

We Are



CENTRAL



Top Of The Class

TCCHS recognizes Valedictorian and Salutatorian

By Hunter Green, student reporter

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 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. "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 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."



2017 Honor Graduates

Dakota Saige Beever
Emily Kay Jordan Bush
Kaleb Lee Carter
Logan Danielle Covington
Deana Nichole Dabner
Maria Star Davis
Hannah Nicole Dixon
Kaitlyn Mackenzie Douglas
Kaylyn Elizabeth Durwin
Madison Brynn Everett
Haiden Grace Hall
Logan Alacia Herring
Ethan Alton Hopper
Megan Nicole Hornsby
Anna Elizabeth Jense
Lindsey Mikayla Jordan

Austin James Kelley
Eli Colby Kosciw
Christina Athanasia Maggitas
Maggie Belle Martin
Keyunna Annice Meeks
Jessica Hope Nelson
Palmer Grace NeSmith
Lauren Emily Pearson
Anna Elizabeth Raffield
Andrew Brock Reid
Kendall Anne Salter
Taylor Amelia Searcy
Bethany Lindel Sharpe
Caitlin Mae Simmons
J. Benjiman Smith
Madison Elizabeth Smith

Megan Nicole Stanley
Justin Taylor Strickland
Steven Van Tran
Luvy Mercedes Valdivia Miranda
Zarah Jacqueline Varney
Shannicia K-jana Walker
Katie Rebecca Warren
Chandler Avery Watson
Aaron Nathaniel Westbrook
Ava River White
Bayli Madison Williams
Tyler Alene Williamson
Daniel Camille Winchester
Vince Allen Wynn

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

A proclivity for science and a passion for helping students learn both in the classroom and on the athletic field have led one local teacher to earn an esteemed title.

Ryan Strickland has been named the Thomas County Central High School Teacher of the Year for 2017. He is a member of the school's science department and coaching staff (baseball).

"Knowing that I can have an impact on a person's future and life fuels my excitement for coming to work every day," he said.

Strickland holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Shorter College, a master's in education from Berry College, and a specialist's degree in curriculum and instruction from Valdosta State University. He is currently completing his doctorate in teacher leadership through Kennesaw State University. Also, Strickland is certified in Gifted and Advanced Placement education for chemistry.

A secondary science teacher since 2007, Strickland has taught physical science, chemistry, and physics classes to students from inclusion to gifted/honors levels. Strickland is a member of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, the Georgia Science Teachers Association, the National Science Teachers

Association, the Georgia Dugout Club, and the American Baseball Coaches Association.

Strickland is married to wife Lauren, who is a speech pathologist with Thomas County Schools, and they have two young sons, Parker and Ryland. He has a combined 10-year history in education. Strickland approaches both life and work in the same way: "with full commitment and strong work ethic."

"As an educator and coach, I believe it is my duty to help students reach their goals, whatever those goals may be," he said. The educator hopes his students "learn to take more responsibility for their learning and actions" through their choices and "that they learn the importance of being prepared and the value of hard work."

"With these values, students can achieve goals that they set for themselves," Strickland said.

Physics student Avery Barrett, 18, said TCCHS Teacher of the Year is "a great reward" for Strickland and "provides validation for his hard work and shows that he is inspiring students to learn and pushing them to work hard."

"I enjoy having a teacher who turns our criteria in the classroom into projects and labs that deal with real-world situations," Barrett said. "Learning becomes very enjoyable when you can relate it to the

things that you encounter every day, and that is exactly what Mr. Strickland does." Strickland's advice to fellow educators is to never "lose sight of why you became a teacher."

"As an educator, you never know what impact you have on a child, and every child has the ability to learn or do something great," he said. "For that reason, it is important never to give up on them, never to lose your passion."



MR. RYAN STRICKLAND

Congratulations Class of 2017



We are
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We Are Central is a compilation of articles that were written to highlight TCCHS activities during the school year.

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Shining examples

Jordan, Mitchell named TCCHS 2017 STAR student and teacher

The Thomas County Central High School honoree of an annual program that recognizes one of the brightest lights in each graduating class has been announced. Lindsey "MiKayla" Jordan, 17, has been named the TCCHS Class of 2017 STAR Student.

The Student Teacher Achievement Recognition, or STAR, program is sponsored by PAGE, the Professional Association of Georgia Educators. "STAR is important because it recognizes the individual achievement of a student who has performed above and beyond everyone else in their grade," TCCHS Assistant Principal Dr. James Rehberg said. "The student has to demonstrate exceptional academic knowledge as indicated by his or her SAT score and be ranked in the top 10 or 10 percent in their class as an indicator of effort and motivation."

Jordan is "very honored to receive the recognition" and said receiving it "meant that all of my hard work was rewarded." Jordan thought she might have the highest SAT score in her class, but admits "it was still a surprise and a relief to know that I actually ended up being STAR Student."

"As both a student and an individual, it

means a lot," she said. "It isn't something that everybody can achieve and it's a distinctive recognition, as I am the only



one of the senior class to have received it. Plus, it's something that I can look back on after I graduate and really feel good about and know that I was successful

through my high school career." Jordan could have selected any instructor she had throughout her K-12 education as her STAR teacher. She chose TCCHS English Language Arts instructor Stacey Mitchell.

"She's a great teacher and I chose her because she's had such a positive effect on my writing ability and kept me writing even when I didn't have the inspiration," Jordan said. "Since I would love to be an author, I really appreciate everything she's taught me even just with academic essays, and I feel like everything I've learned from her is going to help me not only through college but through the rest of my life, too."

Mitchell is "so honored" to be Jordan's chosen teacher.

"It feels great to know that she thinks highly enough of me for this honor because I think highly of her as well," she said.

Jordan admits Mitchell's classes are "a lot of work" but she appreciates Mitchell's efforts to both challenge her students and help all of them succeed. She was enrolled in Mitchell's creative writing class and also took her Honors American Literature and Advanced Placement Literature classes.

Central Students Donate Artwork to Benefit Treehouse Children's Advocacy Center



Young artists at Thomas County Central High School have contributed to an effort to help bring some healing, through color, into the lives of local abuse survivors.

These art students donated prints to the first annual Farm to Fork Dinner, which was held Friday, April 21 to aid local nonprofit The Treehouse Children's Advocacy Center of Thomas County.

Local high schools were asked to get involved by donating student artwork to auction, according to Lindsay Thompson, a The Treehouse Board of Directors member and Thomas County Central High School Digital Learning Specialist.

"I am so impressed with our students' generosity and creativity," Thompson said. "Their donations will help The Treehouse take care of our community's children who need assistance at a very fragile time. The art each student donated took a lot of time and effort, and I am so honored to offer it for auction."

TCCHS donated 10 artworks, prints students created during their art classes.

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.

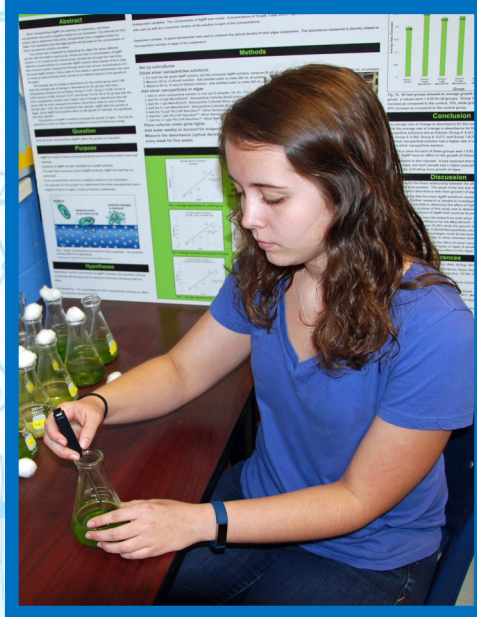
"I am honored that I was selected to attend GHP," she said. "I am excited that I get to spend my summer learning with other students who are just as interested in science as I am."

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 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 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.

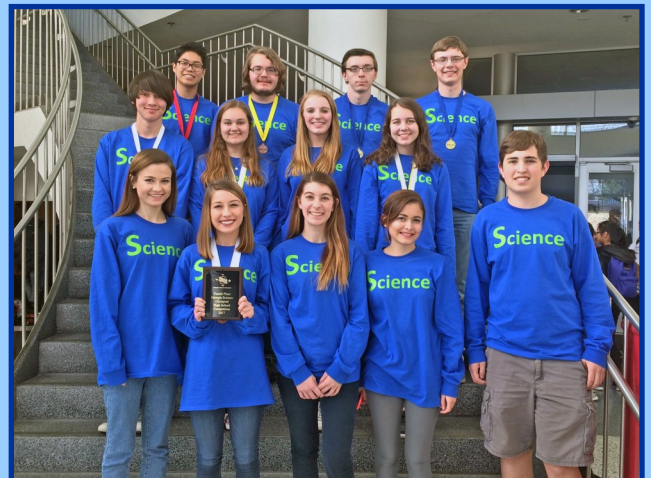
MINDS FOR SCIENCE

Thomas County Central High School Science Olympiad team placed in 19 of 23 events at the Georgia Perimeter College Region Competition.

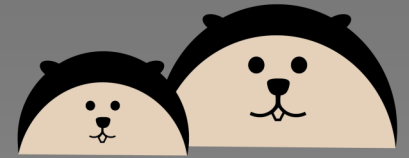
"I am so proud of the students," advisor Laura Kornegay said. "They went up against some very strong schools. It shows they can compete with the best from across the state and hold their own."

The competition was held the weekend of March 3. TCCHS had two first place, one second place, three third place, and two fourth place project winners. The school also had 11 projects earn ribbons.

Three of the 18 TCCHS teams that competed have scored in the top 10 at the state SO tournament for the past several years.



Students Participate in Groundhog Job Shadow Day



Instead of tracking whether there will be six more weeks of winter, a group of local high school students spent their Groundhog Day shadowing jobs in potential career fields.

Thomas County Central High School's second annual Groundhog Job Shadow Day was held Thursday, Feb. 2.

Organizers said the event was "a huge success." Nineteen students participated, and three returned to school with job offers.

"All the students come back with smiles and stories to tell about how much they enjoyed their experience," TCCHS Work-Based Learning Coordinator Michelle Ausley said. "They are so thankful for having the opportunity to experience their career of interest."

Student participants were: Ansley Alligood, Brendan Brock, Dontonio Daniel, William Daniel, Joey Dennard, Joshua Fussell, Hailey Garmon, Victor Gonzalez, Jarred Howell, Melinda Hurst, Hailie Hutchison, Branden Kelley, Irvin Moore, Sanny Patel, Brian Smith, Auh'Daizah Turner, Brittney Watson and Natalie Wyatt. Key professions represented included accounting, automotive technician, child care, criminal justice, construction, emergency response, fabrication, human resources, landscaping, marketing, office management, psychology, real estate sales and veterinary medicine.

"This job shadow day program was a great experience," senior Dontonio Daniel said. "It proved to me that I chose the right skills for me. I'm looking forward to a bright future." Daniel shadowed at CCH Construction Inc. Project Manager Austin Stone said the company appreciated the opportunity to assist a high school

student "in deciding his future career path."

"We hope that Dontonio left today with a thorough understanding of a day in the construction industry and the best wishes in his future endeavors," Stone said.

Other business/industry participants were: American Signature, C & S Machine Company, Clanton Malphus Veterinary Hospital, Flowers Foods, Glad Tidings Academy, Heritage Foundation, KeySouth Real Estate Group, Lanigan & Associates, P.C., New Hire Solutions, Stony Creek Landscaping, Thomas County EMS, Thomasville Police Department, Thomasville Toyota, and Thomasville YCMA. Additional business volunteer participants were Thomas County Fire/Rescue and Vereen Rehabilitation Center Sports Medicine.

"The TCCHS job shadow program is an extraordinary opportunity for local businesses to offer a real work experience to young students on the brink of their career discussions," Allison Bass, of Lanigan & Associates, P.C., said. "We greatly valued the experience and look forward to continued participation with the program."

Senior Auh'Daizah Turner, who shadowed at the site, said she "had an amazing time."

"I didn't only get the feel of the business world but also the feeling of being an accountant, my passion and dream job," she said. "It was an exciting day for me."

Senior Hailie Hutchison, who shadowed Thomasville Police Department Officer Olivia Jones, said the experience is one she "will not forget."

"I learned quite a lot about being a

Thomasville police officer," she said. "I learned you have to have confidence, patience, perseverance, and be ready for anything that life might throw at you to be one of Thomasville's finest." Some student participants said the experience taught them about skills they need to improve. For example, junior Brian Smith said he learned "a lot about working with others on so many levels" and that communication skills are "one of the things I really need to sharpen up on." He "had a great experience."

"This opportunity is a great eye-opener for high school students to get a glimpse of the professional world," New Hire Solutions Senior Placement Specialist Kathryn Aguilera said.

Ausley thanked all the hosts who participated for "taking the time to share your expertise."

"One of the primary goals of this program is to provide opportunities for our students to learn more about careers by experiencing actual work situations," she said. "Your commitment to helping our students make career decisions is greatly appreciated. This opportunity of a lifetime could not have happened without you."

Junior Sanny Patel said the day is "a great experience" and he "enjoyed every minute of it."

"I got to experience what it is actually like to work in a big corporation like Flowers Bakery," he said. "This experience is great for anyone just wanting to learn about a job before they further pursue it. I will use this in the future to help me decide what I want to major and minor in when I am in college."



Spotlight on Drama

By Cassandra Buckman, student reporter

A theatrical competition gave Thomas County Central High School actors an opportunity to both hone their skills and learn about an important historical tragedy within American industry.

TCCHS Drama students competed against other schools this fall in the GHSA Region 1-AAAAA One Act Competition with their one act play, "These Shining Lives" by Melanie Marnich. The play ranked fourth in the competition, which took place Oct. 29.

Two seniors, Kendra Anderson and Lillie Horton, were selected as All Star Cast members.

"It means that I was being recognized as being a distinguished actress," Kendra Anderson said of the honor. "The award makes me feel like I did a good job because we worked really hard to get the production together. It makes me feel accomplished."

The one act play is the TCCHS Drama department's fall production. The community previewed the play during a local showcase held at Thomasville Center of the Arts.

"I chose this play because I saw that I had a group of strong female actors and this is a show that really showcases each of their strengths in different ways," drama teacher Gabrielle Hortman said.

"These Shining Lives" is based on the work of real people who were Radium Dial workers. The female characters were actual women who participated in such work and who died due to the poisoning.



Students from fourth period Advanced Drama, along with a few from Hortman's first and second period classes, participated in the production. Hortman wanted her students to love the show and its story as much as she does. "I think there is a certain element that drew the kids into the show because of how the lines are written, they have a very lyrical flow to them and are pleasing to the ear," she said. "I also wanted the kids to be aware of the overall story because the characters they are playing were real women and men."

Actors and crew also spent a few rehearsals watching videos about the Radium Dial workers about to bring the play's truth to the students, the teacher adds.

This is Hortman's first year teaching drama at TCCHS. Students have expressed excitement over working alongside her.

"I participated in the play because I have always loved acting," junior Cheyenne Owens said with a genuine smile. "I was also really eager to work with our new drama teacher, Ms. Hortman."

Now that the one act has wrapped, Hortman and her students will turn their attention toward preparing for the spring musical.

"I think these kids have come such a long way since August when the cast list came out," Hortman said. "I am so proud of each of them and I can't wait to work on the spring musical with them!"

Thomas County Central High School students in Christine Patton's World History classes travelled back in time to fill the shoes of some of the world's most famous personalities.



Pearson Makes TCCHS History as First Female Football Player



One local student has scored a point in her school's history book. Senior Lauren Pearson, 17, is Thomas County Central High School's first female football player. Her position is place kicker. Her responsibility on the team is to make points after touchdowns and field goals. The athlete, who has a soccer background, always has been interested in kicking and thought kicking a football "looked fun" and would be a chance to try something different.

"It seemed like a great opportunity because I've wanted to kick ever since I saw the Chick-fil-A half-time extra point competition in seventh grade," Pearson said. "I became really intrigued (with the idea) when I heard about the female kicker who tried out for the NFL."

Who says girls can't play football? At TCCHS anyone who wants to play the sport is given an opportunity to try, Pearson said. And, there is no special treatment, nor does Pearson want any.

"I do everything that everyone else is required to do including tackling stations and conditioning," she said.

TCCHS Associate Head Coach Bill Wilhelm said Pearson is "very consistent in her kicking" and calls her "one of the guys."

"She went through all of the summer workouts with the team and has only missed one day of practice because of being sick," he said. "She performs all of the same conditioning and weight workouts as everyone else. She is building her strength and does feel the pressure of being a kicker and knowing that everyone is counting on her."

Junior Noah Voyles, 17, is a team kicker.

He supports Pearson and adds that having her on the team makes TCCHS "unique" because female players are uncommon in this area.

"I think it's cool that a girl is playing," he said. "You don't see that very often. She's a good teammate and does her job really well."

Pearson appreciates her team's support and is dedicated to doing her best.

"This feels unreal and almost a dream to me," she said of being on the team. "I feel like I am a part of something bigger than myself and that I belong to a team that really appreciates and respects the sport. This experience has taught me humility and discipline. Football shapes the attitude and morals of the players. I hope to gain the respect of my teammates and others."

She also encourages any girls who might want to try out for a stereotypical "guys" sport to go for it.

"I'm ecstatic and proud to be able to help the team in any way I can,"

Pearson said. "If a girl has the drive and the ability to play, I think that she should go for it even if she's afraid. I was afraid at first, with some people's disapproval, but I followed my heart and decided to try."

TCCHS Principal Trista Jones is "impressed" by Pearson's "tenacity and competitive spirit."

"We have watched Lauren practice in the heat all summer right alongside the young men," she said. "It was exciting to see her hard work pay off during the scrimmage game. We will continue to cheer for her throughout the season."

TCCHS students honored in One Book art contest

Loren Osgatharp



Miriam Van Veen



Hanna White

Young artists at Thomas County Central High School had an opportunity to interpret the importance of ecological preservation through visual format.

Five art students won or placed in the inaugural One Book Thomas County art contest. The contest was open to local students in grades second through 12th.

Freshman Miriam Van Veen won the grand prize or Best Overall in Show, and \$75 while senior Loren Osgatharp won first place and \$25 in the 11th/12th division. Senior Maria Davis earned second place in the 11th/12th grade division and freshman Hanna Whittle received third place in the 9th/10th grade division. Freshman Chelsea Weaver earned an honorable mention in the 9th/10th grade division. "We are very proud of the artworks our TCCHS students created for the show," teacher Jocelyn Rivard said.

The contest's theme, based on content found in the One Book selection "Ecology of a Cracker Childhood" by Janisse May, was "Saving the Longleaf Pine Habitat: Flora and Fauna." Rivard wanted her students to participate because the contest "provided an avenue for awareness of the longleaf pine deforestation problem."

"Students became aware of the many creatures and plants that work together in such an ecosystem, many of which are on the endangered list," she said. "All the students were attentive to researching only the wildlife of the longleaf pine forest provided in the Janisse May book and then inventing interesting compositions from that. The viewpoints and media for each student had a unique solution; the entries didn't look like 'create the same artwork' assignment."

Miriam Van Veen's grand prize winning piece depicts the Florida black bear, chosen because one of her favorite childhood stuffed animals was a black bear, in its habitat through ink, watercolors and acrylic paint.

At first, Van Veen was "extremely frustrated" with her entry because the watercolors bled through the paper. However, Van Veen refused to give up and said she redid her piece in one night using thick, watercolor paper. "I'm pleased with winning top prize," she said. "I've always liked art, but winning means I have more potential than I thought. A lesson to take from this is to not give up, no matter what." Senior Loren Osgatharp was surprised she won first place in her division. "Many of the other entries were amazing..." she said.

Osgatharp, who loves nature and supports preservation efforts, used her piece to show "the reason to save the longleaf pine." She used crayons, markers, sharpies, and watercolors to create her artwork.

"Without the tree, different animals, bugs and plants are left homeless, so I decided to show different animals and bugs that make the longleaf pine their home," she said.

Maria Davis placed second in the 11th/12th grade division. Davis is proud of her piece and said, though she was short on time, she put forward her best effort. Her piece was created using watercolors and sharpie.

"I chose to have a forest of longleaf pine trees with some of the wildlife you would see near these trees," she said. "I colored the picture in watercolor and added detail with a fine [point] sharpie. All the animals in my piece were researched."

Chelsea Weaver received an honorable mention in the 9th/10th grade division.

She participated in the contest because she loves wildlife.

"I love animals and I feel like it would lighten people's spirits when they see it," Weaver said of her entry.

Hanna Whittle won third place in the 9th/10th division.

"I feel very honored to have my art in the public library where everyone can see it because I've never had anything on display before," she said.

The young artist supports preservation efforts.

"Any chance we get to promote the preservation of our world should never go to waste," she said. "And, as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words."

Weaver encouraged other student artists to participate in contests like this one because "it brings out your potential," inspires others, and provides scholarship opportunities. She also encourages the public to see the exhibit.

"I feel like people would be amazed by the wonderful art, not only mine but everybody who gave it their all..." Weaver said.

Davis said participating in competitions are great experiences whether the person wins or not because "so many people got to see your creation." She is "overjoyed" to be included in the public exhibit.

"My art is not just for me but for everyone to enjoy," Davis said. Whittle said participation in contests like this one are great to put on college applications and winning makes "you feel great."

"To any aspiring artists, never give up," she said. "There's a starting place for everyone."

The exhibition was on display in the Flipper Room of the Thomas County Public Library until Oct. 2.

DEBATE : CRITICAL THINKING, COMMUNICATION, AND TEAMWORK

Thomas County Central High School Debate team members are arguing and analyzing their way to potential championships this year.

Nine students competed in the 2016 VSU Blazer High School Invitational debate tournament on Oct. 1. Twelve students competed at the Wildcat Classic at Valdosta High School held Oct. 15 in Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum debate. Because of their showings in these competitions, several students have qualified for the first/second year debate championship in early 2017.

“Our team has shown increased commitment this season, as demonstrated through several students winning recognition at the early season tournaments and qualifying for post-season competition,” Coach Brian Bellamy said. “I’m very excited about our progress.”

TCCHS is a member school in the Georgia Forensic Coaches Association (GFCA), which means its members are able to compete in invitational tournaments to earn slots to GFCA state championship events, held in February and March 2017, depending upon skill level. Students who have qualified, so far, include: Michael Cress, Jashon McDuffie, Dylan Halphen, Jesse Stone, Taylor Smith, Shadrick Hollis and Kennedy Ward. Michael Cress, who is in Bellamy’s mock trial class, “has expanded his focus on his speech and analytical skills by competing regularly in debate, which has earned him the needed tournament credentials to compete post-season,” according to Bellamy.

Junior Kennedy Ward won first place speaker in Novice Lincoln-Douglas debate during the Oct. 15 event.

Also, sophomore Taylor Smith received a fifth-place speaker medal in Novice Public Forum debate. Smith, 15, is interested in a law career and joined debate to “enhance my ability to argue.” Bellamy said Smith shows “much promise.”

She finished in the top 10 for public forum during the Oct. 1 event. Smith said her placement makes her feel “great and accomplished” and participating in debate makes her happy.

Freshman Jashon McDuffie, 15, joined debate because of his interest in pursuing a law career. McDuffie thanks fellow debaters Smith and Joshua Fussell for encouraging him to join the team.

The team has two returning experienced debaters, Ashton Barwick (second year) and Joshua Fussell (third year).

Debate promotes critical thinking, communication skills, and teamwork, according to Bellamy. The field uses “analyzing, evaluating and creating to seek the truth” and debates are won when students clearly communicate their supported analysis of each topic. Freshman Mitch Stone, 14, joined debate because he is “a very outspoken person.” Stone encourages others to join debate “because it really challenges the mind.” He recently competed in public forum.

Team members sign up for tournaments and attend competitions as frequently as possible from

September through mid-February. The team is currently planning to compete in at least 10 invitational events in 2016-2017. In addition, team members hope to qualify for state and national championships through the National Catholic Forensic League or the National Speech and Debate Association.

Currently, team members may participate in public forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and congressional debates. Public Forum debate is a team event “that advocates or rejects a position set forth in a monthly or bi-monthly resolution topic,” Bellamy explains. Teams “clash” over their positions, but debates “should display solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis.” Lincoln-Douglas, whose name is derived from a series of 1858 slavery debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, is a one-on-one debate, Bellamy explains. Debaters offer “opposing viewpoints on the truth of some topic of importance” that rely on values rather than listing harms/benefits.

Student Congress, or Congressional debate, is “an individual debate in a large group setting” where they “research and write pieces of legislation they determine to be in the best interest of society,” Bellamy said. Students prepare during debate class and by participating in the school’s debate club, but Bellamy adds the best way for debaters to prepare for tournaments is through frequent competition.



We've Got Spirit

Students, Staff enjoy homecoming week

By Morgan Warr, student reporter

Thomas County Central High School took part in a fun and unique homecoming week earlier this month.

Each day had a different theme: tacky tourist, college, dress for success, and blue and gold. Numerous faculty and staff showed their school spirit by dressing up for each theme. Different costumes and outfits drew positive attention and brought the school together.

The homecoming pageant may have been one of the week's most important and exciting highlights. All homecoming court representatives were presented, but the seniors received extra attention because they were up for homecoming queen election. They had a longer introduction as well as a short video that showed baby and current photos.

"Having those pictures put up in front of the whole school is kind of embarrassing," Kendall Salter said. "I really had a good time at the pageant though, and it grouped the whole school together."

That Friday was one of the most eventful days, considering it was the day of the homecoming game.

"Being a football player during homecoming week is fun but stressful at the same time," Chance Stewart said.

"We have confidence, but the pressure is on to make sure we win the homecoming football game."

Several other activities were also held that day. Music was played in the hallways



between each class and there was a spirit competition between all first period classes to see who had the most participation in Friday's blue and gold theme. Mrs. Louise Phillips' class won with 100 percent participation.

"I have some great students in my first period," Phillips said. "They 'bleed' blue and gold. They encouraged everyone to wear blue and gold, even me. I have been blessed with this group of students." The class also has a football player, Lynwood Thompson, and its members wanted to support both the team and

Thompson.

"We want him to know that we are cheering for him and the team," Phillips said.

At the football game, the homecoming queen was crowned. This year's queen is Jamilah Johnson, while Angela Cipriani was selected as Miss Spirit and Avery Barrett was named Miss Yellow Jacket. "Winning homecoming queen was an amazing experience," Johnson said. "It makes high school so much more memorable and I'll never forget that night."

After TCCHS won the game against Monroe, the annual homecoming dance was held.

"There were people actually dancing," Miracle Hampton said. "I stayed until the dance ended and had one of the best nights ever."

Student council planned out homecoming week and had a fun time doing it.

"This was my favorite part of being in student council so far," J'harre Bush, junior class inspirational leader said. "I liked being able to participate in homecoming week in a different way than I usually do." Administration also aided in and embraced the week's student body unity. "It's great to see the students get involved and have fun," Assistant Principal Karen Jones said.



TCCHS Envirothon earns strong showing at state competition

Thomas County Central High School's Envirothon team finished its opening season with a strong showing at state competition.

The team finished in the top 10 overall and "near the top" in Aquatic Ecology & Current Issue at the Georgia Envirothon, according to advisor Laura Kornegay. The event was held March 29-30 at Camp John Hope in Fort Valley.

Team members are Bret Hendricks, Maggie Martin, Luvy Miranda, Steven Tran, and Vince Wynn.

"The state competition was considerably more difficult than region Envirothon," Bret Hendricks said. "This makes me feel that all of our hard work paid off. Placing as one of the top 10 teams in the state for a competition we competed in for the very first time makes me feel proud of our team."

Steven Tran said the state level competition was a change for the team.

"It was more challenging to all of us, but I feel like I have enjoyed the competition," he said. "I am proud of my team and the amount of work we put into the different events. There were many larger schools we had to face, yet we managed to outperform them in certain events."



Student Ambassadors

By MiKayla Jordan, student reporter

One of the most recent student organizations to join the variety of activities at Thomas County Central High School is called “Student Ambassadors.” The Georgia Secretary of State Student Ambassadors program encourages students to involve themselves in the community as well as to host voter registration drives and volunteer events.

TCCHS has a total of nine students in its branch, the max number allowed, but the small group made headway in the state rankings.

The program allows teams to gain points by holding different events that encourage participation within the community. Every week, points are tallied and the Georgia Secretary of State's office posts the school rankings by point amount. The group finished

the year in first place for the Southwest Georgia region and as state runner-up overall.

The TCCHS team gained many of its points by hosting voter registration drives in the school cafeteria, as well as conducting polls there and online. Also, the team has talked to many classes about the importance of voting and other political subjects, much of which occurred before Georgia's voter registration deadline, Oct. 12.

While the talks are an ongoing process, the ambassadors often attend civic events. One of these was the Presidential Peanut Poll at the Georgia National Fair in Perry.

Other than attending community events and volunteering, the program encourages leadership and government involvement, such as attending

meetings of local governing boards. On Friday, Oct. 21 the first annual “Jacket Townhall Meeting” was held at TCCHS. Ambassadors and student council members came together to speak with local and state government representatives.

Those present included state House District 173 Rep. Darlene Taylor, Thomas County Board of Education member Charles Evans, Keith Stone from the Georgia Secretary of State office, and Thomas County Board of Commissioners Chairman Ken Hickey. The TCCHS ambassadors conducted a Youth Assembly trip in November and volunteered as pages in February. They were also one of the sponsors for The Spectrum Run: A Color Run for Autism Awareness in April.



Small Package, Endless Possibilities

By Megan Butler, student reporter

Thomas County Central High School students were handed a small package that held endless possibilities Wednesday. TCCHS issued its student Chromebooks in the school's media center throughout the day, Jan. 18.

Lindsay Thompson, instructional technologist, is “thrilled” Chromebooks are finally being issued to students. “We have been planning for six months and we have finally got the Chromebooks into the hands of students,” Thompson said. “Now the students will have access to state of the art technology resources.”

TCCHS was awarded a grant from GOSA, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, which provides a Chromebook to every student and training for teachers as they implement blended learning. To receive a Chromebook, students are required to turn in a permission letter signed by a parent or guardian.

“The school was able to order 1,350 Chromebooks in addition to 504

Chromebooks it already had using this grant,” Thompson said.

Both teachers and students are excited to see how they are going to be able to implement Chromebooks into their daily work.

Transferring to the use of Chromebooks in class will lower paper usage and help both students and teachers organize their assignments.

“I think Chromebooks will help me find information,” student Coleman Hollis said. “I am looking forward to having my work organized on a Chromebook.” Chromebooks will be a convenient way for students to complete their work.

“I can now have easy access to my school work,” student Megan Curry said.

The Thomas County School System aims to produce the best students that can compete with other students across the country, Thompson adds.

History teacher Brett James said offering Chromebooks to all students is one way to show Thomas County's

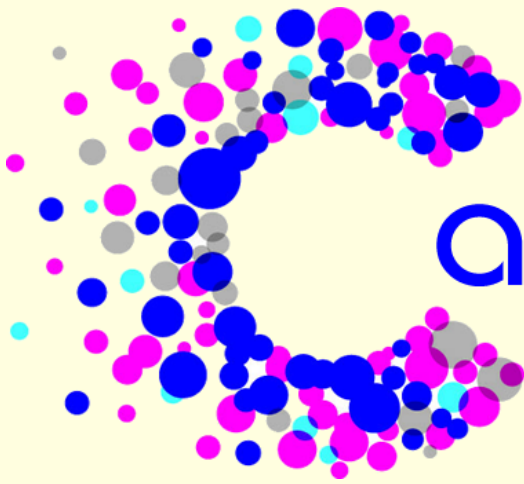
“commitment to student excellence” and give its students “a big advantage” over others.

“Being digitally literate is one of the most important skills today's students and tomorrow's employees need to have,” he said. “Virtually every job requires people to use computers to some degree.”

A main way his students use Chromebooks is for completing assignments in Google Classroom. They make project presentations, complete quizzes and write constructed responses, all using Google digital services.

Chromebooks will prepare students for the real world, where the use of technology is widespread.

“This will empower the students as learners and give them the necessary skills to continue their education in school and in the workforce,” Thompson said.



aps for a CURE

In honor of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness month, Thomas County Central High School students and staff had an opportunity Friday to make individual fashion statements for the cause.

The school participated in "Caps for CURE," a fundraiser suggested by the CURE Childhood Cancer organization to help support the fight to cure the disease. The TCCHS event was dubbed "Caps for a Cure."

"We've had several students come through TCCHS who have had cancer, so we wanted to participate in order to show our support to find a cure for childhood cancer," Beth Adams, assistant principal said. "The students at TCCHS are always willing to help for a good cause, and they seem to really connect to projects that help support other kids in need."

Head gear, such as caps and hats, are not usually permitted inside the school. However, students and staff could donate \$1 and wear any type of school appropriate hat or cap throughout the day. Some students wore traditional caps promoting teams, popular culture, or businesses; others got creative. Sophomores Jaylen Brown and Micah Carroll decided to have fun with the special occasion: Brown donned a shark hat while Carroll wore a royal crown. Brown had some extra money and wanted to donate it to the cause. "I think it's a pretty fair deal that we get to wear hats in exchange for an important contribution to a worthy cause," he said.

Carroll agreed, calling the fundraiser "cool because you can save or help people by wearing hats." Many siblings also chose to band together for the cause. Twins Tori and Sheriden Hall, juniors, came in a princess and the Flash hats, respectively. Sheriden said the cause is a good excuse to wear a hat all day, and Flash is her favorite superhero. Tori decided to wear her princess cap because it is a positive reminder of her childhood.

The twins felt good about being able to support the cause.

"It's nice to know we can do something for people," Tori said. Sisters Gabriella and Desiree Hough also participated.

"We wanted to help them find a cure for cancer," Desiree, a junior, said. Freshman Shelby Lewis paid to wear a cowgirl hat.

"It's the hat that best describes me," the barrel-racer said. "I wanted to give a dollar for a good reason."

Teachers also supported the cause, many to set a positive example for their students and to promote the importance of school spirit.

"If teachers don't have school spirit, how can we expect our students (especially freshmen) to have it," teacher Brett James said. "It's also a nice change of pace and it throws some of the students who are used to us dressing up and looking a certain way."

James adds, "most every family has been affected by cancer," so the event was "a nice way" to participate in the fight to cure the disease "while having a little fun."

Teacher Leigh Barwick said she has "several reasons" why it's important to participate in events like Friday's, but "the single most important reason is to bring attention to the issue of childhood cancer and do what we can to help find a cure."

"I hope students learn that it's easy to get involved and do something good for someone else," she said. "One of the basic human needs is love. Giving to others is a great way to show love and feel empowered."

TCCHS raised approximately \$300. The funds will be sent to the CURE Childhood Cancer organization. For more information, visit the website www.curechildhoodcancer.org.

"We were very pleased with the turnout today," Adams said. "A lot of students donated who didn't even want to wear caps, they just wanted to help."



California Bound



10 TCCHS FBLA members headed to national competition

Several Thomas County Central High School Future Business Leaders of America chapter members are California bound this summer. Six of its entries in the 2017 Georgia FBLA State Leadership Conference and Competition, held March 12-14 in Athens, placed fourth or higher in their category and advanced to this summer's FBLA National Leadership Conference and Competition. Advisor Nicholas Haskin said, "while expectations were high," state competition is never predictable. "We took 45 students to state competition and qualified 10 students for nationals," he said. "That is an amazing 25 percent, and that was with two teams one place out of achieving nationals. We could not be more proud of the hard work and dedication these students placed into their preparation and it showed in their presentations." Ellen Ponder, along with partner Ansley Jones, placed first in Social Media Campaign. They created an original television show, "Southern Royals" about Southern teenage social elites, and a social media campaign to promote its "premiere." "Euphoric is the word that comes closest to how I feel," Ponder said of the win. "I kept imagining Ansley and I getting first, but I didn't think it [was] actually happening. I was a huge, crying mess on stage when it was announced." Savannah Barrett and teammates

Hayley Hoffs and Aaron Westbrook placed third in Graphic Design. Their topic was to create a family fun entertainment center; they chose a beach theme. "I did not expect to place in nationals because this is my first year in FBLA," Barrett said. "Being recognized as top in my state and moving on to nationals to compete is overwhelmingly humbling and awesome. Making it to nationals is an incredible opportunity, and I wouldn't want to be a part of another chapter. Our chapter, overall, did outstanding!" Teammate Hayley Hoffs feels "proud and accomplished" and said the placement "motivates" her "to do even better at nationals." There is "something very special" about this TCCHS FBLA group, Haskin adds, including its "amazing" student leadership, headed this year by chapter president Tyler Williamson and vice president Anna Jense. Haskin notes how the chapter's members "really care for one another" and want success for their teammates as much as their own. Williamson, who earned FBLA "Who's Who" honors and is also the Region 1 president, said her chapter's showing brings "overwhelming joy." "To have 11 students qualify to go to nationals is outstanding work, and each and every one of them worked extremely hard," Williamson said. "I am also so very proud of all of those members who didn't make it, and I

hope it pushes them to do bigger and better things in FBLA next year." Haskin said the TCCHS FBLA chapter works hard to be a place where all members have a home and every student feels accepted "just as they are." FBLA "means the world" to Ponder, and she owes much of her growth to her involvement in the organization, including her choice of college major: strategic communications and graphic design. "It's part of the reason I got into college, because I wrote about FBLA," she said. "FBLA really helped me mature and gave me intrinsic motivation to do better and always be confident." Hoffs joined FBLA because it would be something new and she thought it would be fun. "With going to nationals, it (FBLA) has made me realize that working for what you want will pay off in the end," she said. Other TCCHS FBLA advisors are Michelle Ausley, Mindy Pierce and Patricia Beach. Haskin said they all "applaud" the members' "hard work and dedication" and seeing these pay off through competition successes "makes it all worth it." National competition will be held June 27-July 2 in Anaheim, California.



State Top 10 and National Qualifiers*

- Tyler Williamson & Anna Jense (fourth place, Business Plan)*
- Ellen Ponder & Ansley Jones (first place, Social Media Campaign)*
- Savannah Grace Barrett, Hayley Hoffs, and Aaron Westbrook (third place, Graphic Design)*
- Andrew Brock Reid (third place, Securities and Investments)*
- Steven Tran & Dakota Beaver (fourth place, Digital Video Production)*
- Bayli Williams (second place, Hospitality Management)
- Faythe Choate, Caroline Fuller, Shivani Patel (fifth place, Social Media Campaign)
- Jared Conley & Tyler Williamson (sixth place, Website Design)
- Kenlie Harvey & Drew Lloyd (ninth place, Desktop Publishing)
- Steven Tran & Brooklyn Reese (fifth place, Public Service Announcement)
- Brock Reid & Aaron Westbrook (ninth place, Banking and Financial Systems)
- Anna Jense (10th place, Job Interview)

TCCHS students place in SkillsUSA competition

Miller headed to nationals

Thomas County Central High School had one student and one team place in the state SkillsUSA competition. Jonathan Mills won first place in marine technology and the school's forensics team placed third in its category. The team is comprised of students J.J. Ward, Langley Wooten, and Morgan Lowe.

Mills is enrolled in the Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair Pathway at TCCHS. He is currently in the second-year class.

Instructor Michael Clapper said he'd heard Mills spent a summer working at a boat shop and asked the student to join SkillsUSA and to compete in the marine technology category.

Though Clapper said Mills was a little nervous to compete, the instructor tried to give his students positive encouragement "to do their best and their hard work would pay off."

During competition, Mills had to demonstrate skills learned in shop, take a written test, and complete an interview as if he were applying for a job in the marine industry.

"Jonathan's placement in the competition was a shock to him, since he felt like he was not as prepared as he should have been," Clapper said. "I feel like his skills and training helped him tremendously."

Clapper said Mills was "super excited" to place. Mills verifies Clapper's statement, saying he felt he'd done "very bad" after he'd finished his test, but he was "excited" when they called his name to come to the stage for placement.

"I was excited because I had never



placed with any competition before," he said.

Mills said he enjoys putting in the work on a project and then, once it's done, being able to have fun with it.

Mills is now preparing for national competition, which will take place in Louisville, Ky., in June. He's "excited"

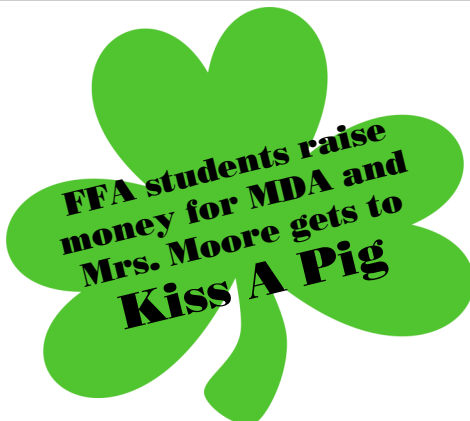
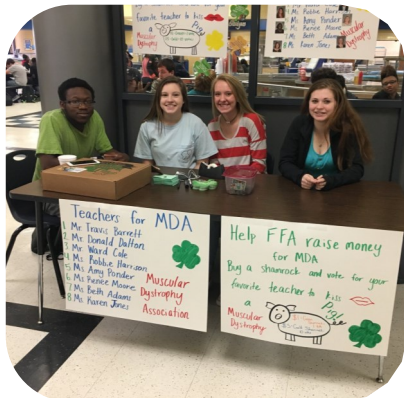
but also "really nervous" because there will be even more people and competitors. Mills plans to prepare for national competition by reviewing everything he did at state and going over his information, step by step.

Forensics team member Langley Wooten said she's always been interested in forensics, largely thanks to watching television shows like "Criminal Minds" and "NCIS." "My favorite part is that real life forensics is nothing like the shows," she said. "What we do is real life and that's the best part."

The team spent numerous hours and days practicing for competition. "We worked on crime scenes and how to properly work one like we would in real life," Wooten said. "We learned more than just how to do it, however. We learned why you do it this way and we're told real life stories of how each piece of evidence, no matter how small, was crucial to an investigation."

Wooten felt the team's performance "was spot on" and she feels the group has "surpassed the title of team" and become "a family."

"We were exceptional when it came to communication," she said. "Everything being done was done in harmony. We've practiced so much we know when we need to help one another without being asked to get everything done and within the time frame. We go to competition and create memories that we still laugh about. It means a lot to be able to work with such great people." The TCCHS Forensics team is advised by teacher Dr. Scott Sweeting.





Getting some bling

TCCHS juniors receive class rings

By Brianna Parker, student reporter



It could be said that Thomas County Central High School put a ring on it Aug. 25. Juniors were given their class rings during a ceremony held in the school's gymnasium.

When ordering, students could choose from many traditional ring styles or even a dog tag option. During the ceremony, class officers spoke about the rings' significance.

"In the end, our rings should symbolize the good times that we have so far experienced in high school and the experiences that are yet to come," TCCHS Junior Class President Huntley Rodgers said. "And (they) remind us that we are all the same in one way: they remind us that we are always Yellow Jackets." It was an emotional

time for students and their loved ones.

"Handing my daughter her necklace was such a wonderful feeling," mother Leslie Layton said. "It's very bittersweet to realize that she's (daughter Ashlan) a junior now."

Juniors were excited to receive their rings.

"High school has been the greatest years of my life," Alyxus McCardle said. "My ring will help me look back fondly on them."

Some juniors even feel as though they missed out by not getting a ring.

"I really regret not getting a ring," Shivani Patel stated. "My best friend got one and it's stunning!"

Achieve and Succeed: NHS Induction

By Megan Butler, student reporter

Scholarship. Leadership. Service. Character. Sixty-eight Thomas County Central High School students were inducted into the National Honor Society Monday, Sept. 19.

"I am excited to see what NHS is all about," inductee Caroline Fuller said. "I have worked hard to be a part of this program and I'm so glad it finally paid off."

NHS students participate in a variety of service events. "We help out the other schools when they have events like Grandparents Day, we collect food around Christmas for families who are hungry, and we collect clothes for the needy, among other things," James said.

Members are encouraged to step out and help their community in any way possible.

"Helping out our community is very important," Daniel Holland said. "I cannot wait to participate in these community events and help others." In order to continue to be a member of NHS, students must maintain a grade point average of an 'A' or higher.

Members who complete the NHS requirements will receive a special gold tassel for graduation.



- Art History • Biology • Calculus • Chemistry • Computer Science A •
- Environmental Science • Government & Politics: United States •
- Latin • Literature and Composition • Music Theory • Physics •
- Psychology • Statistics Studio Art: 2D Design • Studio Art: Drawing •
- United States History • World History •



TCCHS celebrates AP courses

by MiKayla Jordan, student reporter

On Friday, Feb. 24 Thomas County Central High School took a day to celebrate some of the rigorous classes on its roster and the students serious about academics who take them.

In honor of AP day, TCCHS held a special breakfast for current AP students and shadow opportunities for potential AP students.

AP classes are offered at TCCHS because they provide “a tremendous opportunity for students who want to really show top-flight colleges they are serious about academics,” Advanced Placement Coordinator James Rehberg said.

“AP Day is held to celebrate students taking Advanced Placement courses and reward and recognize them in front of the entire student body,” he added.

The day started off on a light note with administrators greeting current AP students and offering them breakfast from Chick-fil-A.

“It’s a nice way to begin the day,” Rehberg said. “Plus, it’s a reward for all the hard work they’ve put in for the classes.”

Several students went to the breakfast, spending the time socializing with friends or some of the

AP teachers that attended.

“It made me feel like all my hard work and efforts had earned me something great, and nothing is greater than free Chick-fil-A,” participant Brianna Parker enthused.

Parker takes both AP World History and AP Biology this year because they offered a “new learning environment” as well as “potential college credit” with the passage of the AP exam at the end of the school year.

The opportunities AP classes offer are what draw students to the courses and is why TCCHS encourages participation in them.

“I encourage students to take AP classes to challenge themselves and broaden their horizons,” AP Literature teacher Stacey Mitchell said. “The rigor of an AP course helps prepare students for classes they will take in college.”

During AP Day, underclassmen who have not taken an AP course were prompted to attend AP classes and experience them for themselves.

“Perhaps someone who has never considered AP sees what’s going on, realizes someone they know is in AP, and starts asking how they can become involved,” Rehberg said. “It’s

also a fun day where students can visit the classes to learn what happens, where they can see that it isn’t impossible to learn and excel there.”

Underclassmen were assigned to visit ongoing AP classes on campus and participate in assignments and activities. It gave them the opportunity to determine whether AP classes were something they wanted to pursue in the future.

“I feel like AP Shadow Day helped me expand my horizons as a student,” sophomore Dev Patel said.

Patel felt AP Day “helps incoming AP students prepare themselves for the challenges ahead of them” and that it helped him see that he “needs to prepare [himself] more for the classes [he] will choose to take.” He looks forward to joining AP Biology and AP Calculus next year.

Senior Daniel Winchester encourages students to consider adding AP classes to their schedule next year.

“AP classes let you enter into a wider variety of courses and you get college credit for them,” he said. “Though they can be a lot of work, they’re completely worth it in the long run.”



F IS FOR FOOTBALL, FLAGS AND FEMALES

TCCHS HELD ITS 11TH ANNUAL POWDERPUFF FLAG FOOTBALL EVENT OCT. 27.

ALL GRADES WERE INCLUDED AND THE SENIOR TEAM WON THE COMPETITION. JUNIORS PLACED SECOND, THE FRESHMAN TEAM PLACED THIRD, AND SOPHOMORES FINISHED FOURTH. FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES SPONSORS POWDERPUFF.

TCCHS COLLECTS DONATIONS TO AID TORNADO VICTIMS

By Taylor Smith, student reporter

Thomas County Central High School Social Studies department sponsored a tornado donations drive for victims of the severe weather that hit this region the weekend of Jan. 21-22.

"I decided to sponsor the drive because it is only by the grace of God that our community wasn't impacted more severely than it was," sponsor Leigh Barwick said. "You can't watch the news and see the devastation and not want to do something to help. I believe as human beings we should desire to take care of one another."

This drive was held the first two weeks of February and gathered more than 2,000 items.

"I am so pleased with the response of our students," Barwick said. "TCCHS was able to bless numerous families through the generosity of our students and faculty members."

The drive collected items such as clothing, non-perishable food, personal hygiene products, and recreational items for families to enjoy.

"I donated a bag of jeans, some shoes, and a bag of shirts," student donor Lindsey Daniels said. "I chose these items

because they were clothes I didn't fit or need anymore. I figured other people needed them more than I did." Participating in a good cause was a motivation for Jimmia Williams, the student who brought in the most donations. "What motivated me to donate was the fact that the people who no longer have their homes and prized possessions



needed things to call their own again," she said. There were 795 total items collected from the winning class. The class earned a pizza party for its effort to help others.

Winning class teacher Thomas Rinehart motivated his students by reminding them of how lucky and blessed they are, such as asking them "to imagine being completely without a home" and encouraging them

through other inspirational discussions.

Williams is a member of Rinehart's winning class.

"It's cool to be a part of the winning class but it's not about winning," she said. "It's about supporting others whenever you have the possibility to do so. This accomplishment made me feel like I actually helped people in need."



Learning Experiences FGE students attend region, state competitions

By Megan Butler, student reporter

Thomas County Central High School students in the Future Georgia Educators club have brought home awards from region and state competitions. Region competition was held March 1 at the University of Georgia. State competition was held March 22 in Atlanta.

"We are so proud of the work that our students put into their competitions," FGE advisor and early childhood education teacher Cindy Carnes said. "They represent our school and profession well." Region winners include: Jada Sparrow, first place in speech competition for "FGE Moment" (when she knew she wanted to be a teacher); Taylor Chancey, first place in essay competition for "How Poverty Affects Students"; first place for team Quentorea Addison, Miyah Washington, and Rondesja Mitchell in the knowledge bowl; first place in T-shirt competition to promote FGE and "Georgia Grown Teachers" for team members Michaelah

Collier, Aaliyah Fuller, Taylor Chancey, Destiny Myrick, Kimayah Simpson, Zekia Greene, Deantre'Naisha Eason, Tashiana Cutino, and Lilia Graham; and, Georgia Smith, Madison Smith and Courtney Robinson won second place in public



service announcement video for "Impact Teachers Have on Students."

Winner Jada Sparrow said speaking at region gave her "a feeling of accomplishment."

While at UGA, Carnes said the TCCHS group, including fellow FGE advisor Amy

Smith, toured the school, went to a college fair, and toured UGA's Early Learning Laboratory School on campus. The students' achievements at region lead their way to state. Carnes and Smith travelled to Atlanta with the students for the competition.

While there, members of TCCHS FGE toured Ahava Early Learning Center in Buckhead. Here they were informed about a Reggio-Emillia based school, which focuses on natural materials, lots of natural light, and hands-on experiences. At state competition, student teams placed third in the T-shirt competition and third in the knowledge bowl, which includes questions about state teacher code of ethics and teaching curriculum. TCCHS FGE is sponsored by PAGE. The competitions were learning experiences for those students involved. They used the time to further their knowledge on their future careers.

Service Remembered

TCCHS OBSERVES VETERANS DAY

Thomas County Central High School did not let its country's veterans go unrecognized Friday.

Students, faculty and staff paid tribute to veterans in a variety of ways.

Activities in honor of Veterans Day included the making and showing of a special video featuring photos of veterans submitted by staff and students, a cap-wearing fundraiser to benefit servicemen overseas, and a special program held at the end of the day.

The special presentation video, "Veterans of Thomas County," which was shown during the afternoon program, was edited by Audio Video Technology and Film advanced student Cassandra Buckman.

"The veterans' video is a collage of photos that represent those who served for our country," Buckman explained. "People in the school brought in photos of loved ones and friends. It's important for us to recognize the men and women who helped keep our country free."

The "Tip of the Cap to a Veteran" fundraiser allowed students and staff to donate \$1 in order to wear their hat or cap of choice throughout the school day. Individuals could pay in advance during lunch or Friday morning. Junior Alan Brinn participated in the fundraiser.

"I wanted to wear a cap today not just to support our military, but also to remember my family that was in the military and those who never made it home," Brinn said.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will go to Operation Gratitude, which provides care packages to servicemen overseas. The total raised was announced at the end of the day with the school (plus some community donations) raising \$214.

TCCHS operated under a pep rally schedule Friday so all seven periods would end early in order to make time for the official "Veterans Day Program." Some students, like council members and ambassadors, attended the ceremony; however, the event was broadcast live to the entire school through CNS.

The program included the pledge, the national anthem, patriotic musical selections from TCCHS Boys Quartet, the playing of the "Veterans of Thomas County" video and thoughts from guest speaker, U.S. Army Lt. Col. (Ret.) William Keith Cantrell.

Cantrell, a Thomasville native, briefly addressed the audience. In his remarks, he talked about the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day, he shared how "war is a nasty, nasty business" and challenged students to read the U.S. Constitution

because armed services exist to defend it.

TCCHS Student Council members shared their thoughts after the ceremony.

Natalie Wyatt found the entire program "very moving" and was especially touched when servicemen present stood as their military branch theme song was sung.

Riley Jones, who called the ceremony "incredible," said the program brought home the reality of what it means to be a veteran. He cited Cantrell's story about seeing a friend at one meal and later being told the friend had been killed. Jones added the ceremony inspired him to do the best he can in his academic and baseball endeavors in honor of the service and sacrifices made by the country's veterans.

Those involved with the day's events hope students gain positive insight from their experiences.

"I thought it would be good for our students to be actively involved in the process, to learn that giving back to our veterans is important," Joshua Niswonger, a TCCHS social studies teacher and student ambassador advisor said after the program. "I hope students gain a better appreciation for the freedom we have because freedom is not free."



Academic Accomplishments

TCHS award ceremonies honor seniors, underclassmen

By Megan Butler and Sierra Stephens, student reporters

Thomas County Central High School students in all grade levels had their hard work recognized in two special, end-of-year awards ceremonies. First, underclassmen with outstanding academic achievements were recognized at the annual Appreciation Day program, held May 3.

Certificates and medals were presented to students with highest averages in academic classes and those who have shown the most potential in their electives. Also, special recognition was given to students who excelled in various academic competitions.

Sophomore Diana Beason received an award for physical science, presented for having the highest average in that class.

"I feel very proud of myself for my accomplishments," she said. "I was surprised to be recognized in science, because even though I worked hard, it is not my best subject. I do love my teacher, which makes me want to work harder. I also work harder

because of the fact that I do struggle in the subject."

Junior Christian Nix was recognized for his work in Algebra II.

"I like math because it all adds up," he said.

Students believe award ceremonies like Appreciation Day are necessary to motivate individuals to do their best.

"These events are important to students because it shows value in their hard work," Nix said.

Honors Night was held the following evening, May 4, when seniors present were awarded various medals, certificates, stoles, cords, and scholarships to recognize their scholastic accomplishments.

Students received awards for having the highest average in their classes, committing to a military branch, completing pathways, M.E.R.I.T. program achievement, National Honor Society membership, community service hours, as well as various scholarships.

Levi Allen received his CTAE cord in

forestry mechanics.

"I chose that pathway because I enjoy forestry," Allen said. "In the future, I plan to work for Nat Geo and forestry will help me ID plants."

Senior Courtney Woods was pleasantly surprised by her awards.

"They gave me an invitation, but I had no idea what I would be getting," Woods said. "I immediately went to [the guidance counselor] and questioned it because it just didn't seem real."

Woods said receiving both the Ben Jackson and the Frank Delaney Jr. scholarships "brought happy tears."

"I was so in shock," she recalled. "I am so glad that I can use both of these scholarships to go toward my college expenses, so I can further my education and do something that I've wanted to do since I was a little girl."

Woods is "very grateful" and still "so surprised" to have received the honors. She hopes to someday return the favor, and help others in the ways that she has been helped along the path to graduation.



I.N.S.P.I.R.E. Club Members Visit Washington, D.C. During Spring Break

By Cassandra Buckman, student reporter



Many students anticipate spring break for visits to the beach, but Thomas County Central High School I.N.S.P.I.R.E. club members were looking forward to their trip to Washington, D.C.

Club members boarded the charter bus that would carry them to their destination on April 1 "with excitement and much anticipation," according to advisor Renae Moore.

The students visited Howard University and sites such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the National Smithsonian Museum of African American History.

Moore said she and fellow club sponsors – Louise Phillips and Regina Beasley – believe the trip "opened the hearts and eyes of our students to the endless possibilities that await them."

Y-LITE?

TCCHS students promote tobacco-free lifestyle

A group of Thomas County Central High School students, along with representatives from Southwest Public Health District, joined forces this year to help put out youth tobacco use. The group is called Y-LITE, which stands for Youth Leaders in Tobacco Education and asks the question, "Why light [up]?"

Thomas County Schools has adopted Georgia's 100 percent Tobacco Free School Policy, Ebonee D. Kirkwood, tobacco prevention coordinator for Southwest Public Health District said. Because of this, the organization chose to conduct a Youth Tobacco Use Prevention Workshop as part of the post-adoption campaign to

"empower" youths with the necessary skills and information "to be advocates for change." "We want the students to know that they play an important role in the post-adoption policy campaign," Kirkwood said. "The students have an arena of influence within their school and community that

we do not have as adults. They are the change agents who are able to help reduce and prevent tobacco use among their peers."

Participant Robert Scott agrees that having a teen group on campus which informs peers about the harmful effects of tobacco use is "a great idea" because "teens relate more to other teens."

"We can tell other teens how tobacco is the number one preventable cause of death among teenagers and it should never be used in the first place," he said. "Once you start, it is very difficult to quit."

One way the group did this is through a video its members shot that

promoted a tobacco-free lifestyle. The video was shown at school and other places, including the local movie theater.

Scott said the video-making process was "fun" and made him feel "somewhat like an actor."

"By doing my part and lifting the weights, I wanted people to feel like you can become very strong when you choose a tobacco-free lifestyle," Scott said.

Participant Miyah Washington was very excited about the video.

"I was anxious to see how it would turn out because I've never done something like that before," she said. "I was too excited to be nervous, and

use is bad and harmful to a person's health.

"In one of our meetings, we were shown a lung example for someone who began smoking at a young age," she recalled. "The lung was completely black, and the inside had cancer in it due to the buildup of tar in the lungs."

Other ways group members promoted their cause was by participating in multiple information activities about tobacco use and they set up tables at sporting and other school events to give out information and Dum-Dum suckers with the message "Don't be a dum-dum!" and use tobacco.

"It is our hope that the workshop provided the youth with useful information, skills, resources, and connections to continue to creating positive change in the school and community," Kirkwood said. TCCHS Guidance Counselor Tammy Shealey feels the group was a positive experience for its members. "Our students

were able to

learn about the harmful effects of tobacco, including e-cigarettes, and share the information with their peers," she said. "We are hoping through the Y-LITE program, students will not try tobacco in any form and continue to be positive role models for others."

Scott will never forget the experience.

"I enjoyed my time spent in the organization," he said. "The experience was a lot of fun, and I would not take it back for anything in the world. Therefore, being a member of Youth Leaders in Tobacco Education, my question to everyone is 'Y-LITE?'"



once I did my part, I couldn't wait to see the results. I'm hoping we will influence some of our classmates with the video."

According to Kirkwood, 90 percent of Georgia smokers first light up before age 18.

"This means that most individuals developed the habit before graduating high school," she said.

"This is why educating our youth is so important. In order for schools to effectively prevent youth tobacco use among students, they must first change the culture and social norms that make tobacco use acceptable."

Washington agrees that people her age should understand why tobacco

Students Take Top Honors at IEYS

Five Thomas County Central High School students attended the International Environmental Youth Symposium. They competed against high school and college students from four continents, and all five students brought home awards.

In the poster presentation category, junior C'lee Kornegay won first place in "Water Degradation" for her research on the effect of silver nanoparticles on algae growth. In the essay competition, senior Eli Kosciw placed first in the category of "Protecting the Atmosphere."

Seniors Maggie Martin placed second with her essay in the "Preventing Air and Water Pollution" category, and Vince Wynn placed second in the category of "Promoting Safe Management of Solid and Toxic Wastes." Junior Hailey Ferrel placed third in the poster presentation category for her research on soil erosion.

"I am overjoyed to see the competitiveness of not only my writing but also my peers' writing at the international level," Eli Kosciw said. "It highlights the academic excellence TCCHS always strives for with our student body." The two-day event was hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency in Atlanta. The theme, "One

World, One Environment," emphasized the interdependence of the world when it comes to the health of the environment. The program included presentations from environmental

impression on the attendees. "The symposium provided me with skills to bring back home in not just S.T.E.M.-oriented fields, but also public policy," Vince Wynn said. "Just being in the same room as the president's special

assistant was enough to inspire me to act in a way that benefits generations for years to come."

C'lee Kornegay learned how to network in order to increase job opportunities. "We also learned the importance of making a change to reduce global warming," she said.

Maggie Martin appreciated the chance to "network and learn from prominent members of the scientific community."

This is the second year that the symposium was open to high school students and their

teachers.

"In the two days of this event, students got to experience current research, learn about career opportunities and current environmental issues, and mingle with students and experts from across the country and from other parts of the world," TCCHS science teacher Laura Kornegay said. "No matter what students end up studying, the health of the environment will always matter to them."



researchers and from student activists. Earth Saver Girl Brooklyn Wright discussed children's books that she authored. One More Generation (OMG) founders Carter and Olivia Reis discussed their "One Less Straw" movement and asked attendees to refuse straws in restaurants for the month of October. They were followed by keynote speaker Rohan Patel, a special assistant to the U.S. president.

The presentations left an

Andrew College Academic Competition



Eleven Thomas County Central High School students placed in individual categories and the school's quiz bowl team won first place during the Andrew College Academic Competition.

The event was held Jan. 25 in Cuthbert. Winners received medals and certificates.

Emily Johnson: first place, 9th grade Social Studies
Jason Weeks: first place, 11th grade Social Studies
Vince Wynn: first place, 12th grade Social Studies
Maggie Martin: first place, 12th grade Social Studies
Kaleb Ward: first place, 9th grade Science
Joshua Stephens: second place, 9th grade Science
Ben Wilhelm: first place, 10th grade Science
Sierra Stephens: first place, 11th grade Science
Jackson NeSmith: second place, 11th grade Science
Chandler Watson: first place, 12th grade Science
Kate Weaver: first place, Art (overall)

All-State Band

TCCHS band students took part in separate all-state events. Logan Leik, who plays the bass trombone, attended the 2017 Georgia All-State Jazz Band held Jan. 26-28. Caleb Moore attended the 2017 Georgia All-State 9/10 Concert Band the weekend of March 3. Moore, who primarily plays the tuba, thoroughly enjoyed his experience.



TCCHS STUDENTS EARN HONORS, AWARDS AT STATE SCIENCE FAIR

Young minds with an aptitude for science proved their hypotheses and emerged victorious in a statewide competition.

Five Thomas County Central High School students earned recognition at the Georgia Science & Engineering Fair, held March 30-April 1 at the University of Georgia in Athens.

Ashlyn Quattlebaum earned first, C'lee Kornegay earned second, Eli Kosciw received third, and Katelyn Hancock got fourth honors. Also, Kornegay earned a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Taking the Pulse of the Planet Award and Gretchen Turnbull won a Society for In Vitro Biology Award.

"Honors" in relation to this science fair means the project placed within a top percentage of all projects, based on number. For example, a first honor means the project was in the top 10 percent of all projects in its category. Ashlyn Quattlebaum worked at University of West Florida last summer. She extracted and quantified capsaicin from various kinds of peppers. For her project research, she used nuclear magnetic resonance and a mass spectrometer.

"Competing amongst 500 other competitors at state level allowed me to make new friends and gain advice for my future research endeavors," Quattlebaum said. "I am incredibly honored to be part of the top 10 percent and receive first honors. My science fair journey has given me a great experience of what research is, and I plan to conduct more research in college."

C'lee Kornegay studied how diversity affects algal response to ocean acidification. Her inspiration for the project was the increased acidity in oceans due to higher levels of carbon dioxide. Her project tested whether a diverse collection of algae would respond differently than single algae to lowering the pH of ocean water.

"I enjoy going to state science fair because I love to look at projects that other high school students can do," Kornegay said. "They always impress me with the unique solutions

they come up with to solve real-world problems."

Eli Kosciw's project centered around microbial fuel cells. A newer form of clean energy, he said, it has a basic electro-chemical system in which bacteria feed off something to make an electric current. Kosciw adds none of his four judges had heard of this type of cell.

"I felt I had picked a great topic to research and study because it was little-known," he said. "Getting third honors and placing in the top 30 percent of all projects assured that all of my hard work in to this project made it valid and scientifically significant."

Gretchen Turnbull studied how a magnetic field affects the regeneration of planaria.

"The critique and advice the judges gave me helped me develop a better understanding of the opportunities that are ahead in my future," she said. "They also guided me into what I can possibly do next year to strengthen my project and allow it to grow in the direction I was looking forward to."

The Society of In Vitro Biology Award is designed "to highlight creativity," Turnbull said.

"The award is given to

honor creativity in projects related to the study of tissue, cells, tumors, and plants," she said. "I earned the award for the creativity in my project by studying how magnetism effects the cell regeneration of planaria rather than studying how UV radiation effects the organism. In the future, I plan to study how magnetism effects tissue regeneration."

Katelyn Hancock studied how a growth hormone (auxin based rootone) affects the development of black-eyed pea seeds.

"Completing these projects gives students a chance to experience science and answer questions of their own choosing," TCCHS Science Department Chair Laura Kornegay said. "They learn to evaluate their own work as well as the work of others. This is an extremely important skill that will help them no matter what area they pursue for their futures."



Which direction will you go?
CTAE Pathways Provide Unlimited Possibilities
at Thomas County Central High School

Audio-Video Production

- Do you value creativity?
- Do you like to use video technology?
- Do you like to work as a part of a team?

- Are you a nature lover?
- Are you interested in protecting the environment?
- Do you like to be physically active?

Agriculture

Business Management

- Do you like being a leader?
- Do you value creativity?
- Do you like to work with technology?

- Do you like to use tools?
- Do you like to figure out how things work?
- Do you like to solve mechanical problems?

Automotive Technology

Health Science

- Are you interested in how the body works?
- Do you value helping other people?
- Do you value good health?

- Are you trustworthy and dependable?
- Do you enjoy interacting with other people?
- Do you value learning?

Early Childhood

Welding

- Do you enjoy building things?
- Are you mechanically inclined?
- Are you curious about how things work?

- Do you like solving problems?
- Do you like collecting and analyzing data?
- Are you organized?

Information Technology