

## Spotlight on WAGE™

Mike Chandler, VP General Manager of Crosby National Swage and Adult Education/WAGE Advisory Chairperson believes that "WAGE™ is probably the best-kept secret in the State of Arkansas that we want everyone to know about. WAGE™ helps employees as well as employers. It is a free program funded by the Department of Career Education with Adult Education funds. It is open to anyone 18 years of age or older. Dislocated workers who are under skilled, underemployed or unemployed have the opportunity to enhance or develop skills while searching for jobs.

It produces more qualified people to the workforce and helps increase production in the workplace, morale of employees and work ethics.

It encourages a continued growth of knowledge and motivation to excel for those going on to post-secondary education. It provides a new confidence in oneself. And most importantly, it is open to anyone who wants to improve his or her quality of life at work or home for free. Participants pay nothing yet have the opportunities to gain everything."



Mike Chandler with Dwane Hester, a Crosby National employee.

## Pulaski County Adult Education: Making Big Things Happen

The Pulaski County Adult Education Center has a plethora of classes, programs, and services ranging from GED preparation classes, GED testing, basic computer literacy, basic skills refresher classes, and WAGE. The classes are taught by one-full time and approximately 30 part-time instructors in numerous locations including the main campus in North Little Rock at 4300 Haywood Street. Other sites include North Little Rock Workforce Center, the Apprenticeship Associated General Contractors, Little Rock and Indian Hills Goodwill Industries, the Jacksonville WAGE Center, Job Corp, Crosby National Swage, Central Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation at Ft. Roots, OUR House Learning Center, and Maumelle Senior Citizen's Center.

Center Coordinator, Jolla Robinson, has set as the primary goal for the center "to do whatever we can to make people more productive citizens. Our goals are to take students on the second or third grade-level to employment or postsecondary education." According to Robinson, "Meeting the needs of every student is a challenge. If we focus on the small things, the big things will happen." Serving about 3,500 individuals annually and enrolling about 1,800 a year, Pulaski County Adult Education has been an innovator – willing to try new things, go the extra mile, and share resources and staff many times over.

One of the center's greatest challenges is training and retraining teachers. In years past, most of the adult education teachers were full-time and stayed in their positions. Now, with limited funding and the necessity of part-time teachers, turnover is greater which requires training and retraining. Other challenges mentioned by Robinson include learning new regulations and new accounting practices.

Over the next five years, goals for the center include (1) assuring that the center is technologically up-to-date (2) providing avenues that allow students to progress from low academic skills to employment or postsecondary education and (3) center will annually earn 275 GED credentials; 200 WAGE certificates; 800 educational functioning level gains; 150 manual outcomes; 250 jobs obtained; and 250 postsecondary education enrollments.



Above: (r-l) Carol Argetsinger instructs Ina Nelson and Latisha Boyd at Pulaski County Adult Education Center. All students benefit from one-on-one time spent with teachers.

Below: Dr. Charles (Chuck) Carter, GED Chief Examiner



The Arkansas Department of Career Education funds the Adult Education Division. The Adult Education Division provides programs and services statewide.

## OCTOBER REMINDERS

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| <b>October 10</b>    | <b>Adult Education Week Proclamation Signing (10 a.m.)<br/>Governor's Conference Room/2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, State Capitol Building</b> |
| <b>October 10-11</b> | <b>Adult Education Administrators' Meeting, Embassy Suites Hotel</b>   |
| <b>October 12</b>    | <b>GED Examiners' Conference, Embassy Suites Hotel</b>   |
| <b>October 27-28</b> | <b>AACAE/ALC Conference, Wyndham Hotel</b>   |

## Adult Education Division Administrative Assistant

Gina Heimbach is the new Administrative Assistant for the Adult Education Division, Arkansas Department of Career Education.



Gina's primary focus will be working with AERIS (Adult Education Reporting Information System). She will also be tasked with reviewing and updating operations manuals and providing administrative support.

After living in Tulsa, Oklahoma for 18 years, Gina moved to Arkansas almost two years ago. She previously worked in the gaming industry, but says she didn't just take on a new job; she considers it the beginning of a new career.

"People are so positive," says Heimbach. "The office staff is lively and encouraging. It's refreshing!"

Handling multiple tasks and functioning in a fast-paced environment is not a problem for Gina. With a smile she says she works best in "organized chaos".

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## GED Pride: Saline County Adult Education

**How does one take the worst of times and make the best of it? The answer: by earning an Arkansas High School Diploma. Saline county resident, Jerry Cooke, did just that at the Saline County Adult Education Center.**

**With the economic downturns, Cooke (owner and operator of Jerry's Hardwood Floors) decided he would expand his options and pursue his GED® diploma. Cooke reasoned it would open doors and opportunities that weren't currently available to him. He said, "I thought that if the economy got much worse, I would get a job if I could get my GED [diploma]."**

**Cooke enrolled in classes in July. He worked days and came nights. After 30 hours of classroom instruction, Cooke was able to pass the Practice Test and take the GED® test. When asked what he feared most, his reply was, "the math." Cooke left high school in 1974 and was reluctant to approach math. While Cooke uses workplace math every day in his job, he needed to learn algebra and some geometry. Cooke later said that his fears were unwarranted.**

**His instructor, Lana Tollett, says, "Jerry was a dedicated student who was highly motivated. We were pleased with his classroom work. Right at first, he didn't have much confidence in his skills, but after he started working with math, he realized that he could learn the necessary skills. He flourished after that."**

**Saline County Adult Education Director, Yvonne Dougherty, says that Cooke's experience is typical of the older students. "Many had a less than ideal experience in school or feel that they are too old to learn so they are reluctant to enter classes. Once they make that decision to enroll, most have a successful experience in our adult education classes and are glad they decided to take the plunge."**

**"Jerry Cooke exemplifies the type of student who makes us proud to be adult educators," Dougherty says. "At 52, he took a pro-active stance and made a decision that would open new doors for him. And, he was successful beyond his wildest dreams."**

**To encourage GED® graduates to continue their education, Pulaski Technical College offers a full tuition scholarship to each graduate who earns a score of 600+ on the GED® test. When Cooke initially enrolled in adult education courses, college wasn't even on the horizon. He said, "I knew I would feel very good about passing the GED® [test], but I never dreamed I would have scores high enough to earn a scholarship." Cooke is now making big plans for a different kind of future than he had originally envisioned. He will enroll in Pulaski Technical College for the spring semester. He plans to earn an associate of arts in general education and then transfer to UALR where he wants to earn a degree in Spanish or English.**



Jerry Cooke and Lana Tollett

