

ARKADELPHIA ADULT EDUCATION STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Lester Buck currently attends the Arkadelphia Adult Education Center where he learns and improves his computer skills. Though he earned his GED - credential years ago, he still carries his miniature GED diploma in his wallet. He decided to earn a GED diploma when he was working part-time for a funeral home and needed the credential to serve an apprenticeship at Roller McNutt Funeral Home in Conway. In addition to investing in lifelong learning, Mr. Buck enjoys life, sings in a trio on the radio, plays the guitar, and serves as a Notary for Clark county.



Justin Rucks recently earned his GED credential. He is currently working as a receptionist at the Community Family Enrichment Center where the adult education center is located. His advice to others: is to "keep trying until you get it!" Justin's future plan is to major in automotive mechanics.

Arkadelphia Adult Education Center: Matching Students with Resources

Meeting the needs of the many individuals served by Arkadelphia Adult Education Center is the primary goal of the center according to Sheri Rogers, Director.

"Matching students with resources whether here or wherever is an important part of what we do," stated Rogers. The center personnel work tirelessly to help students reach their goals which include obtaining employment, earning their GED credential, or entering college. Some students need assistance in all those areas. "We don't stop with what's available at the center but reach out into the community," says Rogers. Motivating students, improving self confidence and convincing the students that they can achieve are of primary importance.

Julie Bradshaw, Instructor, works with students on being successful on their GED tests or improving their math, writing, and reading skills. "Our most important goal is for them to be a successful adult and contribute to their family," Bradshaw says.

Classes are offered in GED preparation, Adult Basic Education, and English as a Second Language at the main center in Arkadelphia and satellite centers at Gurdon and Amity. Since July 1 of 2009, over 60 students have earned their GED credentials. In order to celebrate the accomplishments of the year's graduates, a graduation ceremony was held on May 28 with Representative Johnnie Roebuck as keynote speaker.



Above: Instructor Julie Bradshaw and students in computer area.

Below: Sheri Rogers Center Director.



Arkansas Correctional School Graduation Ceremony Held

Former US Senator David Pryor delivered the address at the 37th Annual Graduation Ceremony at the Arkansas Correctional School (ACS). During the 2009-10 school year 844 individuals earned their GED credential through ACS; approximately 340 attended the ceremony. Additionally, one individual earned an associate degree through Riverside Vocational Technical School, and 22 graduated from the Emerge Entrepreneur Program.

Senator Pryor's message to the graduates was one of responsibility and motivation. For those student inmates investing in the future by getting an education the chance of returning to prison after release is far less likely. During his speech Pryor shared a favorite piece from his collection of artwork. The picture was painted and given to him by a seven year old child who had no arms. The message inspired by the picture is with effort "anyone can do anything."



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

Conway Adult Education Success Story

Keith Blocker, 46, and his wife, Shawn, 40, of Conway had different reasons for dropping out of high school, but they had the same nagging feeling of regret. When the SAS shoe factory in Conway where they met and both worked closed last summer, it was "devastating," Keith recalled, but it was the motivation they needed to get their GED credentials. Now they're not only proud Conway Adult Education Center graduates, they're headed to college together this summer.

"There are eight (siblings) in my family, and there's only four of us that have our high school diplomas now," Shawn said. "I'll be the only one out of eight to go to college." Shawn said she got married in the eighth grade when she was 15 - then she got pregnant. She quit school at the end of that school year. The marriage didn't last, but she said it was always her intention to finish high school.

Keith - whose father worked at shoe factories until he retired - dropped out of school after the 11th grade at Corning High School. "I wasn't doing that bad in school; I just didn't study the way I should, and I fell a little bit behind and was going to have to go an extra year," Keith said. He didn't see the point. "I was 17, and I kind of thought I knew everything, but I didn't know anything," he said.

On February 8, 2009, three top executives called the managers together, including Keith and Shawn, and explained that "due to the economy, they were going to have to close Conway [SAS]," Keith recalled. "When you're told you're losing your job, it's a shock." And it wasn't just one job; it was two. The plant closed in June 2009, and it was pretty obvious to the Blockers what they needed to do. They went to the Conway Adult Education Center and took an assessment and began preparing for the GED Test.

Keith and Shawn addressed the other Conway Adult Education Center graduates at a ceremony on May 15. The couple used the loss of their jobs as a springboard to furthering their education and developing new career paths. As Keith says "you're never too old to learn."

Read more of the Blocker's story in
Arkansas Online

<http://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2010/may/27/conway-youre-never-too-old-20100527>

Adult Education Activities Reach Outside Classrooms

The Fort Smith Police Department in conjunction with the Fort Smith Adult Education Center provided a Car Seat Safety Check for the children and families of the Bright Start Early Learning Center. Parents replaced their old car seats with new ones and learned how to install and use them properly. The Bright Start Early Learning Center provides childcare, preschool, and family literacy services to students of the Fort Smith Adult Education Center. According to Gary Udouj (Center Director), 22 seats were checked, 19 new seats were installed, 9 seats were found to be unsafe and destroyed.



Above: A Fort Smith police officer conducts a car seat safety check.

Regular attendance, self-discipline, and positive attitudes were the standards for Adult Education students' participation in a basketball scrimmage at Phillips Community College University of Arkansas-Helena-W. Helena (PCCUA). Students set goals to improve attendance and classroom performance and achieved these goals to play in the scrimmage. The two teams were highly motivated for success. Corey Williams led team "Balla Blocker" with 27 points, and Tarcellas Barnes of team "Rim Wrecker" scored 25 points.

The objective of the organizing recruitment and retention committee was to reduce absenteeism and tardiness. Players were recognized in an award ceremony and received trophies donated by Trece Williams, PCCUA Adult Education Instructor, and Cyrus Vance, Adult Education Coordinator.

Below: Adult Education students scrimmage at PCCUA.



Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) Programs and Certificates Benefit Participants Statewide

Bradley County—One WAGE Employability student was employed by Ortho-Flex Saddle Company. His previous employment wage was \$7.25 for 30 hours per week. His new wage is \$10.25 per hour at 40 hours per week plus additional benefits. Ortho-Flex Saddle Company produces custom-made saddles that are shipped worldwide.

Lonoke—Two students recently gained employment after completing the program. One now earns \$10.35 per hour; the other earns \$12.00 per hour.

Texarkana—After participation in the program two students obtained jobs in the local economy. One makes \$15.25 per hour, and the other makes \$9.00 per hour.

Russellville—One WAGE graduate received a job at ABC Block Precast Division in Harrison as a corporate manager with a starting salary of \$52,000 annually. The benefits package included company housing, a company vehicle and weekly expense account.

For more information on the WAGE Program visit <http://ace.arkansas.gov/AdultEd/WAGE.html>.

