



The Buzz

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Thomas County Board of Education Monthly Newsletter

Thomas County School System Names Nancy Rogers Teacher of the Year

Thomas County School System officials have named Nancy Rogers, eighth grade MERIT teacher at Thomas County Middle School, 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,” Rogers 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.”

Rogers earned a Master’s Degree in Secondary Education (English) from Valdosta State University, and she holds

additional certification in the ESOL and gifted areas.

With 16 years of experience in teaching, Rogers began her career at Westwood School in Camilla, Georgia. Rogers has worked for Thomas County Schools for almost 11 years, teaching English to ninth and tenth graders at Thomas County Central High School for eight years, and serving as the English MERIT teacher at the middle school for almost three. Rogers’s philosophy about teaching can best be summed up in three words: enthusiasm, rigor, and relationships.

“My enthusiasm for my subject and my students is one of my greatest strengths in the classroom,” Rogers said. “I hold high expectations



Thomas County School System Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay (from left), Thomas County Schools retired administrator and Principal Emeritus Bob Parrish, and Thomas County Middle School Principal Jamie Thompson congratulate Nancy Rogers (second from left) on being named Teacher of the Year for the school system.

for all of my students; I truly believe that every student is capable of attaining the goals I set for them. Although enthusiasm and rigor are important, nothing will ever be accomplished in the classroom if the students do not think their teacher cares about them. Relationships, in my opinion, are the most important part of my job as a teacher.”

Prior to her career in teaching, Rogers worked as a sales representative for a pharmaceutical company. She said her decision to leave a lucrative career was “to fulfill the purpose God intended for my life.”

Rogers said, “I did not feel as though my job was making a difference in the world. I pursued what I had always felt in my heart was my career: teaching. I have never regretted that decision, and now instead of wishing I could

make a difference, I have the opportunity to do so every day in my classroom.”

“Mrs. Nancy Rogers is an extraordinary example of an educator,” Thomas County Middle School Principal Jamie Thompson said. “She exudes passion for all of her students. She also works diligently to collaborate with her team and other English teachers in order to improve the educational

See TOTY on page 4

HD Supply Waterworks, Inc. Awarded BEE Partner of the Year



Allen Thornhill, Marketing Programs Manager for HD Supply Waterworks, receives a plaque from Garrison-Pilcher Principal Sharonda Wilson, from left, Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay, and Hand-In-Hand Principal Jeanna Mayhall for being chosen as BEE Partner of the Year. See page 4 for full story.

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.tcjackets.net under the News and Events tab.

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TCCHS ECE Program Receives GECEF Certification



TCCHS Early Childhood Education teacher Cindy Carnes and Thomas University Education Department’s Nickey Johnson, an advisory committee member and community partner, review industry certification documents.

Five years of hard work and dedication paid off with the achievement of an important goal for a Career Technical Agricultural Education Pathway at Thomas County Central High School PREP Academy.

The Early Childhood Education program recently earned its industry-certification from the Georgia Early Childhood Education Foundation. It received

\$10,000 to be used toward program equipment and resources.

“This is a five-year process of meeting 87 standards in early childhood education,” teacher and program advisor Cindy Carnes said. “This is a tremendous accomplishment and it took lots of hard work. This certification shows that we are a quality program with high standards.”

The program had to adhere to a list of standards set by the foundation. These 87 standards are divided into nine areas: instruction, equipment and facilities, learning resources, instructional staff, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), program promotion, advisory committee, student career related services, and health and safety.

Some certification requirements included collection of work samples for a portfolio, all ECE teachers had to pass a content knowledge test, and the program had to have a CTSO. TCCHS has a Future Educators Club, a CTSO sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators. Carnes and fellow program teacher Amy Smith are its advisors.

Also, the program had to complete an application and prepare for a site visit conducted by representatives from the Georgia Board of Education.

“The committee looks for student involvement in a related club or organization

which develops leadership skills and provides for competition opportunities to enrich the student's professional skills,” FGE advisor Amy Smith said.

A committee visited the TCCHS ECE program to review the work samples and documentation, as well as view the facilities and meet with advisory committee members made up of community stakeholders.

TCCHS has received an official banner its ECE program can “proudly hang” to show its certification accomplishment, Carnes said. The program must re-certify every five years to maintain its industry certification status.

“Our goal is to provide quality programs for the students at TCCHS, and making sure programs meets industry standards is one way to do that,” said Beth Adams, CTAE Director and Assistant Principal. “Having our teachers maintain strong programs with rigorous standards ensure our students are ready to pursue careers in education once they graduate high school and helps prepare them to enter the workforce.”



ART CONTEST

Cross Creek Elementary students participated in this year’s art contest sponsored by the Georgia School Nutrition Association (GSNA). This year's theme of the art contest was "Strong Roots, Strong Future: Georgia Grown." Students were to display Georgia-grown fruits and vegetables that have helped Georgia's students continue to be strong and smart. Laylen Hines placed first at the local and state levels; Lillian Oaksford placed second at the local level; and Abigail Singletary placed third at the local level. Cross Creek's School Nutrition Manager Marie Johnson is the local president of Chapter 2 of the Association. Pictured from left to right are Abigail Singletary, Cross Creek art teacher Annie Burke, Laylen Hines, Marie Johnson, and Lillian Oaksford.

Kornegay Earns GHP Slot

A Thomas County Central High School student with a love of discovering the unknown and a desire to help make the world a better place has been selected to take part in a prestigious summer initiative.

Junior Celia “C’lee” Kornegay, 16, has earned a slot in this year’s Georgia Governor’s Honors Program.

“I am honored that I was selected to attend GHP,” she said. “I am excited that I get to spend my summer learning with other students who are just as interested in science as I am.”

Kornegay, who was nominated for both math and science, chose science. Her favorite branch is chemistry because she enjoys “learning about why things happen on a molecular level rather than just knowing certain processes.”

“[Scientific] studies are constantly finding new ways to improve life and discovering new breakthroughs that could have a major impact on society,” she said. “I would love to be a part of that.”

GHP is a program that

gathers together some of the best and brightest young minds in the state for a unique learning experience.

“I nominated her because of her high achievement in the classroom and active involvement in science beyond the classroom – Science Olympiad, science fair, robotics, etc.,” TCCHS Science Department Chair Laura Kornegay said. “Not only is she involved in these activities, but she has competed successfully at the school, region, and state levels, even international with her winning first place at the International Environmental Youth Symposium.”

Math instructor Darrin Minns, who also nominated



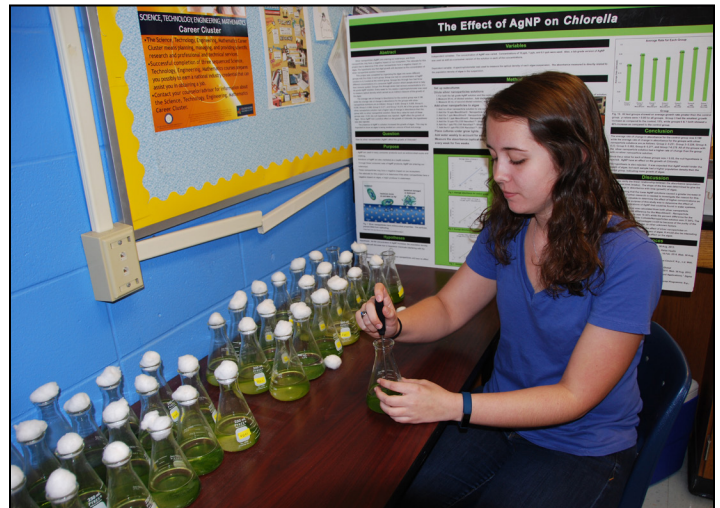
This year’s GHP will be held at Berry College in Rome, Georgia.

Kornegay, taught C’lee in Analytic Geometry, Algebra 2, and AP Statistics. She’s also been a member of the school’s

math team for three years and serves as its co-captain this year.

“She’s a wonderful student, but what separates her from her peers is her desire to learn new things and explore new subject areas,” Minns said. “She’s a joy to teach.”

Kornegay thanked her teachers for nominating her and said she wouldn’t even have been considered without them, especially Judy Holwell who wrote her science recommendation. Once nominated, she “worked hard” on her application



TCCHS student C’lee Kornegay has been chosen to attend this summer’s Governor’s Honors Program in the field of science. Here, Kornegay monitors the growth of algae for her experiment on how diversity affects algal response to ocean acidification.

to earn an interview and practiced with teachers and students to improve her interview skills.

“The students participating in this program are extremely gifted, and I am honored to have the ability to work with them,” she said. “Through activities such as Georgia Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (GJSHS) and Georgia State Science and Engineering Fair (GSEF) I have met people who were also accepted for this program. I am excited!”

TCCHS Assistant Principal James Rehberg believes Kornegay’s nomination by multiple teachers “is a testament to how

gifted and talented she is” and he said C’lee “will be right at home” during GHP.

“She has consistently demonstrated academic excellence in and out of the classroom, winning numerous accolades in both science and

math across the region, state, and nation,” he said. “I know she will have quite a bit of insight and experience to offer this summer. The program will benefit from her just as much as she’ll benefit from it.”

This year’s event will be held June 18 through July 15 at Berry College in Rome. Part of the GHP experience for science participants is the forming, conducting and sharing of an individual experiment, Kornegay said. She looks forward to this learning opportunity.

“I hope that this

experience helps me develop my future science fair projects,” she adds. “I am also looking

forward to learning more complex or interesting science techniques that might not be a part of the curriculum we are taught in the classroom. I also hope that I can learn from others’ work to better my own.”



HD Supply Waterworks Named BEE Partner of the Year

HD Supply Waterworks, Inc. has been named Thomas County School System's BEE Partner of the Year for 2017 - 2018. 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.

"It is a true honor to be selected as the BEE Partner of the Year," Allen Thornhill, HD Supply Waterworks Marketing Programs Manager, said. "Education professionals are tasked with one of the most important jobs in our community, and it is a privilege to be able to support that endeavor any way we can."

HD Supply Waterworks is a company built on the manufacturing and distribution of supplies, yet dedicated to community service. One of the biggest attributes to the success of this business is their commitment to "volunteerism, product donations and giving to organizations that positively impact the communities." Hand-In-Hand Primary School nominated HD Supply Waterworks for the

distinguished BEE Partner of the Year Award.

"HD Supply Waterworks has provided resources and supplies that would have otherwise been costly to our students and families throughout the years," said Jeanna Mayhall, Hand-In-Hand Principal. "This partnership has helped the students of our school and school system benefit through multiple donations of bottled water, in the thousands, for school activities such as meetings, fundraisers, field trips and school dances. HD Supply Waterworks has become so valued not only due to their monetary support, but also due to the amount of time the company has given our system."

In addition to donating more than \$2,000 in supplies to the school system, HD Supply Waterworks has given over 300 hours of meaningful volunteer time at the schools.

"This partnership is unique because HD Supply Waterworks receives no added publicity or financial gain for what they provide our students and system," Mayhall added. "The company wants to continue to grow their partnership with each of the Thomas County Schools in the years to come. We look forward to working with the people who have made such a difference in the lives of our students."

Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School nominated HD Supply Waterworks as Partner of the Quarter during this past school year. Principal Sharonda Wilson explained that the company has supported the school for several years.

"Their level of support is

consistent and so valuable," Wilson said. "The work of the company keeps people hydrated as they serve the students of Thomas County Schools. We are very grateful for the dedication of this school partner."

Associate Superintendent Melanie Chavaux highlighted HD Supply Waterworks' benefits to the school system.

"Our Partner of the Year has built meaningful relationships, as well as donated invaluable time and financial resources which sets this partner apart from many others," Chavaux said. "HD Supply Waterworks seeks to make their impact far-reaching and valuable to every student within the Thomas County School System."

TOTY from page 1

experience for all of our students. Mrs. Rogers is a teacher who has had a positive impact on our students, our school, our system, and our community."

This is the second time Rogers has been chosen as Thomas County School System's Teacher of the Year. In 2012, Rogers was a finalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year.

Rogers added, "I was fortunate to have some very special teachers who made such a huge difference in my life that I credit them with my becoming a teacher. Every day I aspire to be like them, to encourage and help my students 'think the unthinkable' in their own lives."

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, "We are extremely proud of each of the candidates who participated in the Teacher of the Year process for the Thomas County School System. We are very proud of Mrs. Nancy Rogers, and we know that she will represent the system well."

Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay said, "Mrs. Rogers exemplifies the standard of excellence that we have for our teachers and students, and we are honored that she is part of our faculty family. We have great expectations for her in the state competition."



Teachers of the Year from other schools in the system include Leigh Pollock, from left, Hand-In-Hand; Ryan Strickland, TCCHS; Kelli Dorminey, Cross Creek; Kylene VanHeiningen, Garrison-Pilcher; and Shantel Thompson, Bishop Hall.

Top of the Class By Hunter Green, student reporter

TCCHS Names 2017 Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Honor Graduates

Years of hard work, perseverance and dedication have paid off for a group of Thomas County Central High School seniors. The highest academic honors for its 2017 graduating class have been named: valedictorian, salutatorian, and honor graduates.

Valedictorian is Hannah Dixon, salutatorian is Chandler Watson, and there are 46 honor graduates.

Looking back on her freshman year of high school, Hannah Dixon never imagined she would be named valedictorian of her class. But, she said “a lot of dedication and perseverance” paid off.

“Being named the valedictorian of my class is a recognition I hold to the highest standard of honor,” she said. “I had no idea the payoff of my hard work and determination would be as notable as this recognition.”

Even though Dixon feels school involvement, studying “relentlessly,” working hard and paying close attention in class were important aspects of her becoming valedictorian, she believes there is more to it than just doing well in school.

“The key to achieving such a level of recognition comes from the rigidity of my own standards,” she said. “I set my personal expectations at the highest of levels and then aimed to reach a level beyond that. Moral support from my family, friends and teachers and self-determination were, are, and will continue to be crucial components of my academic career.”

Chandler Watson is humbled by the honor of being named salutatorian. He calls it “a sweet justification and victory” after some of his most trying times.

“I’m proud to be labeled as salutatorian, but it’s really the

teachers I must thank,” Watson said. “All I did was what I was told to do: homework, study, classwork.”

He also gave a shout out to his Advanced Placement classes, where Watson said he “learned the most about how to study and apply what I learned.”

Watson feels there is no reason in doing something if 100 percent of his energy will not be put into it, which is how his hard work paid off in the end. This includes never being afraid to ask for help, never losing sight of his goals, and never taking anything for granted.

“If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right,” he said. “This applies to school, life, [and] home. The little details add up into the big picture.”

Both Dixon and Watson encourage other students to realize their potential and shoot for the stars.

“The old saying ‘You can achieve anything you set



Hannah Dixon will attend the University of Georgia, and Chandler Watson will attend Georgia Institute of Technology.

your mind to’ is a cliché for a reason,” Dixon said. “The key to becoming an accomplished individual truly lies within yourself. You will never recognize your fullest potential without believing in yourself and shooting for the stars.”

Watson adds he aimed to give his all “every day, no matter what” and, at some point, “dedication yields results.”

“Shoot for the moon and you might hit the stars,” he said.

HAND-IN-HAND'S NEW GARDENS



Eagle Scout and TCCHS student Harrison Keyton recently built eight raised garden beds for Hand-in-Hand classes to use for spring planting projects. Pictured with Harrison, teacher Paige Nix, and Principal Jeanna Mayhall are Jordan Bostick, Brandy Ramsey, Kinsley Benefield, Keymya Andrews, and Noah Stewart. The students are proud of their newly planted gardens!



Chris Cox’s and Bobbie Barlow’s students planted, harvested, washed and tasted radishes in their outdoor garden.

Dooley Deems Thomas County Schools a Leader in Computer Science Education



Dr. Caitlin Dooley (center), Georgia Department of Education Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, observes fourth graders Haley Gonzalez, from left, and Enrique Lopez as they program robots in the coding classroom at Cross Creek Elementary.

Dr. Caitlin Dooley, Georgia Department of Education (DOE) Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, recently visited Thomas County Schools to learn more about what is needed to ensure all students in Georgia – in rural, suburban, and urban schools – have access to high quality Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education including computer science across all grades in K12.

Dr. Dooley's visit started at the Thomas County Board of Education where she met with school principals and administrators. The group interacted as Dr. Dooley asked questions about Thomas County's intensive computer science program that starts in Pre-K and continues through twelfth grade.

"I had the pleasure of seeing students in Thomas County while visiting several school districts in South Georgia," Dr. Dooley said. "The county is a leader and innovator as it incorporates computer science education

throughout elementary, middle, and high school."

Following the meeting, Dr. Dooley was given a tour of several schools to witness first-hand the students' exposure to the STEAM fields. Her tour began at Cross Creek Elementary where she observed students programming robots in the coding classroom.

Dr. Dooley and the group stopped by Thomas County Central to visit the AP Computer Science class to learn more about the full computer programming pathway being offered there. At her final stop, Dr. Dooley witnessed students in the technology exploratory course at Thomas County Middle School complete various projects using different coding languages. All of the schools shared how they incorporated the Project Lead the Way curriculum in their academic classes.

"Through the use of design challenges, innovative projects, and entrepreneurial

experiences, students can learn how programming, networking, data, and hardware (like robots) can be created," Dr. Dooley added. "I loved how the teacher [at Cross Creek] was using WeDos to challenge the students to build robots that can pull different items. The teacher was also asking students to analyze data about which items were easier and harder to pull. This is the kind of experience that engages students."

Dr. Dooley shared with the group that the US Bureau of Labor estimates that by 2020, most jobs will be STEM or STEAM related, and about 70 percent of those jobs will require computer science.

Dr. Dooley said, "This doesn't just mean coding. It means that students need to understand how computers work, how they're made, and how they can be embedded into everyday items and activities to make living better. Whether a child grows up to be a farmer or fashion designer, their future will likely involve digital computing. So just like a child needs to learn about

math because math is a part of our world, children need to learn about computing because computers are a part of our world."

"We were delighted to showcase our K-12 computer science initiative to the Department of Education's top leadership," said Thomas County School Superintendent Dr. Dusty Kornegay. "Thomas County is clearly the leader in Southwest Georgia in terms of offering a comprehensive K-12 computer science and robotics curriculum. Our aim is for students who graduate from Central to be on equal footing with students from the state's finest metropolitan prep schools when they enter highly competitive universities like Georgia Tech. We have assembled a top-notch team, and I am very proud of what they have accomplished," he said.

Upon conclusion of the meeting, representatives from the Thomas County School System were invited to DOE to share their successes and collaborate with Dooley's team.



Dr. Caitlyn Dooley, second from left, TCMS Principal Jamie Thompson, and Hand-In-Hand Assistant Principal Dee Gaines listen as Grant Evaluator Julie Sharpe (far left) explains how the Thomas County School System has integrated computer science into all of its schools.

Duke TIP Students from TCMS Score High



TCMS seventh graders Molly Grace White, from left, Jenaya Coleman, Laura Hiers, and Georgia Rose Patton were among a select group of students statewide to meet the criteria to be Duke TIP students.

The Thomas County School System recently announced that four of its middle school students were recognized as a part of the 2017 Duke University Talent Identification (TIP) Program.

Jenaya Coleman, Laura Hiers, Georgia Rose Patton, and Molly Grace White, seventh graders at Thomas County Middle, were among a select group of students statewide to meet the criteria to be Duke

TIP students.

In December 2016 and January of this year, the four took either the ACT or SAT through 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. Thirty-eight TCMS students initially qualified for participation in the TIP program.

Thomas County Middle School's TIP Club Advisor Retha Lee said, "We are proud of these seventh-grade students for taking on the challenge of exams such as the PSAT, SAT and ACT. The high scores our students received are indicative of the academic rigor of their

MERIT courses here at Thomas County Middle School, as well as the students' intelligence and motivation. We hope the work they've done in our Duke TIP Club will continue to serve them well in their academic careers."

The Duke TIP Club advisors, 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 four students scored high enough to be eligible for participation in Duke's Summer Studies programs.

Coleman, Hiers, and White have all been invited to attend a state recognition ceremony.

Thomas County Students to Attend NHD National Competition

Students from Thomas County Middle School and Thomas County Central High School recently attended the National History Day State Competition at Mercer University. Seven students from Thomas County Schools qualified for the NHD National Contest and will attend the competition in June at the University of Maryland.

Mandy West, National History Day coordinator for TCMS, said, "National History Day allows students to take a topic they are passionate about and gain a deeper understanding of its historical context. Going to archives, analyzing primary sources, visiting museums and interviewing witnesses are all ways our students increase their historical knowledge and

build lifelong skills."

This is the fifth year Thomas County students have entered the state contest. Students were led by teachers Charla Floyd, Christine Patton, Heather Ward, and Mandy West. This year's theme was "Taking a Stand in History."

In addition to qualifying for the national contest, two TCCHS students won a special award for their project on The Radium Girls of WWI. Brooklyn Reese and Kennedy Ward, who have previously represented Georgia at nationals in other categories, were awarded The Edward Jones Award for Economic History for their documentary.

Students who finish in first or second place at the state competition qualify for the national competition.



National qualifiers include TCMS students Morgan Ward, pictured sitting from left), Jenaya Tyler, and Karsyn Bush. TCCHS students going to nationals are Brooklyn Reese (pictured standing from left), Kennedy Ward, Zach Goff, and Emma Goff.

The complete list of national qualifiers includes Thomas County Central High School students Kennedy Ward and Brooklyn Reese (2nd place group documentary), Emma Goff and Zach Goff (1st place group website), and Thomas County Middle School students Karsyn Bush (2nd place individual website), and Jenaya Tyler and Morgan Ward (2nd place group website).

Other winners at the state competition include TCCHS students Cynthia Ramos and Kayla Moore (group exhibit finalists) and TCMS students Laura Hiers (3rd place individual performance), Georgia Rose Patton (3rd place individual website), Emily Hobbs (individual exhibit finalist), Ben Castillo (individual documentary finalist), and Bradley Dechman (individual website finalist).

Bishop Hall Students Attend PeaceJam Southeast Conference

Six students from Bishop Hall Charter School recently returned from the spring PeaceJam Conference at Florida State University (FSU) where they had the opportunity to meet with like-minded high school students from all over the Southeast. The conference was a celebration of the one-year international education program built around Nobel Peace Prize Laureates who work personally with youth to pass on the spirit, skills, and wisdom they embody.

During the two-day conference, the students were privileged to listen to and learn from a Nobel Laureate, and to share about the service project implemented at their school. Bishop Hall social worker Dan Salveter has been involving his students in PeaceJam for eight years.

"The Peace Jam group

at Bishop Hall consists of 15 students who decided they will become more aware of the needs of others and get active in shaping their world," Salveter said. "These students have focused on increasing the activity levels of Bishop Hall students and educating them on living more healthy lifestyles."

The conference is filled with many social activities including workshops, small group discussions, and a ceremony of inspirations. The keynote speaker was Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi who spoke about her efforts to improve peace and human rights in the Middle East and around the world.

Salveter said, "I love taking students to Peace Jam because it exposes them to the thoughts and words of Nobel Laureates, most of whom have risked their lives for



Pictured during PeaceJam on stage with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi (kneeling, far left) are Christian Bengtsson (from left), Kaylee Williams, Joey Hilton, Cheyenne Stanley, Zac Burton, and Jake Cumbest. Ebadi's interpreter, Shirin Eshadi, is kneeling at right.

their beliefs. I am very proud of these dedicated students and count my experience in working with them as one of the great experiences of being an educator."

In the fall, the students attended the annual PeaceJam Slam at FSU where they became inspired to build the program at Bishop Hall by engaging in workshops and service projects. The goal is to inspire a new generation of leaders who will transform themselves, their local communities, and the world.

Joey Hilton is one of the participants who went through the program. He said, "I got to explore things I didn't know, meet people who inspired me, and learn life strategies that will help me cope with personal situations."

"The program taught me how to deal with different people and how to lead in different situations," participant Kaylee Williams said. "I also learned how to allow others to lead when the time is right."

One of the conference favorites for many was "family time." Family time was when the participants met in small

groups with people they had never met. The discussions ranged from light conversation to deep dialogue between the participants.

Jake Cumbest said, "I really enjoyed the family group time and getting to know people I've never met on a very personal level. I made many lasting connections with people who live in other cities."

In addition to the PeaceJam program, 45 Bishop Hall students and 25 Renaissance students have been participating in the Power of Peace Project (POPP), founded by Kit Cummings. POPP, which began in a prison, has now expanded into a community development project which includes a student development program and anti-bullying campaigns in schools among other entities.

Cheyenne Stanley said, "Kit Cummings taught me how to be a better person. I have not only learned how to treat others with compassion and respect, but to also respect and love myself."

The group met together once a week for six weeks and graduated from the program at the end of March.



DANCING DRUMS - Garrison-Pilcher Elementary students recently drummed along to the beat with professional musician and performer Steve Campbell. Campbell's visit was provided by the Thomasville Center for the Arts and Visiting Artist workshops. First and second grade students had the opportunity to rotate through a variety of drum and percussion instruments as they experienced the importance of working together as a team to make music sound great.