



The Buzz

MAY
2016



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Garrison-Pilcher's Erin Hall Named Teacher of the Year

Thomas County School System officials have named Erin Hall, second grade interventionist at Garrison-Pilcher Elementary, as the District Teacher of the Year.

"Words cannot express how incredibly honored and grateful I am to represent the Thomas County School System as Teacher of the Year," Hall said. "My family, friends, coworkers, and administration support me in my passion for children and education. Without their support, I would not be able to make such an impact on the students I serve."

Hall has been a teacher for five years with Thomas County Schools. She taught PreK for two years at Hand-In-Hand and three years at Garrison-Pilcher, with one year in a second



Garrison-Pilcher Principal Sharonda O'Neal (left) and Thomas County Schools Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay (right) congratulate Erin Hall on being named Teacher of the Year for the school system.

grade classroom and the past two years as the second grade interventionist.

"As the interventionist, I work with students who have significant reading and math difficulties," Hall

said. "For those students, it would be easy for them to become frustrated with school and learning. My goal is to encourage them to love reading and math, even when it is difficult. To see the look on student's faces when they achieve a goal that they didn't believe was possible is the reason I continue to love my job as an educator every day."

Hall attended Garrison-Pilcher, Cross Creek, Thomas County Middle School, and graduated from Thomas County Central High School.

Hall said, "I have always known I was meant to be a teacher. My mom has videos of me 'teaching' to my stuffed animals when I was a little girl. Growing up in the Thomas County School System was an amazing experience that I will cherish forever, especially the early elementary years."

Garrison-Pilcher Principal
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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

May 23, 24 & 25 - Teacher Post-Planning

July 4 - Independence Day Holiday

July 26 - July 29 - Teacher Pre-Planning

August 1 - First Day for Students



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.

Battery Source Recognized as BEE Partner of the Year



Karl Glass, Battery Source District Manager, receives a plaque from Hand-In-Hand Principal Jeanna Mayhall and Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay for being chosen as BEE Partner of the Year. See page 5 for full story.

Teacher of the Year cont. from page 1



Thomas County Schools retired administrator and Principal Emeritus Bob Parrish congratulates Erin Hall at Garrison-Pilcher on being named Teacher of the Year.

Sharonda O’Neal said, “I am very pleased and excited that Erin Hall was named Thomas County Schools Teacher of the Year. She is an example of a true teacher leader. Erin thoroughly communicates with students, parents, colleagues and administrators to ensure that students are successful.”

Hall graduated from Valdosta State University with a degree in Early Childhood, a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood with Reading and ESOL endorsement, and currently is enrolled in the Education Specialist program for Teacher Leadership.

Hall added, “It is my personal belief that all students can learn when given the correct environment and tools they need for success. I also believe that it is an educator’s job to encourage and inspire students to learn.”

“She makes her learning environment student-centered, interesting, diverse, and fun for all learners,” said O’Neal. “I am very excited about her future. Erin will definitely continue to grow and flourish in her career.”

The Teacher of the Year (TOTY) process began in February. School winners were judged on a written application and an interview before an

impartial committee. Judges submitted independent ratings for each candidate, and the person with the highest overall average was named District Teacher of the Year.

Melanie Chavaux, Associate Superintendent, who oversees the Teacher of the Year process, said, “Teaching is more than a job, it is a calling. The interview panel had a very difficult job in selecting the 2016-2017 Teacher of the Year.”

“We are fortunate to have such innovative and dedicated teachers in our system,” Chavaux added. “We are delighted to have Erin Hall as Thomas County’s Teacher of the Year. Ms. Hall will represent our system well at the state level.”

Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay said, “I congratulate Miss Hall on this milestone achievement in her career. To achieve this distinction so early in her career is a testimony to her talent, passion, and dedication. I feel very fortunate to have her as part of our school system family, and she is a great representative of the many fine teachers that we have throughout our district. I know that she will represent us well at the state-level competition.”

TCCHS Names Honor Graduates, Valedictorian, Salutatorian



TCCHS Class of 2016 Valedictorian Cole Donovan and Salutatorian Jane Guo pose for a picture in the library.

Hard work and the drive toward academic excellence has led a group of upcoming graduates at Thomas County Central High School to the top of their class.

The school recently announced honor graduates, salutatorian and valedictorian for the TCCHS Class of 2016. Valedictorian is Cole Donovan and salutatorian is Jane Guo. Also, 40 students have been named honor graduates.

“We are very proud of these young adults and everything they have accomplished,” TCCHS Assistant Principal James Rehberg said. “Four years ago we issued a challenge to the class of 2016, to be the best, and I think the number of honor grads shows you they were ready to meet the challenge. It’s a good group, a diverse group, with tons of talent and varied interests. I wouldn’t be surprised to hear about their continued achievements for years to come.”

Cole Donovan was “excited and relieved” upon hearing the announcement. “I am proud of myself as well as Jane because I know that we

were competing with some incredibly intelligent peers,” he said. “It is the capstone of my educational career thus far.”

Donovan adds being valedictorian was not something he competitively strived for, but the thought was always present and pushed him to work hard.

Jane Guo said she tried her best, worked her hardest, and just happened to get salutatorian. She says titles like valedictorian, salutatorian and honor graduate don’t define a person.

“Titles like valedictorian, salutatorian or honor graduate can never define the entirety of someone as a person,” she said. “It doesn’t accurately define anyone because it is relative only to your class. Whether you got honor grad or not, you are more than just a title. If I had worked just as hard and not gotten the title, I wouldn’t have felt any different because I am satisfied with my efforts.”

Donovan plans to attend the University of Georgia to study English/Latin education. Guo also plans to attend UGA and will study biochemistry.

Author Annette Laing Visits Thomas County Middle School



Zachary Wood demonstrates an air raid warden's uniform from World War II with the help of Dr. Annette Laing.

Thomas County Middle School sixth grade students welcomed author and historian Dr. Annette Laing to their media center on Tuesday, April 26. These students have studied World War II as a part of their curriculum for the past two years. Laing's presentation was called "Could You Be a World War II Kid?"

During the meetings with Dr. Laing, students were able to learn how air raids, food rationing, the blackout, and evacuations affected citizens of England, particularly children, during World War II. She used artifacts, multimedia, period costumes, and readings from her book *Don't Know Where, Don't Know When* to make history come alive for the students. The presentation encouraged the students to think critically and to discover parallels in the American experience of World War II.

"When students have the chance to hear from an author and historian, it encourages them to continue learning more about history at a deeper level," said Mandy West, social studies department chair and sixth grade teacher. "Touching

the artifacts also helped history come alive for the students."

Erin Rehberg, TCMS media specialist, was the host for this event. "We love to have authors visit in our media center," she said. "The students were totally engaged during Dr. Laing's presentation, and she did a fantastic job of transporting the children from Thomas County in 1916 to England in the 1940s. She made history exciting for the students."

Student Bryce Shroats had the opportunity to wear some of the artifacts during Laing's presentation, including pieces of an air raid warden's uniform. "Hearing her presentation about life back then made me feel grateful," he said. "I would not want to be a kid in England in the 1940s."

Annette Laing is the author of *The Snipesville Chronicles* series for middle school readers. The series highlights the adventures of three children from South Georgia as they are transported to different historical time periods. She makes her home in Atlanta, Georgia.



BUILDING HOOVERVILLE - Cross Creek students from Kari Holm's and Heather Butler's fourth-grade classes built a Hooverville town while studying the Newbery Award book, *Bud, Not Buddy*. Pictured from left to right are Jakayla Harrison, Dontrail Blangor, Brooklyn Paschall, Abby Hurst (TCCHS Intern), and Alexandria Willis.



Students from Vicki Warren's and Kathy Swearingen's 2nd grade classes participated in the Georgia Student Media Festival. Projects were sent off to the state level for judging. Both projects were recognized for Outstanding Media Production with high scores for Merit. Congratulations to these rising 3rd graders! Students pictured above from Swearingen's class are (L-R) Makenzie Smith, Elizabeth Ralston, Jazmine Burgess and Logan Webb. Students pictured below from Warren's class are (L-R) Blade Trawick, Drew Jones, Laylen Hines, Katelyn Bradshaw and Sophia Stewart.





TCCHS medal winners at State Science Olympiad are Jacob Hancock, C'lee Kornegay, and Hailey Ferrel.

TCCHS Places Second at Regional Science Olympiad

Thomas County Central High School Science Olympiad students brought home medals and ribbons from the Georgia Science Olympiad competition.

The event was held at Emory University. Twenty-four teams competed. Three TCCHS students medaled and several received ribbons.

"I am very pleased with our performance," coach Laura Kornegay said. "I'm not sure the kids realized how tough the competition would be at state. Anytime you can finish ahead of schools like Woodward Academy and Rockdale Magnet School, you're doing something right. We also finished ahead of Northgate, the team that placed ahead of us at region."

Medal winners are: C'lee Kornegay and Hailey Ferrel, who won fourth place in Electric Vehicle, and Jacob

Hancock, who won fourth place in Wind Power.

"I had to build a turbine for the competition," Jacob Hancock said. "My teammates really helped me come up with a good design. It was fun to build and test different designs."

Ribbon winners are: C'lee Kornegay and Hailey Ferrel in Air Trajectory, Eli Kosciw and Austin Kelley in Green Generation, Eli Kosciw and Guanghui Li in It's About Time; and Steven Tran and C'lee Kornegay in Robot Arm.

Tran said he and his partner built their own robot arm for their competition section. He said, overall, the experience was a fun one.

"I did my best on each event and that paid off," he said. "Knowing that I got a ribbon means that there is plenty to improve on for next year."

TCCHS Sophie Anderson Wins Congressional Art Competition

Sophie Anderson has won the honor to have her work displayed in the U.S. Capitol. She won first place in the 2016 Congressional Art Competition held by U.S. Rep. Austin Scott.

"Being honored by this award is a definite confidence boost and reassures me that an art-related career is the right choice for me," Anderson said.

Anderson's reward for first place is a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the National Congressional Art Competition reception and exhibit ribbon-cutting in June. Also, her artwork will hang in the Capitol for one year, alongside more than 300 other honored artworks from other congressional districts.

"It is incredible to know that my project will be hung in the Capitol," Anderson said. "This is an award I've been working toward for a long time, and it's exciting to have my hard work recognized. I can't wait for the opening. I'm looking forward to not only seeing my own art but getting to meet hundreds of other artists my age."

Her winning piece is titled "Looking to the Future."

"The artwork is of an old man's profile surrounded by mushrooms with clocks in the background," Anderson describes. "It is done in pen and ink washes. The theme of the drawing is old age, the passing of time, and death."

Other honorees were for second and third place, as well as honorable mentions, all selected "by a distinguished panel of judges," according to a press release from the congressman's office. A



Sophie Anderson, pictured with U.S. Rep. Austin Scott, holds her first place artwork, "Looking to the Future."

People's Choice Award also was given, chosen by Scott's eighth district constituents who voted on his Facebook page.

"I am pleased to see such artistic talent coming from the Eighth Congressional District and applaud our students for their hard work and dedication," Scott said in the release. "I applaud our Eighth Congressional District art teachers who instill a spirit of creativity, encourage big imaginations, foster talent, and impact their students' lives forever."

TCCHS art teacher Jocelyn Rivard said her students look forward to participating in this annual competition, which sets its bar very high.

"To have the visual arts celebrated at the highest national levels lends real validation to our high school programs," she said. "And for those who earn first place, such as Sophie, going to the Capitol reception makes for a standout high school experience."

Anderson also is eligible for a \$3,000 per year scholarship to Savannah College of Art and Design.



Sellers Named State Winner for Young Georgia Authors

Mackenzie Sellers, rising freshman at Thomas County Central High School, was recently named this year's eighth grade state winner of the Young Georgia Authors (YGA) Writing Competition.

Sellers, daughter of Lindsey and Sean Sellers, is a MERIT student. As an eighth-grader last year at Thomas County Middle School, she was in Nancy Rogers' English and language arts class.

Rogers entered Sellers' poem entitled "Where I'm From." Her poem was entered in state-level competition by first winning system level and regional competitions.

Rogers said, "Mackenzie is a special young lady with a talent for writing; I'm super excited that she received this award!"

Unlike many writing competitions, YGA does not provide a prompt to which students must respond or provide other boundaries to their genre choice or creativity beyond a maximum length limit.

Entries may include short stories, poetry, essays, personal narratives, academic/research reports, as well as any other original student writings.



Battery Source Recognized as BEE Partner of the Year



Battery Source has been named Thomas County School System's BEE Partner of the Year for 2015 - 2016. The Business and Education Exchange (BEE) Partner of the Year is chosen from the outstanding BEE Partners who work with Thomas County Schools to strengthen the link among schools, businesses/industries, and the community.

The announcement was made at the annual Superintendent's Breakfast where the BEE Partner of the Year nominees were honored. The Superintendent's Breakfast is sponsored by the Thomasville Chamber of Commerce, one of the active connections between Thomas County Schools and the business community of Thomasville and Thomas County.

Prior to the announcement, Associate Superintendent Melanie Chavaux shared a few of the goals of Business Education Exchange (BEE) Partners.

"Our goals are to increase student achievement, promote school attendance, and increase awareness of career opportunities within the community," Chavaux said. "Without the commitment of the business partners, meeting these goals would not be possible."

For nearly 60 years, Battery Source has served Thomasville and Thomas County as a leading retailer and service provider of batteries and golf carts. They opened their first business in Thomasville, but is currently building their 21st store and employs 85 workers company wide. Nearly 6,000 students and staff from multiple schools in Thomas County have been impacted by Battery Source.

Hand-In-Hand Primary School nominated Battery Source for the distinguished BEE Partner of the Year Award.

"This BEE Partnership has enhanced Hand-In-Hand's ability to promote positive behavior choices for our students, something vital at this age," said Jeanna Mayhall, Hand-In-Hand Principal. "Battery Source generously donated a brand new golf cart to be used by Hand-In-Hand to help afford positive behavior support rewards, as well as attendance incentives by providing more than 150 hours of rides for our students who have earned StarBucks, a positive support tool we implemented for all of our students."

In addition to donating the golf cart to Hand-In-Hand, Battery Source lends its own time in picking up, servicing and returning the golf cart to ensure the students and staff are kept safe while riding.

"As if that weren't enough, the employees of Battery Source also spend time in our school, eating lunch with our children, reading, and participating in events," Mayhall added. "Their presence is felt and very appreciated!"

Chavaux highlighted Battery Source's benefits to the schools.

"This BEE Partnership is unique because it benefits more than one school in Thomas County," Chavaux said. "Battery Source has also donated the use of their golf carts for free to all county schools for special events such as grandparent's days, honors days and graduation. Because this partnership affects choices and behaviors for students and their families at the primary level, we hope to continue to see a positive correlation in student behavior and attendance as these students further their education within Thomas County Schools."



CAREER DAY AT CROSS CREEK - Students in Jamie Whigham's and Kelli Dorminey's social studies classes participated in Career Day as part of their study on economics. The classes learned about different services around the community when several parents and grandparents visited the classrooms to teach them about their careers. Students received great insight on why certain jobs are important, what services are provided within that job, and how other people benefit. Pictured above are Whigham's students Tybria Staten (back row L-R) Meghan Moncrief, Mason Hymer, Debrale Smiley, Gaines Small, Ayla Little (front row L-R) Sarah Stolarik, Kaylin Franklin, Antonio Cody, Griffin Wilson, Takai Donaldson, and Quantarious Brinson. Dorminey's students pictured below are Dane Taylor (back row L-R), Jecardo Neloms, Donnell Jester, Ryan Brown, Taden Shroats, Jolie Brinson (front L-R) Gracie Powell, and Levi Broome.



Students Encouraged to Read Over the Summer



Emily Hobbs and Kaylee Barrett discuss books in preparation for the Summer Reading Challenge at Thomas County Middle School.

Media specialists in the Thomas County School System are encouraging students to read over the summer

In order to promote summer reading, each school's media center has developed a list of rewards for students that complete the requirements for their school's challenge.

"I always tell the students that becoming better readers can be a lot like training for a race," said Erin Rehberg, media specialist at Thomas County Middle. "They've been reading all throughout the school year. If they stop reading over the summer, they are going to lose some of the ability and speed they've gained throughout the year, just as if they stopped training to run a race."

The requirements vary from school to school. Lucy Thompson, Hand-in-Hand's media specialist, understands the value of students being read to at home from an early age.

"Our kindergartners are at such a critical age when it comes to literacy. Anything we can do to promote summer

reading will greatly benefit our students."

Thompson has promised an ice cream party to participating students along with a chance to win a \$25.00 gift certificate to the school's book fair in the fall.

Darlene Cook, media specialist at Garrison-Pilcher, has fond memories of reading in the summer as a child. "My early love of reading and books came from visiting the library in the summer. We encourage our students to read and have books read to them even when they are out of school."

Cook looks forward to meeting a new group of first grade students at Garrison-Pilcher next August. "I cannot wait to talk with these children about the books they read over the summer," Cook said.

High school students are also encouraged to participate in the Summer Reading Challenge. "Our ninth through twelfth grade students don't have very much freedom or time when it comes to selecting their own books during the school year," said

Selina Bell, media specialist at TCCHS. "Summer reading is a time for students to look for self-selected titles that will continue to foster a love of reading."

Teachers and media specialists are far too familiar with a decline in reading that comes with being out of school. According to the Georgia Department of Education, research has shown that students can have a 2-3 month loss in reading ability over the summer.

Annette James, Cross

Creek's media specialist, feels that summer reading is crucial to the success of elementary school students.

"We want our students to keep their minds active this summer, and keep reading," James said. "This will help them come to school in August prepared for a new grade."

The requirements and rewards for each school vary. Please visit the Thomas County School System's website at www.thomas.k12.ga.us for more information about the guidelines for each school.

Duke TIP Students from TCMS Score High



Thomas County Middle School seventh-graders (L-R) Sarah Carnes, Danielle Sauls, and Anna James were recognized as part of the 2016 Duke University TIP Program.

The Thomas County School System recently announced that three of its middle school students were recognized as a part of the 2016 Duke University Talent Identification (TIP) Program.

Sarah Carnes, Anna James, and Danielle Sauls, seventh graders at Thomas County Middle School, were among a select group of students statewide to meet the criteria to be Duke TIP students.

The Duke TIP Club advisors, Retha Lee and Tonya Frare, help students prepare for national tests such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT by guiding them through sample test

questions and showing them online resources for further practice

All three students scored high enough to be eligible for participation in Duke's Summer Studies programs.

The Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) identifies 7th graders in sixteen states in the Southeast, Midwest and Southwest who have scored at the 95th percentile or above on a national grade-level achievement test, but several students from TCMS scored higher than the 90th percentile nationally on this assessment.