host events for the Georgia Math Conference held yearly at Rock Eagle in October. The organization provides professional development for AP Math Teachers in Georgia through AP Mathematics sessions at the Georgia Math Conference, shares experiences of teachers who score AP free response questions in the summer, as well as, provides a bi-annual newsletter.



ESRA

Successful Review for Thomas County Nutrition Department



TCCHS' cafeteria staff include Faye Barrineau, Alma Bryant, Amber Crowell, Alice Griffin, Vince Lewis, Stacy Munford, Mystic Newton, Marie Ragan, Elaina Roberts, Delois Robinson, Irene Robinson, Makayla sharp, Tracy Tucker and Evelyn Williams.

Thomas County School System's Nutrition Department recently underwent an administrative review by the Georgia Department of Education Nutrition Division. After a long and involved process, the department boasted a successful monitoring with lots of positive feedback.

The two schools chosen for the review were Hand-In-Hand Primary School and Thomas County Central High School. Director of Nutrition Cindy Carnes said that her staff went above and beyond the call of duty.

"I owe everything to the staff at these schools and to our other managers who helped evaluate the two schools being reviewed," Carnes said. "We have such a great team! I could not have done it without some key players who also played a huge role in our success."

Hand-In-Hand received many positive commendations such as "clean, organized kitchen, high quality food, and excellent leadership and staff organization."

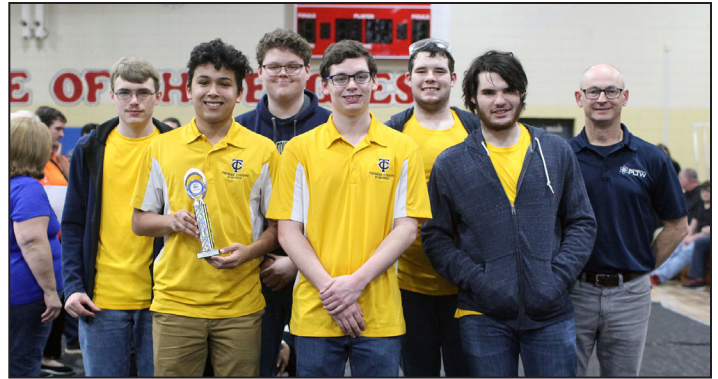
Leanell Nelson is the

nutrition manager at Hand-In-Hand.

"The Hand-In-Hand nutrition staff works really hard to follow all of the guidelines and policies on a daily basis so when it came time for our review, it was easy to do everything right," Nelson said. "Even though we are all well-trained, having people watch us was hard. I told my staff it was their time to shine, and that's exactly what they did. They are the greatest!"

The visit at the high school was equally successful. Some commendations included, "great rapport with students and staff, excellent batch cooking, extremely tasty food, and wonderful teamwork." Marie Ragan, TCCHS nutrition manager, was proud of her staff.

Ragan said, "My staff is the greatest. Their dedication to their job is beyond words. The day of the review was a little stressful, but the staff worked with ease and confidence. To sum things up, I am proud to work in a kitchen with these ladies and Vince. I could not do what I



CYBERSTINGERS GOLD GOING TO STATE - TCCHS robotics teams finished in third and fifth positions overall out of 23 teams at the district level of the FIRST Tech Challenge robotics competition at Mitchell County High School in Camilla. The district included teams from areas south of Atlanta, middle Georgia, Columbus and southwest Georgia. Cyberstingers Green finished fifth in preliminary rounds but did not advance to state competition and competed in the semi-finals as the captain of one of four alliance teams. Cyberstingers Gold team, which finished third overall in preliminary rounds, advanced through the semi-finals and final of the game competition and won the event as part of the winning alliance team. In separate judging for robot design, Cyberstingers Gold won second place. Cyberstingers Gold qualified to compete in the state championship at the Cobb County Civic Center Feb. 21-22. Cyberstingers Gold team members (left to right) Jacob Brinson, Ben Castillo, Norman Desourdy, Brian Ryals, Nathan Gibson and Jordan Gibson pose with their trophy and adviser Brian Bellamy (far right).

do without them."

The team from GADOE also visited the central office and was complimentary of the department. The team noticed there was an increase in participation by 20,000 more meals from this time last year.

"We are so proud of the strong program we have at

Thomas County Schools, and we look forward to many more years to come," Carnes added.

The administrative review is designed to be conducted both off-site and on-side and is broken down into sections. The nutrition department is up for review every five years.



Hand-In-Hand cafeteria staff include Kendra Bell, Rosa James, Micah Kimler, Queen Lamb, Leanell Nelson, Annie Stephens, Ana Ulloa, and Mary Young.

1,000,000



ONE IN A MILLION - Six fourth graders and one third grader from Cross Creek Elementary have joined an elite club. These students are the school's first members of the 1,000,000 Word Club. Cross Creek students participate in the Accelerated Reader (AR) program as part of the independent reading component of a balanced literacy program. Through AR testing, the word count is identified for each student. Pictured with Media Specialist Annette James are the students who met the goal of reading more than a million words. From left to right on the first row are Keya Patel, Kaytlyn Holloway, Ben Carlisle, and Kevin Ramirez. On the second row from left are Maggie Cook, James, Wesley Herring and Mia Freeman.



GETTING SOME GOOD TIPS - The Thomas County School System recently held its annual TIP Expo. TIP stands for Technology and Instructional Practices. Held at Thomas County Middle School, the expo was a district-wide event giving all teachers the opportunity to learn how to integrate technology and effective instructional practices into their classrooms. The event allowed teachers in Thomas County Schools to share their knowledge of various tools and strategies so that fellow educators will be able to improve instructional opportunities. There were 41 sessions ranging from information on how to get organized using Google for Education to how to create Digital Escape Games. There were also outside presenters from Georgia Public Broadcasting, Southwest Georgia RESA, Valdosta State University, and Edmentum. Pictured is Russell Paine from SWRESA giving tips to teachers on how to get organized with Google.

Lend Your Voice & Make a Difference!

Community Engagement Session
Thursday, February 20
6:00 - 8:30 p.m. | TCCHS

Come and be a part of our strategic planning process as we look to the future of our school district! All parents, citizens, district employees and students are encouraged to attend.

Sandwiches & beverages will be served at the event. Please RSVP by visiting the website. www.tcjackets.net



THOMAS COUNTY SCHOOLS

When: Thursday, February 20, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Thomas County Central High School Cafeteria

Who: All Thomas County School System employees, parents, senior citizens, businessmen and women, civic leaders and residents. High school students are also encouraged to attend.

What: A Community Engagement Session to gather input from parents, citizens, district employees and students. Everyone is invited: parents, all district employees, high school students and community members. No special experience or knowledge is required. We will present information on the district, the strategic planning process and then break into small groups for discussion.

FOOD WILL BE SERVED!

NOTE: Sandwiches and beverages will be served at the event. Please RSVP at the district website to help us plan how much food to prepare. (www.tcjackets.net)



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