



# The Buzz

APRIL  
2015



## Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

### Todd Wilson Named System Teacher of the Year



Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay (L-R), TCCHS Principal Trista Jones, and Thomas County Schools retired administrator and Principal Emeritus Bob Parrish congratulate Todd Wilson (second from right) on being named Teacher of the Year for the school system.

Thomas County School System officials have named Todd Wilson, Special Education teacher at Thomas County Central High School, as the District Teacher of the Year.

Wilson said that he was surprised and excited by the announcement.

“Being named Thomas County Schools Teacher of the Year is the greatest honor and privilege of my professional career,” said Wilson. “This whole experience has been incredible. I’m so blessed to come to work every morning and do something I love. I truly enjoy adapting my teaching to the individual learning style of my students and watching them learn and grow.”

After graduating from Thomas County Central

High School in 1985, Wilson received a bachelor’s degree from Valdosta State University. During his first few of years of teaching, Wilson completed his Master’s Degree in Education from Troy University.

Wilson started his teaching career at TCCHS nine years ago as a resource and inclusion math Special Education teacher. He obtained certification in Adaptive Special Education, and then transferred into a self-contained Adaptive Special Education classroom, a setting he has worked in for seven years.

“Special need individuals have always had a special place in my heart and having the wonderful opportunity to teach them over the past nine years has been amazing,” Wilson said.

Thomas County Central Principal Trista Jones said that the Teacher of the Year honor “couldn’t have happened to a better person.” Jones said, “Mr. Wilson demonstrates passion, professionalism and purpose in his teaching. His devotion to his students is uncompromised.”

Influenced by former teachers to enter the field of education, Wilson said that he wanted to be remembered for making a difference in someone’s life.

Wilson said, “It’s important to me to not only encourage the special need students in my classroom to gain new insights into education, but also to give them an authentic high school experience each and every day here at Thomas County Central High School.”

As a teacher of special education, Wilson works with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. Wilson explained that he adapts the general education curriculum and teaches a wide range of subjects such as reading, writing, science, social studies and math to students with mild and moderate disabilities.

Wilson added, “A lot of people don’t know or understand what all we do as special education teachers. I want to make the kids feel valued and be confident that they can contribute to our

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

### CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

**April 20 - 24** - Georgia Milestones Assessment Test

**April 29** - Garrison-Pilcher 2nd Grade Olympic Day

**April 30** - Garrison-Pilcher 1st Grade Olympic Day

**April 30** - Garrison-Pilcher School Council Mtg., 4:30 p.m.

**May 5** - Student-Led Conference Night, Hand-in-Hand, 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

**May 8** - Hand-in-Hand Mini Relay for Life

**May 8** - Eighth-grade Rocket Day, TCMS

**May 16** - Color Me With Cheer 5K Fun Run/Walk \*Sign up by May 4 to ensure a t-shirt!

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

The Buzz is a monthly publication of 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, Departments/Public Relations tab.

## Knapp Named TCCHS, Thomas County STAR Student



Pictured is STAR Student Justin Knapp with STAR Teacher Cary Riggs.

Excelling as a student is about more than good grades: it’s also about work ethic and dedication to improving oneself.

Justin Knapp, a Thomas County Central High School senior has been named not only the school’s STAR student, but also the STAR student for Thomas County. He recently competed for the Region 9 STAR Student honor in Americus, Georgia.

“Being selected as STAR Student is such an honor because it is a testament not only to my own work but also to how well my school has prepared me,” Knapp said. “I’m humbled to be able to represent my school in this way.”

The teacher Knapp selected as STAR Teacher is Cary Riggs, who has taught Knapp in Latin I, Latin II and Advanced Placement Art History classes.

“He is a wonderful student, the kind every teacher hopes to teach,” Riggs said of Knapp. “He challenges his teachers to be the very best they can be, and he

doesn’t accept the easy answer but takes it further. He keeps you on your toes and moving with him. I was very honored to be chosen by him.”

Knapp said Riggs’s dedication to students – both in the classroom and in life – has left a positive and lasting impression upon him.

“For as long as I’ve known him, Mr. Riggs has been someone who cares about more than just my classroom performance – he cares about me as a person and is always available to talk,” he said. “I believe this is why he has had such a profound impact on my life.”

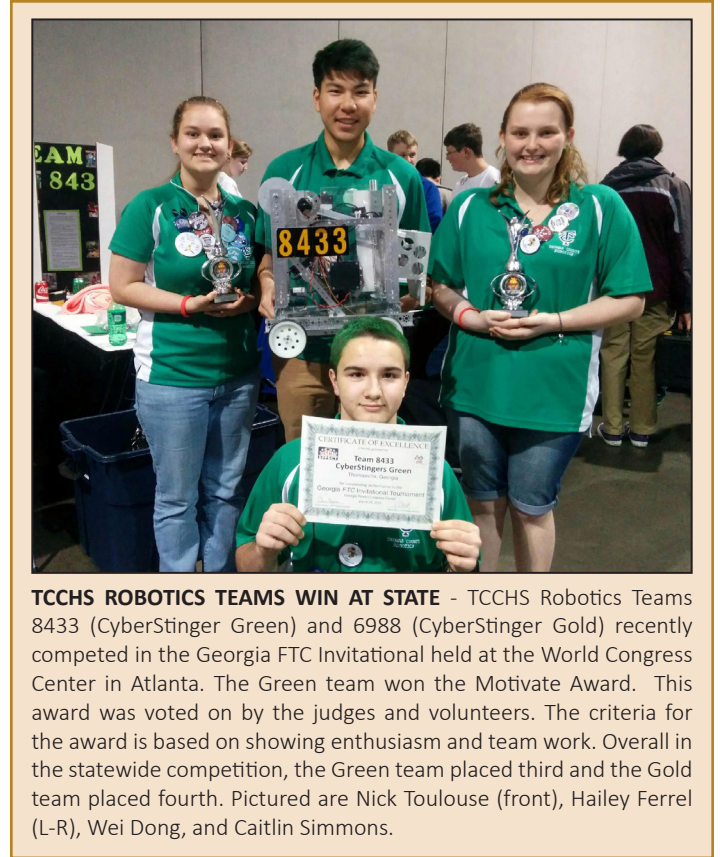
STAR is sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, or PAGE.

To be considered for STAR Student, the individual must be a senior, have the highest SAT score of their graduating class and meet all other program requirements, including being in either the top 10 percent or among the top 10 students numerically in their class.

Knapp made a perfect score on the math section of the SAT and has a 4.0 GPA.

He also was a Governor’s Honors Program finalist in Communicative Arts, achieved a perfect score on the Georgia

High School Writing Test, is an AP Scholar with Distinction and is a drum major for the TCCHS Marching Yellow Jacket Band.



**TCCHS ROBOTICS TEAMS WIN AT STATE** - TCCHS Robotics Teams 8433 (CyberStinger Green) and 6988 (CyberStinger Gold) recently competed in the Georgia FTC Invitational held at the World Congress Center in Atlanta. The Green team won the Motivate Award. This award was voted on by the judges and volunteers. The criteria for the award is based on showing enthusiasm and team work. Overall in the statewide competition, the Green team placed third and the Gold team placed fourth. Pictured are Nick Toulouse (front), Hailey Ferrel (L-R), Wei Dong, and Caitlin Simmons.

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society in some capacity. It is a joy to see students gain new insights and learn about themselves simply because they can see I believe in them.”

The Teacher of the Year 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.

Dr. Bob Dechman, Director of Federal Programs, Accountability, and Assessment, oversees the Teacher of the Year process.

“I was very pleased with the selection of Mr. Todd Wilson as Thomas County Teacher of the Year. He will represent our district well in the competition for state teacher of the year.”

“I was impressed by each of the teachers chosen to represent their schools,” added Dechman. “The selection committee had a difficult job. They made an excellent choice.”

Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay said, “Mr. Wilson represents the very best in one who is called to teach: he is compassionate, he has a heart for his students, and he never stops trying to help each student reach his or her greatest potential.”



## Kornegay Selected for NYSC

### Several TCCHS students place at state science fair

One Thomas County Central High School student has been selected to participate in a national science collaborative and several others placed or received special recognition during the 2015 Georgia Science & Engineering Fair.

The fair was held March 26-28 at the University of Georgia. All students placed first in the ABAC Region Science & Engineering Fair in order to advance to state competition.

"Going to the state science fair gives students a chance to discuss their research with experts," TCCHS Science Department Head Laura Kornegay said. "It is a great opportunity to share their ideas. They also get to see what kind of research students from across the state are doing."

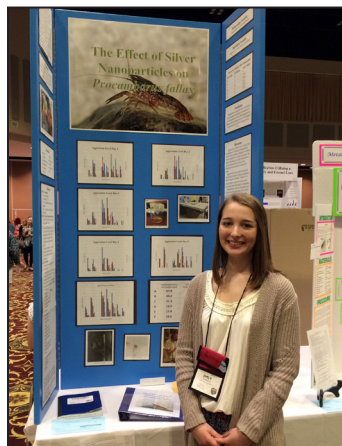
Senior Emily Kornegay was selected as one of two students to represent her state at the National Youth Science Camp.

NYSC, according to the application, "is an elite residential science education program that honors and challenges two graduating high school science students from each state and others from around the world."

Kornegay submitted an application a week prior to the state science fair, and was selected for an interview held during the event.

"I was surprised," Emily Kornegay said of her selection to NYSC. "I have worked toward it, but I did not expect to be one of the only two people sent from Georgia. I was thrilled that my work through high school helped me get this honor."

NYSC participants



Emily Kornegay explored the effect of silver nanoparticles on aggression levels of crayfish.

attend lectures and hands-on seminars conducted by scientists from around the US, and are challenged to explore new scientific areas. For more information, visit the website [www.nysc.org](http://www.nysc.org).

"I will make sure to stay up-to-date on recent advancements in science that interest me," Kornegay said of her camp preparation. "I'm sure I will make priceless friendships and connections that will stay with me for a long time."

Kornegay also received the NOAA "Taking the Pulse of the Planet" award, and third honors in Environmental Science for her project. The NOAA award recognizes a science fair project that is environmentally conscious.

Kornegay's project was "environmentally focused." It studied the effect of silver nanoparticles on *Procambarus fallax*.

"I measured the effects by observing how different concentrations of silver nanoparticles affect the aggression level of crayfish over 10 days," she explained.

Senior Noah Harris was



TCCHS students attended the 2015 Georgia Science & Engineering Fair. Pictured are: (first row, left to right) Emily Kornegay, C'lee Kornegay, Ashlyn Quattlebaum, (back row, left to right) Jacob Hancock, Noah Harris, and Jonathan Castillo.

selected as an alternate for NYSC and received special recognition from the Tellus Science Museum for his project.

Harris tested ferrofluid (liquid magnet) to see if it could be used to clean up oil spills, and determined the substance would be very effective on a small scale.

"I am thankful to be selected as an alternate," Harris said of his honors. "I enjoy the recognition, but I am very excited for those that have been selected."

Ashlyn Quattlebaum (and her partner, Kaleb Carter) received second place honors in Chemistry. Their project tested four edible food items with four different types of peppers to see which one increased the pH level of the peppers by reducing the acidity level.

"The interviews were difficult, especially since my partner was unable to go," she said. "So, I was completely shocked about receiving second place. It is a complete honor to me because I was so glad I represented my school,

family and my partner so well."

A career that involves chemistry or science interests Quattlebaum, so her science fair experience gave her a memorable opportunity to learn more about her possible field of study.

"This experience was an amazing learning opportunity and a memorable one as well," she said. "Thank you to everyone who helped in this process!"

TCCHS student Jacob Hancock received fourth place honors in Energy and Transportation. His project involved testing different substances through an electrical current to determine how much hydrogen could be produced in the shortest amount of time.

"I was really excited to place," Hancock said. "I saw a lot of great projects at state that were very detailed and well thought through." He, too, felt the fair was a positive learning experience. "At state, I learned stuff I didn't know about my project from the judges and the general public," he said.



## Duke Tip Students from TCMS Score High on ACT



Seventh-graders Kaleb Ward, Emily Johnson, Langley Wooten, and Matthew Sherrod were recently recognized as Duke TIP students.

The Thomas County School System recently announced that four of its middle school students were recognized as a part of the 2015 Duke University Talent Identification (TIP) Program.

Emily Johnson, Matthew Sherrod, Kaleb Ward, and Langley Wooten, seventh graders at Thomas County Middle School, were among a select group of students statewide to meet the criteria to be Duke TIP students.

In December of 2014 and January and February of this year, the four academically talented seventh graders took the ACT through the Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP). They sat for the exams in Thomasville alongside the usual group of college-bound 11th and 12th graders, and many earned scores that rivaled or surpassed those earned by the older students in the next seats.

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

Director of Honors, Gifted, & Accelerated Instruction for

Thomas County Schools Dr. Jim Rehberg said, "I'm really pleased to see our students do so well and receive recognition for their hard work and talents on a state level. Our teachers work very hard to prepare all of our students to perform at an advanced level, and it's always encouraging when others outside of our system acknowledge our students' accomplishments. I'm really happy to see these students aspiring to greater goals and pushing themselves to a high level of achievement."

Johnson, Sherrod, Ward and Wooten have all been invited to attend a state recognition ceremony in May.

The Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) identifies seventh-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. Duke TIP provides participants with suggestions for using their ability more effectively and a variety of educational materials and publications.



**CROSS CREEK CLASSES VISIT PROVIDENCE CANYON** - Students in Angela Hutchings' and Kelli Dorminey's third grade classes at Cross Creek recently took a trip to the center of the Earth. This adventure allowed students to see first-hand the effects of weathering and erosion. The group traveled to Providence Canyon in Lumpkin, Ga. It is one of the most remarkable natural wonders and historical sites that can be found in Georgia. Students enjoyed a hands-on experience that deepened their knowledge of the different types of soils and saw how weathering and erosion slowly engrave and perfect the Earth into a work of art.



**HIGHEST PARTICIPATION IN THE ROSE CITY WALK** - Thomas County Schools had a great day at the Rose City Walk. The school system received an award for the highest participation for employers with over 500 employees, TCCHS was awarded the Most Improved Participation Award, and Bishop Hall was recognized for having the highest percentage participation for a school. Thank you, Thomas County Schools employees!



**HAND-IN-HAND STUDENTS** - Amy Sowell's Pre-K class recently used potting soil in the sensory tub. Students may not realize it, but they are developing fine motor skills to prepare for writing.



## Palmer Named Georgia FCS Teacher of the Year



Megan Palmer, TCMS family and consumer sciences teacher, has been named the 2015 Georgia Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year.

Each year, for the past 11 years, Megan Palmer has taught her students life-changing skills. As the Family & Consumer Sciences (FACS) teacher at Thomas County Middle School, she's taught them how to be involved in the community, how to use math and chemistry in sewing and cooking, and how to look for leadership opportunities.

This year, Palmer's efforts have been recognized by her being named the 2015 Georgia Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher of the Year. She was recognized at the Georgia Association of Family & Consumer Sciences state conference on March 27.

"It makes me feel like what I'm doing is making a difference," Palmer said of her recognition.

As a family and consumer sciences teacher in grades fifth through eighth, she is also an advisor for the Thomas County Middle School chapter of the FCCLA, organizing extra-curricular service projects and encouraging community involvement.

"My best days in the classroom are when students are enjoying the learning process," Palmer says. "Family & Consumer Sciences is such an open door, and I love seeing students have fun while picking up on the important topics we are discussing. Utilizing the old and new ways of Home Economics and FACS brings some familiarity to the students and brings them knowledge for real life that is so important."

After deciding she wanted to be a teacher, Palmer chose a career in FACS through her involvement in FCCLA in high school and college.

Palmer said, "Being an advisor for FCCLA is fulfilling because I get the opportunity to build extra-special relationships with these students. Allowing them opportunities they may not have otherwise and encouraging them to seek leadership in various ways is always rewarding. Because I was so involved when I was younger, I love seeing where the path takes them!"

Through her teaching career, Palmer has worked in both Oconee and Decatur counties in Georgia. Palmer has been with the Thomas County School System for two years.

"I am so grateful for the Thomas County School System and the support I, and our

new program, has received in the past two years," Palmer said. "FCCLA is growing, and we have been able to offer fun activities that develop useful skills that the students can use whether it's in school, or in their neighborhood, or in their home. I am so excited to see what the future holds!"

## Cross Creek Hosts Its 21st Math-a-Thon to Benefit St. Jude's



Top earners pictured from left to right are Mac Mobley, Quincey Hart, Brooke Lancaster, Brady Whatley, Malazia Brown, Libby Stewart, and Lilli Griffin.

This year, Cross Creek Elementary students worked together again to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital by participating in a Math-a-Thon. The Cross Creek K-Kids Club chose to sponsor this event and took on the responsibility of organizing materials and encouraging classmates to participate.

Leslie Aracri, the K-Kids Faculty Advisor, said that she could not be more proud of both the K-Kids for taking on the organization of this event, as well as the students of Cross Creek who participated. She is planning on ways to make the fundraiser even more successful next year.

Cross Creek students completed pages in their Math-a-Thon book and in return were given donations from friends, family, and

local businesses to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This year Cross Creek Elementary was able to raise \$1,350.80 in a two-week period.

The top earners from each grade level were treated to lunch off campus at Chick-fil-A. The top earners for fourth grade were Brooke Lancaster, Malazia Brown, and Lilli Griffin. The top earners for third grade were Mac Mobley, Libby Stewart, Brady Whatley, and Quincey Hart.

Cross Creek Elementary has hosted 21 Math-a-Thons since 1992. Altogether, they have raised over \$73,800. This amount was enough to pay for two major surgical procedures as well as help with other expenses such as ICU care at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

## GARRISON-PILCHER BOOK AWARDS



Students from Topreka Hayes' Garrison-Pilcher first grade class were awarded the top honors for their class-made book, *Our Favorite Things*. The book was written and illustrated by the students during the yearly reading of the Georgia Book Award state titles. Students pictured from left to right are Aiden Miranda, Adariana Barber, Laylen Hines, and Logan Webb, along with teacher Topreka Hayes and Principal Sharonda O'Neal.



Chasity Hurst's second grade class wrote and illustrated the book, *The Biggest Heart*, winning top honors in the Second Grade Garrison-Pilcher Book Awards. These awards are held during the yearly reading of the Georgia Book Award state titles. Students pictured from left to right are AnToya'l Green, Jep Parnell, Jenna Clanton, Takai Donaldson along with Teacher Chasity Hurst, Principal Sharonda O'Neal, and Teacher Judi Howell.

## Congratulations, Teachers of the Year!



**KERI JOHNSON**

Hand-in-Hand Primary School recently named kindergarten teacher, Keri Johnson, as its Teacher of the Year. This is her second time enjoying this honor. Johnson, a teacher for 10 years, said, "I take pride in teaching. I do not see teaching as a profession, but as my passion. As a teacher, I make a huge impact on our babies and our community."

Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School recently named first-grade teacher, Janet Lambert, as its Teacher of the Year. Lambert has taught for 31 years, with 28 of those years at Garrison-Pilcher. Lambert said, "Our children are our future, and I believe teaching is one of the most important professions one can have."



**JANET LAMBERT**



**ANGELA HUTCHINGS**

Cross Creek Elementary School recently named third-grade teacher, Angela Hutchings, as its Teacher of the Year. Hutchings, who has been teaching for 10 years, implements various strategies to keep every student engaged in learning and creates a learning environment to meet the needs of all of her students.

Thomas County Middle School recently named eighth-grade Georgia history teacher, Deann Garcia, as its Teacher of the Year. Garcia has taught at TCMS for seven years and currently teaches accelerated and gifted students through the MERIT program. Garcia said, "I absolutely love seeing students excited about learning."



**DEANN GARCIA**



**CHRIS MIRANDA**

Bishop Hall Charter School recently named English literature teacher, Chris Miranda, as its Teacher of the Year. Miranda has been teaching for six years. "I teach because I find my greatest fulfillment through helping others. I'm a successful teacher simply because I love what I do," Miranda said.