



The Buzz

SEPTEMBER
2014



Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

TCCHS's Robertson Returns as 12th Grade Counselor



TCCHS Senior Guidance Counselor Whitney Robertson talks with senior Linna Le about upcoming SAT dates.

One of Thomas County Central High School's previous teachers and graduates returns to the school this year as the 12th grade counselor.

Whitney Robertson spent four years as a math teacher at TCCHS, but transferred to Baconton Community Charter School in 2012. She came back to Thomas County Schools in the 2013-2014 school year with a job at TCMS. Now, she is back where she started: at TCCHS.

Robertson, who graduated from TCCHS in 2001, says she never saw herself becoming a teacher.

"I felt like it was the direction God was leading me," she said.

Many TCCHS seniors are excited about their former math teacher's return. One of those seniors is Robertson's former student Stephen Atkinson.

"Having Mrs. Robertson

back is so amazing," Atkinson said. "I think she will do awesome things as a counselor at TCCHS."

At home, Robertson has a wonderful family that consists of her husband, James, and their

children: Andrew, who is five, and Ellie, who is 14 months.

When asked what the most difficult part of her job is, she answered, "It's hard not to take my work home with me."

"I mean it's hard not to let the problems that certain students have worry and affect me," Robertson explained. "But, it's also nice to celebrate with them when good things happen."

Though she enjoyed her years as a teacher, Robertson said she battled with being a teacher while wanting to be a motherly figure, too.

"As a teacher it was hard to hand somebody a paper with a failing grade on it," she explained. "As a counselor, I can be stern like a mama when I need to be, but it's nice that I can be an encouragement, too. I get to be like a little cheerleader for every student. That's exciting to me."

TCCHS Senior Justin Knapp National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist



TCCHS senior Justin Knapp has been announced as a Semifinalist in the 2015 National Merit Scholarship program.

About 1.4 million juniors in more than 22,000 high schools entered the 2015 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2013 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. Of those taking the test, approximately 16,000 were named as Semifinalists.

"It is such an honor to be able to advance to the next round of competition in this scholarship selection process," Justin Knapp said.

To become a Finalist, Knapp will work with counselors and administrators at TCCHS to submit a detailed scholarship application, in

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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

Sept. 15 - TCMS Grandparent's Day

Sept. 17 - TCMS Georgia Studies Tour Parent Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

Sept. 19 - Varsity Football vs. Bainbridge at the Jacket's Nest, 8:00 p.m.

Sept. 20 - TCCHS Homecoming Dance, 8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

Sept. 23 - Bishop Hall Blood Drive

Sept. 25 - Varsity Football vs. Americus-Sumter at the Jacket's Nest, 7:00 p.m. (second half - NO charge)

Sept. 26 - Varsity Football OPEN

Sept. 26 - Cross Creek Card Sales End

Oct. 6 - Oct. 10 - Fall Break

Oct. 13 - Student/Teacher Holiday

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

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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.

Thomas County Middle School Launches TCMS TV



TCMS TV anchors Adrienne Carson, from left, and Taylor Hester read from a teleprompter to announce the morning news for the middle school.

The Thomas County Middle School eighth grade technology class has begun a new endeavor this year. Twenty-five students were selected for a year-long broadcasting class. The students work together as a team to produce a news show that is shown throughout the school each day. The students in the class have a specific job to complete during the filming of each show. So far they have shown great teamwork and have produced a great product.

TCMS Exploratory

Technology and Broadcasting Teacher Ashley Palmer said, "TCCHS has a rich history of successful broadcasting and TV production. We at TCMS wanted to replicate this history and success. Allowing our students to produce a news program each day is unique among middle schools, and we are grateful for a community and school system that has provided this opportunity."

Newly renovated space in the main building at TCMS provides the state-of-the-art facilities for video broadcasting and robotics including a television studio area, a control room, editing bays, and a robotics classroom.

"I am so proud of our young students," Palmer added. "They have shown a tremendous amount of professionalism in the way they approach this class. Each student has executed their particular role with maturity and confidence. This has allowed us, as a class, to produce a news broadcast we are proud to air."



TCCHS ROBOTICS TEAMS ATTEND TECH CHALLENGE- Students from each of Thomas County Central's three robotics teams attended the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Kickoff at Southern Polytechnic Institute on Saturday, September 6. Students attended sessions on best practices and changes in FTC. Along with teams from across the state, they watched the video release of this year's challenge, Cascade Effect. Students attending the event were (l-r) Garrett Castleman, C'lee Kornegay, Caitlin Simmons, Beth Sharpe, Kacy Jones, and Austin Ridley.



TCCHS STUDENTS WIN BIG FOR MURAL DESIGN - Congratulations to TCCHS Art students Erica LeSuer, Raven Haywood and Rachelle Brown. They earned \$500 Runner-Up in the Thomasville Center for the Arts "Flaunt - Pop It Up" mural contest. Students cut a section from a 1941 historical photo of the "Willie James Williams Family Reunion" provided by the Jack Hadley Museum and designed a background. The area's high school murals will be on display through the month of September on the outdoor wall of Mickey-T's Consignment Shop in downtown Thomasville off Stevens Street. Pictured are Raven Haywood and Erica LeSuer with Mrs. Jocelyn Rivard, Art teacher. Not pictured is Rachelle Brown.



Broadcasting students Jaylen Lightsey (L-R), Dev Patel, Brandon Butler, and Aaron Boor produce the news outside the studio by directing the weatherman Kade Little.



Deputy Sheriff John Sellers and Lamar Matthews present the school safety plan to Thomas County Central teachers during professional learning groups.

Thomas County Central Staff Make Safety a Priority

Faculty and staff at TCCHS recently spent time reviewing safety procedures in professional learning groups. The goal of the review was to help teachers prepare to respond appropriately in case of an emergency situation on campus.

"Reviewing safety procedures with our staff is an important activity at the beginning of each year to ensure our students are well cared for during the school day," said Trista Jones, principal.

One of the most important procedures identified related to campus safety was the routing of all visitors through the front office. Visitors must report to the front office to obtain a visitor's pass before

moving through the building. Visitors should be prepared to show a photo ID to obtain a pass or to check out students.

Lamar Matthews, assistant principal, explained the policy was not to prevent people from coming on campus, but to help keep the school as secure as possible.

"We want the public to feel welcome, but our number one priority is keeping students safe," Matthews said.

The school's safety plan was developed in conjunction with the overall district plan and supports the district belief statement that all students can learn with quality resources in a safe, clean and supportive environment.

State Board of Education Public Hearing Well Attended



TCCHS economics teacher Leigh Barwick addresses the crowd during the public hearing held on September 9.

Dr. Sandra Reed, local physician and state board of education member for the eighth congressional district, held a public hearing on the Common Core Curriculum and other educational issues at the Thomas County Board of Education auditorium September 9.

More than 120 citizens from Thomas, Brooks, Colquitt, Tift, and Lowndes Counties attended. Twenty participants signed in to speak addressing topics including the Common Core Curriculum and the new teacher evaluation system which ties fifty percent of each teacher's annual evaluation to his or her students' test scores.

Joe Brown, a former assistant professor of mathematics at West Point and an active volunteer in the Thomasville City School System through the local Rotary Club, expressed concern that the Common Core standards are based on the false assumption that all students are college bound. "Common Core is based upon the assumption that students will be going to college, and for those students, it is probably okay. I think that the standards through eighth grade are probably okay. My problem is

in high school where students are trying to find themselves and follow their passion. . . We need to offer alternative classes to college for young people. . . The math standards are frankly too high. . . One size should not fit all," he said.

TCCHS economics teacher Leigh Barwick said that she has taught for 22 years and that she is not afraid of evaluations based upon the performance of her students, but she questioned the equity of the two tier evaluation system that will have some teachers evaluated based upon rigorous state exams while others are evaluated on school-developed tests. "Measuring one set of teachers by highly rigorous Milestone assessments and another by radically different, school-developed, Student Learning Objective assessments violates basic standards of workplace equity," she said.

Dr. Rudy Hehn of Thomasville expressed support for common standards. "Standardization is not always a bad thing. We need to have a set of goals for our teachers and for our children to learn. Having that be somewhat the same nationwide seems like a good thing. We are a very mobile society," he said.

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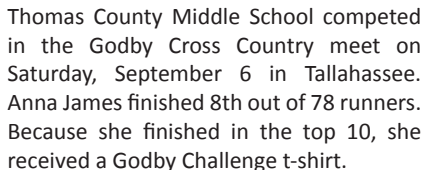
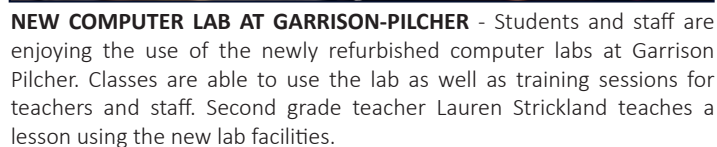
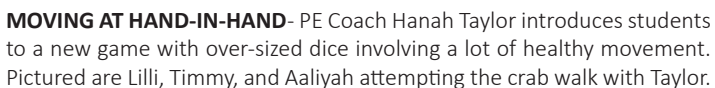
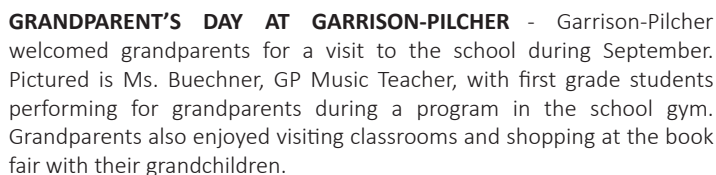
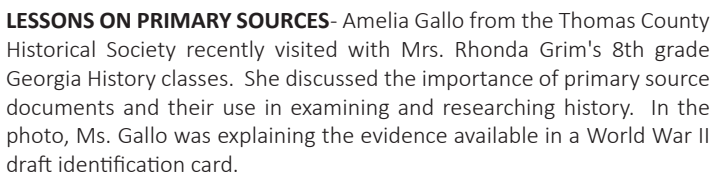
which he provides information about his academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received.

Additionally, Knapp must maintain an outstanding academic record, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT scores that confirm his performance on the PSAT.

"I believe Justin is an

excellent candidate for the National Merit Scholarship program," said Dr. Jim Rehberg, director of honors, gifted and accelerated instruction. "He has already posted perfect scores on the graduation writing test and the math section of the SAT, so he is deserving of this recognition."

About 15,000 Semifinalists are expected to advance to the Finalist level. All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from the group who advance as Finalists.



**Call 225-3900 for
more information.**