

the Career Counselor 2016

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'The Wise Old Owl' Takes a Bow After a Half Century of Service

Arkansas FFA Advisor Marion Fletcher, affectionately known as "The Wise Old Owl," has decided to retire, marking an end to a stellar 53 years in agricultural education.

"I think I'm leaving it in good shape, at a good place, and I'm looking forward to it and offering some advice along the way," Fletcher said.

Arkansas FFA members – past and present – along with state and business leaders paid homage to Fletcher at the organization's closing ceremony in June.

"He's had such a long run and to witness it firsthand and to see the history of Mr. Fletcher, it's pretty emotional for me," said Mark Dement, a former Arkansas FFA officer. "No one



At his retirement reception, Fletcher (center) is all smiles with Harper Martin and Lucas Martin. Both are members of the Greene County Tech FFA Chapter.

will ever match his legacy or stay around as long as he has," he said.

Among those who spoke about Fletcher's influence included Rob Roedel, corporate communications director for Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas; State Senator Bruce Maloch; Dr. Charisse Childers, Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education; and Dr. Steve Brown, the National FFA Advisor.

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Fall Issue

A public information pamphlet of the Arkansas Department of Career Education

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Also in this issue: A special section highlighting client and student successes; start reading their stories on page 7. Director receives National CTE Award. GED® Top 25 recipients. Conferences, Graduations, Scholarships and more!

Adult Education
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Career & Technical Education
Office of Skills Development

Childers Named Recipient of Coveted Career and Technical Education Award

Charisse Childers, Ph.D., the director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education, has been presented with the “**State Director: Rising Star**” award, presented by Advance CTE. Advance CTE is the longest-standing national non-profit organization that represents state directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary, and adult Career and Technical Education (CTE) across the country. This honor is awarded to State CTE Directors who display unequivocal dedication to and engagement with the goals of advocating career and technical education. Childers accepted this award at the organization’s spring meeting in Washington, D.C.

Governor Asa Hutchinson appointed Childers to lead Career Education in January 2015, when he took office. The agency has four divisions: **Arkansas Adult Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Career & Technical Education**, and the **Office of Skills Development**. She directs the work and vision of the agency of nearly 600 employees across the state, along with a twenty member industry-led board, while overseeing workforce training grants, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation services. Childers oversees and coordinates more than \$170 million in federal and state funds.

During the 2015 Legislative Session, Childers worked with Governor Asa Hutchinson and **State Senator Jane English** in ensuring the passage of Act 892, which established the Office of Skills Development. This legislation is responsible for aligning workforce development programs with the skills needed by business and industry. Childers is also an adviser to Governor Hutchinson as she serves as a member of the Governor’s Cabinet and a five-member workforce cabinet.

Before leading Career Education, Childers headed and managed Accelerate Arkansas, a group of business and education leaders working



Dr. Childers (in orange) was presented her award by former ACE Associate Director for CTE **Rod Duckworth**, to her left. Duckworth is now Chancellor of Florida’s Career & Adult Education Department.

to develop Arkansas’ knowledge-based economy. She built the organization’s statewide recognition and credibility as a leader in strengthening the state’s economy in STEM education, innovation, research, and entrepreneurship.

“I am honored to have been selected by the Advance CTE Board of Directors for this national award,” Childers said. “I look forward to continuing to represent Advance CTE, my state, Governor Asa Hutchinson, the Arkansas Department of Career Education, and CTE leaders as we demonstrate the importance and exemplary work in career and technical education.”

Kimberly Green, the executive director of Advance CTE said the following: “Charisse has been a visionary trailblazer for Arkansas and has worked tirelessly throughout her career to advance Career Technical Education. We are lucky to have her as a passionate and talented leader for CTE in Arkansas, as well as the nation.”

A former classroom teacher, Childers earned her master’s and specialist degrees from Arkansas State University. She earned her Ph.D. in public policy with a specialization in education policy from the University of Arkansas.

Top 25 GED® Scorers Prepare for New Chapter

When **Mason Weldon** got word that he scored well on his GED® exam, he thought test administrators meant he achieved a high mark when comparing others' results who also took the exam at the Saline County Adult Education Center.

But then he got clarification. **Weldon had the 24th highest score in the state!**

"I'm really excited. I didn't realize it would be like that," he said.

Weldon (pictured top, right, with a family member) attended the annual "Top 25 Ceremony," which recognizes the test takers who rank in the top 25 for their achievement on the GED® exam among all test takers in the state. In 2015, 4,304 Arkansans took the test. The ceremony took place at the Old Supreme Court Chamber at the Arkansas State Capitol. Usually flanked with their families and GED® instructors, the honorees are not only celebrated but also encouraged to continue on to become contributing members of society.

"This is just the beginning," said **Trenia Miles, Ed.D.**, Deputy Director for Adult Education. "If you need to come 'home' to get that encouragement and for resources, we are always here for you," Miles added.

Arkansas consistently ranks as one of the top states with the highest pass rates on the exam. In 2015, Arkansas had a pass rate of 87 percent, which surpassed the national pass rate of 67 percent. GED® leaders unveiled a brand new format in 2014, which is now computer-based and tests on four components with two extended response questions. The new format reflects the current learning methods outlined by the Career and College Readiness Standards.



Joe Berry (pictured left), the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor at Arkansas State University-Beebe, served as the keynote speaker. Berry himself received his GED® and earned a place among the Top 25 scorers in Arkansas. He shared how his own triumphs and experiences propelled him to where he is today.

"My high school guidance counselor told me I didn't have what it took to make it through high school. When I got ready to transfer from ASU to UALR, I was told I didn't have the academic ability to make it. I ended up graduating with the department's highest award," Berry said.

He added that the accomplishment the honorees received should serve as motivation to go further.

"The GED® was not the last domino to fall for me, and I hope it's not the last domino to fall for you. If you have that commitment to education, whether it's in the classroom or you take continuing education classes, show your resilience. I'm a firm believer that this is your start," he said.



Betting on the Future... Winning With Diversity **Arkansas Rehabilitation Association** **hosts Southwest Regional Conference**

The annual **Arkansas Rehabilitation Association Training Conference**, this year also host to the **Southwest Region Conference**, was held May 18 - 20 at the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs.

With its theme "Betting on the Future... Winning with Diversity," the conference presented workshops and activities that focused on the future and growth of the rehabilitation arena, with such titles as "Accommodating an Aging Workforce," "Managing a Catastrophe, Counseling and Ethical Issues," "Cultural Sensitivity Working With Transgender Clients and Coworkers," and "The Inclusive Career Genogram."

One of the most anticipated events at the annual ARA Conference is the Scholarship and Awards Banquet. Scholarships are given to college students concentrating their studies in the rehabilitation field.

This year's scholarship winners were as follows:

- ★ **Shay West** from Russellville -- awarded the R. Lewis Urton Scholarship. West attends Arkansas Tech University.
- ★ **Earline Brown** from Pine Bluff -- awarded the Thirland "Danny" McKissic Scholarship. She attends the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff.
- ★ **Stephanie Harper** from Star City -- awarded the E. Russell Baxter Scholarship. Harper attends the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- ★ **Cynthia Peques** from Pine Bluff -- awarded the Vincent H. Bond Scholarship. Peques attends the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.
- ★ **Rakim Cheeks** from Pine Bluff -- awarded the Butch Barnes Scholarship. Cheeks attends the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Two recipients were unable to attend the banquet:

ARA continued on page 5



Recipients, l-r: **Rakim Cheeks**, **Earline Brown**, **Shay Arnold**, **Cynthia Peques**, **Stephanie Harper**, Rehabilitant of the Year **Billy Scissom**, and the two Counselors of the Year: **Maryanne Caldwell** and **Amanda Crawford**.



Taylor Colquitt

GED® *continued from page 3*

Dexter Harvey (bottom, left photo, holding plaque, with family members), who had the 20th highest score in the state, took the exam at the Conway Adult Education Center. His goal is to become a full-time firefighter, but he will have to wait until he's 21 until he can sign up.

"I'm trying to gain weight until then," Harvey said, while chuckling.

While the aspirations of each of the recipients vary, Weldon is ready to hit the ground running in becoming a linguist. He wants to learn French, German, Japanese, and Spanish.

"My plan is to become a polyglot. I know there are a lot of opportunities in that field. I like the way languages have evolved over time. It's a bunch of building blocks. You can find out why people talk the way they talk," he said.



GED® Test Administrator **Janice Hanlon** (purple jacket) with some of the honorees.

ARA *continued from page 4*

★ **Sarah Davis** from Conway -- awarded the ARS Commissioner's Scholarship. Davis attends the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) in the Occupational Therapy program.

★ **Courtney Craft** from Alma -- awarded the Rick Fleetwood Scholarship. She is a student at UCA in the Speech Language Pathology program

In addition to ARA's scholarships, the Arkansas Association for Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns bestowed a \$500 Book Scholarship award for the 2016 academic school year to

★ **Taylor Colquitt** from Maumelle -- Colquitt is attending UCA this fall and majoring in Occupational Therapy.

The Rehabilitant of the Year Award is also presented at the banquet and highlights what our agency strives to accomplish every day.

This year's recipient, **Billy Scissom**, applied

for services May 2013 and received core services, along with training assistance. He went on to secure the necessities for opening his own barber business and is now a successful business owner in Russellville. Scissom has also maintained contact with our agency, even after his case was closed, in order to assist in community events and to help spread the word about the services we offer to individuals with disabilities.

The event provides a platform as well for recognizing the exemplary work and dedication of counselors to their jobs and their clients.

This year saw two agency counselors announced as co-award winners for Counselor of the Year:

Maryanne Caldwell, from District I/ Fayetteville, works with Transition students in the Springdale area.

Amanda Crawford, Counselor in District V/ Russellville Field Office.

ICAN Advisory Council Member Challenges YLF Delegates



In a speech filled with humor, candor, and encouragement, **Wesley Wilson**, a native of Emerson, motivated a group of students to dream big and pursue their dreams, despite their disability.

Wilson

Wilson served as the keynote speaker at the **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)** luncheon, which took place at the Holiday Inn Presidential in Little Rock. YLF is a five-day leadership program for rising 11th and 12th grade students living with a disability. The program seeks to provide the students with information and resources that the teens can use to make wise choices once they graduate. The students learn a wide range of skills, including college enrollment, résumé writing and interview preparation, and networking.

In addition to attending various sessions, the students toured the State Capitol (pictured below with Governor Hutchinson) and the Governor's Mansion.

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ARKANSAS

Adult Education

1966 • Fiftieth Anniversary • 2016

Join Us

in celebrating 50 years!

Highlights include:

“Arkansans Ask”

September 15 AETN 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

This live, call-in show will include four video segments to highlight the contributions Adult Education has made to Arkansas learners and include Graduation and Beyond, Story of an Entrepreneur (feat. Steve Landers), Second Chance at Success, and Language Is Not a Barrier. Each two-minute video will focus on a different facet of Adult Education. In addition, there will be a panel and staff from adult education and the AALRC to answer questions.

Cap Toss/Governor's Proclamation

September 20 Steps of the Capitol

11:00-11:30 a.m. *(light reception following event)*

The Cap Toss will take place at the Capitol and will be an opportunity for students to take a picture on the steps of the Capitol in their cap and gown in celebration of graduating. In addition, we plan to have the Governor's Proclamation in which the Governor recognizes adult education/literacy in Arkansas.

50th Anniversary Private Luncheon

September 21 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Governor's Mansion/Grand Hall

We will recognize the contributions Adult Education has made to the State of Arkansas. Special guest speaker will be Governor Asa Hutchinson.

The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.
--Vince Lombardi

SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS

In Her Own Words... **Lily Morrow**

When I held my high school diploma, tears dropped down from my eyes. I had so much I wanted to say. I not only made a lone journey from China to America but also had an unbelievable tough path to approach my dream of education.

When I was a teenager in China, I had to drop out of middle school, not because I was stupid or couldn't learn, but because of poverty. In China, we have to pay our tuition, textbooks, and fees. I grew up with my grandparents who were farmers. My grandpa was sick from the time I was eight years old. Our whole family was dependent on my grandma (I call her Na Na in China). She worked in the fields as hard as a man. I tried to give her a hand when I could. We had low incomes one year after another. When we got a little money from selling crops, most of the money was spent on my grandfather's medicine. When I reached the ninth grade, my grandparents finally couldn't afford school anymore. I had to leave my class, my schoolmates, and



my teachers. I was depressed and melancholy, but I didn't blame my grandparents. I could understand our situation.

After I dropped out of school, my grandma told me to live with my parents, who lived in Mongolia. Hopefully they would send me back to school. I knew how much pain it caused my grandma to make that decision, but she wanted me to receive a good education.

After I moved to my parents' home, I hoped they could send me back to school. I waited and waited, but I didn't get the results as I wished. They told me that my sister and brother were in school already, and they couldn't afford to let three of us go to school. They also told me that I had to help them sell clothes to support the family.

My hope for education was killed by poverty. I was angry, despairing, and destroyed. I didn't have any choice. I had to do what my parents told me to do. I watched the other children, who were about my age, go in and out of school while I was selling clothes on the street at 10 degrees in the winter. I wished I could be one of them. Even though my chance to go to school had seemed zero percent, my enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge never died.

I couldn't accept my adversity. I believed I could change my life, so I went to Beijing to create a new one. Because I could speak a little English, I found a job selling crafts and handmade furniture. I did well after I took the job, and that was where, by chance, I met Bill. We were so happy to get to know each other and fell in love. When Bill asked me to come to America, I agreed. I knew that this was my only chance to make my dream become true.

After I came to America, Bill tried to help me to learn more English. We found the Literacy Council, which helps people who can't read or speak English very well. That was my first school in America, and I so appreciated

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MORROW *continued from page 7*

it. In Literacy Council, I got free books and free teachers. My teachers were so helpful. My English was getting better and better. A few month later, I passed my first English written test for my driver's license and built a strong foundation for studying to get my GED®.

After I heard I could take the GED® test to get a high school diploma, I was so ecstatic. To get a high school diploma had been my dream for a long time. I knew it would not be easy, but I could work hard. Bill helped me find the Adult Education Center, which is a free adult education program supported by government grants. The Adult Education Center offers a variety of classes. For example it has GED® classes, English as a Second Language classes, and job skill training classes.

At the Adult Education Center, I met lots of new teachers. They told me that everything was free, and I could work at my own pace in the classroom. When I had any problems, my teachers were very happy to help me. We also had computer class rooms, which were free for students to use. It was so convenient to find study materials. The Adult Education Center also offers retired real GED® tests for us to practice on. Then, when we take a real one, we have an idea what to expect on the test. Every day I could see my classroom filled by adult students. We had people from everywhere, not just Americans. Some of them had part-time jobs, while some of them didn't have a job. The people who come to the class are willing to study even though it will not be easy. They

Driven to Help Others Karen Stuckey

Karen Stuckey came to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in January of 2014 but at the time wasn't sure what she wanted to do. She knew she needed to work, but wasn't sure how to proceed. She contemplated a weight loss program to assist her in obtaining employment. Then she thought about school, but deep down she wanted to own her own business. She wanted to help others and at the same time be able to make her own hours.

Karen eventually decided she wanted to pursue a small business. She wanted to open her own business for non-emergency transport. She researched other funding sources, set up insurance, developed signs for her vehicle, wrote her business plan and submitted to it to the Small Business Department of ARS.

"She was approved and we started purchasing items to get her in business," reports Small Business Manager **Jeff Jackson**. "Throughout the whole journey, Stuckey worked hard and did everything asked of her. She continues to work hard and looks for other ways to keep her business running. She is a true warrior and I am proud to have worked with her."



want so much to change their life. The Adult Education Center gives hope to the people who are voracious for knowledge. The most important thing is that the Adult Education Center makes us ready to approach higher education.

The Adult Education Center prepared me for the ACT test and I made 28 in math. In 2013, I got a full tuition academic scholarship from ASU Beebe. In addition, the Arkansas Lottery Scholarship program and Pell Grant made it possible for me to go to school and take a full load. I took Calculus I and Calculus II, and made an A in both of them. And this spring of 2016, I got my Associate of Arts,

Liberal Arts degree with a 4.0 GPA having finished 65 hrs. I plan to transfer to UALR to begin working on a Mechanical Engineering degree.

I can say that I'm so lucky to live in America. In March 2013, I got my U.S. Citizenship. The opportunities here in Arkansas have turned my life from hoping to live one more day to hoping to be part of a nearly unlimited future. I hope the Adult Education program can profit more unlucky people and give them a second chance. Let this only hope continue going on and on. I wish God will bless all the people who have a good heart, and God bless America.

Special thanks to **Ben Aldama**, Dean of Adult Education, and **Susan M Ratliff**, Data Entry/AERIS, both at NorthWest Arkansas Community College Adult Education Center, for submitting the following Success Stories from their files.



NWACC Successes Raise the Bar

It is not every day a department can say they have *two* recent college graduates working for them. In May, the **NorthWest Arkansas Community**

College (NWACC) Adult Education Center celebrated **Dora Perea** and **Vickey Gamez's** achievement of earning their Associate of Arts Degree from NWACC! Dora Perea is the Center's evening Intake Specialist who will be attending Missouri Southern State University to earn a teaching degree while continuing to work with our program. Vickey Gamez plans to continue her college education at the University of Arkansas (Fayetteville) while also continuing to serve as the primary Test Proctor on a full-time basis.

Their colleagues at the Adult Education Center couldn't be more proud or excited for these two wonderful family members!



Every May, the **NorthWest Arkansas Community College Adult Education Center** holds a Graduation Ceremony for our **General Education Diploma (GED®)** and, beginning in 2004, their **English as a Second Language (ESL) Graduates**. For many years they have also passed out two scholarship awards -- for one GED® and one ESL outstanding graduate -- that is good only at the NorthWest Arkansas Community College. This year, our two scholarship winners were **Cecilia Smith (ESL)** and **Jennifer "Zowe" Decator (GED®)**. Even though the students have to write essays and turn in applications for the chance to win the scholarships, no one knows who 'won' until graduation day. Needless to say, both ladies were shocked. The entire staff and faculty at the NWACC Adult Education Center are very happy for both Cecilia and Zowe.



SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS! CONGRATULATIONS TO BOTH LADIES
CECILIA SMITH AND JENNIFER 'ZOWE' DECATOR!

As you may or may not know, every year the **GED® Testing Division** of the Arkansas Adult Education Department and the Arkansas Department of Career Education, honor the top 25 GED® graduates in the state and, this year, the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Adult Education Center had three such honorees. Needless to say, we here at the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Adult Education Center are honored and blessed to have these three grads in the top 25 graduates throughout the entire state of Arkansas. The ceremony for this year's awards was held on May 4, 2016, and we are aiming to have four – yes, four! – such honorees in the Top 25 GED® group in 2017!

Turn to page 3 for more on the "Top 25 Ceremony" held earlier this year.

If you would like to follow the NWACC Adult Education Center on Facebook, go to:
facebook.com/NWACCAdultEducation/

Knowing What it Takes Artie Nowden



Artie Nowden came to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services immediately following graduation from Parkview High School in Little Rock. He knew he wanted to attend ACTI for welding because he had toured their facilities during his senior year. He applied and was accepted to ACTI and enrolled in their welding program.

Artie flourished at ACTI and graduated in December 2015. He currently works at O'Reilly Auto Parts and thoroughly enjoys his job. In his spare time, he wrestles in the local pro circuit.

"He is an entrepreneur and is always looking to better himself," says **Stacy Gravett**, ARS District VII (Little Rock) Counselor. "I have no doubt Mr. Nowden will be a name we all know in the future.

"It was my pleasure working with Artie and I am proud to call him a former client."

FBLA App Developer Addresses Career Education Board

Lake Benson

Lake Benson, a 2016 graduate of Wynne High School, addressed the Career Education and Workforce Development Board at its July meeting. He explained how he and some of his classmates developed FBLA's mobile app, which was used by students, teachers, and professionals at the organization's spring leadership conference

"It was a lot of fun making an app and knowing other people would use it," Benson said.

Wynne High School offers Mobile Application Development – or MAD for short – which teaches students how to do everything from coding to creating app pages.

"Whenever we got into coding, we thought we had gotten over our heads. It was really hard, but once we got into it, it was a lot of fun," Benson said.

More than 100 people downloaded the app during the conference. Benson said he and his team were overjoyed and felt their hard work had paid off.

Benson is studying computer science at Arkansas Tech University. He will also take some classes in game design to fulfill his dream of becoming a game designer.

He credits his teacher, **Chris Davis**, and the MAD curriculum for steering him into a field that not only challenges him but also interests him.

"The biggest thing we learned in this class is when you don't know how to do [something], you try to figure out how to do it. Mr. Davis taught us how to find out what the problem is and learn how to fix it," Benson said.



Conquering Adversity **Lillian Rivers-Fries**

“My story is all about making the most of my circumstances.

“Ten years ago, I was enjoying a successful career with an Arkansas Company. I had good pay, great benefits, and was promoted several times. I settled in and ‘planned’ to comfortably retire in twenty years. Then...

“In 2006, I was diagnosed with cancer. Since it was treated in the early stages, I assumed I would spring back in no time and resume my life. I was wrong. The lasting effects of the chemotherapy, which was necessary to save my life, also prevented me from getting on with it.

“It took three years, but I was finally back to full throttle and ready to work!

“Unfortunately, my position at my old job had been filled.

With prospects dim, I decided to enlist the help of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. With the help of Vocational Counselor **Nola Newton** and [District Manager] **Deandria Bass**, I changed my career focus and went back to school. I earned my Bachelor’s degree in Rehabilitation Science in 2012, and went on to complete a Master’s degree in College Student Personnel in 2014.

“As I searched for employment, Rehabilitation Services and Business Consultant **Yvonne Rowland** helped me every step of the way. The agency called and followed up with my interviews and also gave me tips on how to go about getting back into the workforce.

“I am now working for the state of Arkansas. This was a scary



journey for me, but working with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services made the difference in everything!

“I am grateful and blessed to tell my story because I know that life is ever-changing and unpredictable. With a little faith and a helping hand, we can do anything!

Lillian Rivers-Fries BA, MS

Conway Adult Education WAGE™ Program Makes Center History **Alberto Giarratana**

On June 9, 2016, a Faulkner County Sheriff’s Office detainee made Conway Adult Education Center history by graduating from the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) Program.

Alberto Giarratana received certificates in employability, industrial and customer service. Giarratana attended classes for two hours a day, four days per week to complete the program. In a news release, **Major John Randall** of the Faulkner County Sheriff’s office

said that more detainees are expected to graduate soon. There are approximately 15 detainees currently



Giarratana poses with Kathryn Rasure (WAGE™ Program Coordinator and Lead Instructor, left), and Ruth Ann Williams (Conway Adult Education Center Director)

working toward WAGE™ certifications. This Conway Adult Education partnership is an effort to decrease inmate recidivism in Faulkner County by training and educating detainees for their transition back into the community. Helping detainees earn WAGE™ certificates, study basic education areas, or work to earn the GED® credential, progress will be made toward enabling offenders to find jobs and become productive citizens.

Never Give Up **Tyrone Womack**

Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) graduate **Tyrone Womack** was referred to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' Business Relations Representative **Jacqueline Balti** (District III/West Memphis) by ARS counselor **Laurie McClendon** in June 2015.

When Balti initially met with Womack, he was very shy and withdrawn. He was 26 years old and had never been employed. Balti encouraged him in his job search and provided him with employment counseling. He indicated that his job interest was working at McDonald's. Since he was receiving SSI and could only work a limited amount of hours, and because of his lack of employment history, Balti felt McDonald's would be a good fit and a good place to start.

Balti immediately began to reach out to her contact at the local restaurant. Former ARS client **Vemetria Henderson** was an assistant manager and she explained the hiring process so that Mr. Womack could apply. He followed through and was scheduled for an interview. He contacted Balti the next day to inform her that he had been so nervous. The manager suggested he go home and return the next week. Balti provided him with a mock interview so that he would be able to go back to McDonald's and be successful.

Womack interviewed the following week and began working



October 2015. Balti stayed in contact with Womack and reports that he is still employed.

"His whole demeanor has changed," Balti said. "He is confident, proud and says he will be opening a bank account for the first time and saving money for an apartment.

"This young man has shown a commitment to maintaining employment and turning his life around."

was very laborious for her. Now she can simply put a page under the machine and push a button to take a photo of it, and the machine does its magic.



Keeping Success in Sight **Zester Edwards**

Dawn Humphry, Instructor at the Howard County Adult Education Center, shares a story about her student, **Zester Edwards**:

"Days like today are just another reason I find my job so rewarding," Dawn said, "One of my students, Ms. Zester Edwards, improved her score by four grade levels, and she wanted me to take her picture with our new **MyReader** (magnification machine obtained from the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center) with her scores displayed so that her sister and niece could see them [shown below]."

She continued, "This piece of equipment has allowed Ms. Edwards to see print that she has not been able to see in the past without using both her prescription lenses and a magnifying glass. Reading

"She doesn't even need her glasses to read now. She was so happy with her scores today that she was brought to tears."

Ms. Edwards said, "Learning is fun now that I don't have to strain my eyes to see."



No Drain on Talent Kaitlin Rhodes

Kaitlin Rhodes, an ARS client, was selected to participate in the Central Arkansas Drain Smart project. Her art can be found at the intersection of 7th and Center Streets in downtown Little Rock.

Her "Barn Owl" was inspired by her favorite species of the native Arkansas owl. According to her artist concept profile, she hopes the artwork "reminds visitors of nature's beauty and the need to protect it."

The Drain Smart program is in its second year in central Arkansas. Organizers want the partnership to

highlight local artists' talents and hope it brings awareness to citizens about runoff water and its importance to local water resources, like Fourche Creek and the Arkansas River.

Deannine Haley, a counselor in the Benton Field Office, has worked with Rhodes to help her develop positive social skills. What a great client-counselor relationship this has created!

Crafty Lady Cindy Hays

Cindy had not been able to work full time since 1997. Turning to ARS, she sought career assistance and guidance. Cindy struggled with interacting with people, and she was extremely shy, which made it a challenge for her to obtain employment. Meeting with counselor Lisa Earls and Business Relations Consultant Denise Wilson (District II/Batesville), they saw the potential in Cindy and they both began the process of creating a plan to assist her.

Cindy, Lisa and Denise discussed different options and what would be a good fit.

Denise placed a phone call to an acquaintance at a local community college and

inquired about openings and career opportunities. Luckily, they had a part time position available in Human Resources. The department contact informed Denise that she was highly allergic to perfumes and other smells and she was selective with whom she filled this position. Oddly, Cindy shared the same sensitivity to surroundings, which proved to be a serendipitous connection between them.

Cindy was hired and worked in HR for three years and proved herself worthy of a promotion. While Cindy wanted to take the promotion, she could not obligate herself to a 40-hour work week due to health reasons. After much deliberation, she made the decision to leave.

At that point, she revisited ARS. After some coaching, she developed a business plan with



assistance from the ARS Small Business Department. It was a trying process of almost a year; at times her health hindered her but she was determined to overcome all obstacles. Eight months later **Cindy's Crafts** is now underway. Crediting ARS for helping to make her dream become a reality, Cindy is contributing to the economy and living a productive and independent life.



Project | SEARCH®

Project SEARCH® Leads Interns to Jobs

A standing room only crowd with bright smiles and a few tears. Each year, that is the view at UAMS at the hospital's annual Project SEARCH® graduation ceremony as the interns selected to participate in the program share their experience with their family members and supporters. Project SEARCH® is an international, one-year internship program for adults with disabilities who aspire to have a job. The program, funded by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, provides real-world work experiences, in addition to job coaching skills, to the interns. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education.

While UAMS has hosted this program since August 2013, Arkansas Children's Hospital launched Project SEARCH® on its campus in August 2015 and just graduated its inaugural class.

"Project SEARCH® gave me a chance to provide for my family. The teachers treated me with respect, and they made me feel good about myself," said **James Tyler Philemon**, who graduated from the UAMS program.

Twelve interns took part in the program at UAMS, while Arkansas Children's Hospital welcomed eleven participants in its first group. The bulk at each site has already found a job – either on the campus or elsewhere in the city. Each of them went to various

departments at the hospitals and learned critical job readiness skills, which can be transferred and applied in any environment.

"Hard work pays off and staying positive and motivated can take you very far in life," said **Shakemia Rayford** (pictured below, right, with ARS Counselor **Lakera Davis**), who became emotional while sharing her thoughts. "I want to thank the job coaches for their hard work along the way."

At the Arkansas Children's Hospital ceremony, **Shirley Nixon**, a parent of a participant, said she will forever be indebted to program administrators and hospital staff in helping her son, Jared, and the other interns to gain not only skills



UAMS Project SEARCH® graduating class



Arkansas Children's Hospital Project SEARCH® graduating class

but also confidence.

"I want to thank you for opening up your departments, your knowledge, and your hearts. Thank you for putting in that extra effort to make them feel welcomed and part of your departments," Nixon said.

The relationship between the interns and Project SEARCH® coordinators do not end right at graduation. The organization is committed to working with the interns over the next five years, making sure they are employed and remain employed.

JAG



Arkansas Receives Top JAG Designation for Graduation Among At-Risk Youth

Jobs for Arkansas Graduates, which is a state affiliate of the national organization **Jobs for America's Graduates** (JAG), has once again been recognized for achieving performance outcomes in five key areas in an effort to assist at-risk and disadvantaged youths in graduating from high school (or receiving a GED®) and thereafter finding and maintaining quality jobs through the organization's school-to-work program.

The **"5-of-5 National Performance Award"** recognizes states who have met certain goals in five performance areas. Below, you will also see how Arkansas fared in the five sections:

Performance Area	Expected Achievement Score	Arkansas's Achievement Score
Graduation Rate	90% or greater	93.9%
Positive Outcomes Rate	80% or greater	81.7%
Aggregate Employment Rate	60% or greater	70.2%
Full-time Jobs Rate	60% or greater	77.5%
Full-time Placement Rate	80% or greater	94.1%

The numbers are based on the Class of 2015.

Arkansas has received the 5-of-5 distinction every year since 2007. **Kenneth Smith**, who serves as the national JAG organization president, commended Arkansas on the achievement. He added the following: "These results are even more remarkable given the national unemployment rate of this demographic, which is greater than four times the unemployment rate of young people in general."

Charisse Childers, Ph.D., the Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education, said, "I am proud of the accomplishments of the students in the JAG program in Arkansas. The support provided by the schools, the teachers, and the funding partners is to be commended and has contributed to consistently excelling in all five performance areas."

Governor Asa Hutchinson sits on the organization's national board.

For the past two years, Jobs for Arkansas Graduates placed second among the thirty-two nationwide programs for the amount of scholarship funds received by students.

JAG is offered in 102 schools across Arkansas and is a special program of Career and Technical Education, one of four divisions of the Arkansas Department of Career Education.

Visitors Explore Options at Career Expo

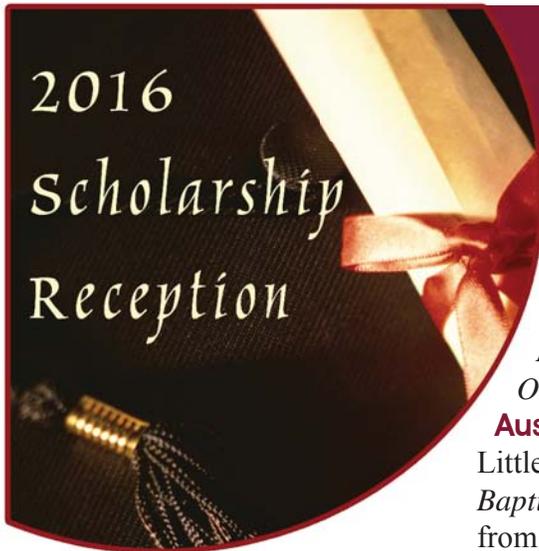


The Arkansas Department of Career Education teamed up with **Cumulus Media** to

host the Arkansas Department of Career Education career expo at the Metroplex in Little Rock.

More than 300 attendees packed the venue and had the opportunity to connect with dozens of employers, such as Waffle House, the Little Rock Police Department, and the North Little Rock Police Department. Attendees also got a chance to learn about various services that are available at Career Education and other state agencies.

Career Education conducted a series of workshops, such as résumé tips, submitting applications successfully, essential employability skills, how to ace an interview, tools that help you work, and how to dress for success, to help those looking for work or simply wanted career advice.



Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities Awards Scholarships

Governor Asa Hutchinson provided remarks and well wishes to sixteen students who were selected to receive scholarships from the Arkansas Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities (GCPD), a program of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division that is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in the state.

A reception to honor the scholarship recipients took place June 23 at the Arkansas Governor's Mansion. North Little Rock Police Chief **Michael Davis** emceed the event.

Each recipient received \$500 that will go toward their postsecondary pursuits. The honorees are awarded based on financial need, academic achievement, school and community involvement, goals, and the challenges faced as a result of his or her disability. The money used to fund the scholarships is taken from fines collected from violators of the

state's accessible parking law.

This year's recipients are **Mason Archer** from Arkadelphia. Attending *Ouachita Baptist University*; **Austin Clements** from North Little Rock. Attending *Ouachita Baptist University*; **Lekivia Cobb** from Pine Bluff. Attending *University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff*; **Ashten Dean** from Cabot. Attending *Ouachita Baptist University*; **Tribby Gibson** from Conway. Attending *Hendrix College*; **Jacob Green** from Batesville. Attending *University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville*; **Grace Harrisberger** from Sherwood. Attending *University of Central Arkansas*; **Kaylee HERNsberger** from

Camden. Attending *Henderson State University*; **Courtney Hutto** from Shirley. Attending *Arkansas State University at Beebe*; **Amanda Key** from Malvern. Attending *University of Arkansas at Little Rock*; **Ty McKoin** from El Dorado. Attending *Southern Arkansas University*; **Charles McLeroy** from Little Rock. Attending *University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff*; **Brandon Phillips** from Little Rock. Attending *Pulaski Technical College*; **Nora Skrdlant** from Jacksonville. Attending *Arkansas State University at Beebe*; **Elaine Taylor** from Conway. Attending *Harding University*; **Kobi White** from Little Rock. Attending *Hendrix College*



GCPD Executive Director **Leonard Boyle** (seated, left) along with ARS Commissioner **Alan McClain** (second from right) and agency Director **Charisse Childers** (far right) join **Governor Hutchinson** and the scholarship recipients who attended the reception.

CONGRATULATIONS

Agency Staff News



Kathi Turner, deputy director for the agency's Career and Technical Education Division, was awarded the Arkansas Association for Career and Technical Education's (AR ACTE) Administrator of the Year Award at the annual conference in August. Pictured at left, Turner is accepting her award from AR ACTE President **Ross White**.

Bridget Bullard Criner (right) has been appointed as the **Associate Director for the Adult Education**, one of the divisions of the Arkansas Department of Career Education. She previously served as Program Advisor within the division.



In this new role, Criner will now oversee the five regions of the state and a host of programs, which

include the GED® program, Distance Learning, and College and Career Readiness.



Cheryl Wiedmaier, Ph.D. (left), now serves as the **Associate Director for Career and Technical Education** for the Arkansas Department of Career Education. Wiedmaier joined the agency in June 2013 as Program Coordinator for Curriculum and Career Development.

Stephanie Isaacs (right) has been appointed the **Associate Director for the Office of Skills Development**. This office, created by Act 892 during the 2015 Legislative Session, is responsible for aligning

career and technical education programs with the skills needed by business and industry.

Prior to this appointment, Isaacs served as Senior Auditor for the Arkansas Department of Career Education.



Otis Dixon (left) has been named **Chief Information Officer** for the Arkansas Department of Career Education. In this role, Dixon will oversee all the agency's computing and technology needs. Dixon

served in this role on an interim basis before the appointment.

Joseph Baxter (right) has been named **Deputy Commissioner** for the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division of the Department of Career Education. Baxter was hired as ARS's Chief Financial Officer in April, 2012, following a 26-year career in the military that included the job of Budget Analyst at the Pentagon.



The National Association for Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns 2016 Conference

**Changing The Game:
Equity, Innovation and Opportunity**

The National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns 2016 Conference was held this year in New Orleans July 14 - 16.

“Promoting cultural diversity and disability through advocacy for excellence and equity in rehabilitation research, education, and practice” is the mission of NAMRC. This year’s theme, “Changing the Game: Equity, Innovation and Opportunity,” communicates an urgent need for action to abolish the attitudinal, legislative, and architectural barriers that continue to handicap Americans with disabilities, particularly those Americans from underserved/underrepresented populations.

During the opening ceremony, Arkansas’s Chapter (AAMRC) was awarded the Membership Award for the highest number of new members among all state chapters! Concurrent sessions included such topics as *Mentorship: A Game Changer for Women*; *Ethics, Culture & Spirituality: Applications for Professional Practice*; and *Ethics and Disability Policy*, just to name a few.

Dr. L. Robert McConnell, Assistant Professor in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Western Michigan University, addressed



The Arkansas Chapter of NAMRC (AAMRC) was well represented.

Attendees included (back row): **Adrienne Toney**, AR PROMISE, Southern Region; **Kecheta Jacobs-McCoy**, ARS Counselor, Jonesboro; **Kimberley Holland**, ARS Counselor, Hot Springs; **Sara Woodruff**, AR PROMISE, Western Region; **Valencia Butler**, ARS Counselor, Hot Springs; **Everett Adamson**, ARS District III Manager; **Lakera Davis**, ARS Counselor, Little Rock Field; **Niketa Nash**, ARS Counselor, Little Rock; **Kimberly Clayborn**, ARS District II Manager.
(front row): **Jennifer Carr**, AR PROMISE, Eastern Region; **Ellice Scales**, AAMRC President; **Carolyn Turner**, Retired ARS Counselor; **Alicia Olson**, AR PROMISE, Eastern Region; **Judy Smith**, National Representative & Director of Special Projects; **Trisha O’Neal**, ARS Counselor, West Memphis.

the group of nearly 200 on Friday, July 15th as the Keynote Speaker.

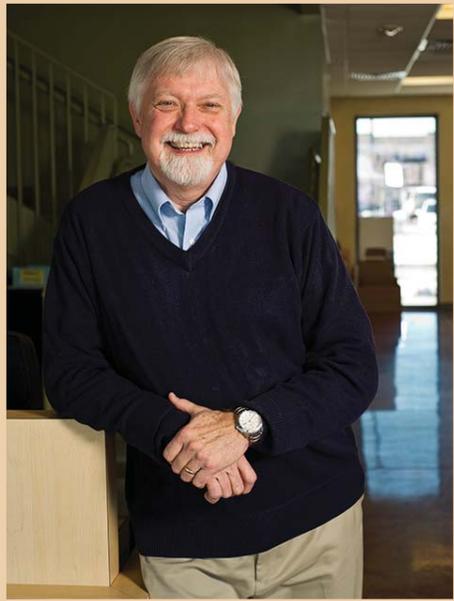
Carolyn Turner, retired vocational rehabilitation counselor from Little Rock, was awarded the Virgie Winston-Salem Lifetime Achievement Award. **Judy Smith**, NAMRC board member and ARS director of transition services, reported, “I thank [ARS] Commissioner McClain for supporting the delegation of ARS employees that attended the 23rd Annual NAMRC Conference... One

hundred percent of our delegation stated that the conference was very beneficial to them, especially as it relates to enhancing our abilities to serve the wide-ranging, diverse populations living with disabilities in our great state.

“Together, our chapter will continue to accomplish all of our goals.”

For more information on NAMRC, please view the website www.namrc.org or contact **Ellice Scales** at ellice.scales@arkansas.gov.

Highlighting the Career Education and Workforce Development Board Keith Vire



Sometimes in life the unexpected disruption turns out to be a blessing in disguise. A terrible thing happening at the worst possible time led to the course-direction change that put **Keith Vire** on the path to a career with purpose.

The Vietnam War derailed his plans to make good on a scholarship to study math at nearby College of the Ozarks (now University of the Ozarks) in Clarksville. His draft number was coming up so, after his first semester of college, Vire joined the Navy to stay out of the Army. As a signal man during a two-year stint on an aircraft carrier just off the coast of Vietnam, he had a lot of time to think, read, and talk with a couple of close friends. During that time, he decided he wanted to spend his life doing something he believed was important and chose the special education field.

When he returned from the service, Vire had more educational options thanks to the GI Bill.

“So I went to the University of Arkansas, which is where I would have liked to have gone initially anyway,” he said. “I’m from Arkansas and it’s THE place to be in Arkansas. I’ve always been a U of A fan and I don’t just mean sports — I’m a fan of the University of Arkansas.”

Vire completed a B.S.E. in special education in 1975.

His next step was obtaining a master’s degree in special education learning disabilities from Missouri State University, which he was able to do while working as a resource teacher.

Even though he very much enjoyed his special education teaching position in Springfield Public Schools, he could not resist an opportunity to move back to Northwest Arkansas and run a nonprofit in 1977.

And that is what he has been doing ever since. **Only now he is Dr. Keith Vire, CEO of Arkansas Support Network, where he has been since 1990.**

Add motivated and efficient to the list of descriptors for Vire, because he completed his rehabilitation doctoral degree from the University of Arkansas in 2005, taking only two years to do so. His certification area was program evaluation, which he claims has been a particularly beneficial tool. The ability to evaluate the work they are doing at Arkansas Support Network and, when applying for grants, be able to say they have documented experience in terms of program evaluation, has been a boon in bringing programs to the organization.

ASN serves 1,500 people

every year, through 12 programs. It provides support to make it possible for clients to live in their own apartments instead of segregated housing. It offers supported employment and is philosophically opposed to sub-minimum wage workshops. The types of support provided are primarily for people who have developmental disabilities.

As CEO, Vire’s efforts are divided between raising support and advocating for change, not just for ASN but advocacy for people across the state.

“We have to change the landscape for people with disabilities and it gets very frustrating sometimes.”

Referring to one of his heroes, **Justin Dart**, the father of the **Americans With Disabilities Act**, Vire poses the question:

“What if he had been a person who didn’t have a disability? Would he have accomplished so much? I think the answer is no and one of the things I have failed at doing is finding the right person who can move the needle in this struggle, someone who is passionate and willing to speak out and also has a disability.”

The organization continues to add to its programs to benefit people with disabilities, because Vire believes it is the right thing to do. That leaves ASN with a never-ending need for more financial support. ASN lives on a razor-thin margin, and it’s Vire’s desire to build an endowment so that his eventual successor “will be able to sleep at night.”

When the day comes for Vire to
VIRE continued on page 20

Transition Employment Program Ups Its Game

Forty-nine students graduated from the **Transition Employment Program (TEP)**, a five-week program that takes place at the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI). TEP is in its third year. **The number of graduates has grown more than 200% since it began.**

To celebrate the milestone, a graduation ceremony took place at the Hot Springs Convention Center. The graduates were congratulated by their family members and friends. **Charisse Childers, Ph.D.**, the Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education, gave the keynote address, offering words of encouragement to the program participants.

Alan McClain, ARS Commissioner; **Carl Daughtery**, Chief of Field Services; **Judy Smith**, Transition Director-Special Programs; and **Jonathan Bibb**, ACTI Director, also gave stirring words to motivate the graduates to dream big and to pursue those dreams.

TEP is a five-week, pre-employment program that prepares rising high school seniors for various career fields. After completing the program, the students will complete 100 hours of paid work experience following their graduation from high school.

Cassie Brown (pictured speaking at right, center photo), whose daughter graduated from the program, said her daughter gained a sense of independence while at ACTI.

"Through the program, we found out she can be without me and I can be without her," Brown said.

Michelle Redman (pictured speaking at right, bottom photo), also a parent, said her son truly developed into a responsible young adult during his time at TEP.

He even gained an interest in wanting to learn sign language so he could communicate with the deaf students whom he befriended. He will take some sign language classes during his final year of high school.

"He matured over the five weeks. He is now able to talk with us as an adult," she said.



VIRE continued from page 19

hand over the reins to his successor, he imagines himself still playing a role in policy work but also having more time to devote to another passion, guitar making. Until then, Vire remains satisfied with that early career-change decision.

"I thought I couldn't do better in terms of a livelihood — I could make more money but couldn't do any better in terms of being fulfilled."

Reprinted in part from the University of Arkansas News, published on Aug. 17, 2016, by Lori L. Foster, communications assistant

Arkansas Makes Strides by Becoming a Leader in Career and Technical Education



Above: Speakers at the press conference included (top row): **Shaun Dougherty**, Fordham Institute; **Jordan Lee**; and CEWD Board President **Michael Garner**. Middle Row: 2016 National ACTE NewTeacher of the Year **Jessica Young** of Fordyce High School; **Alex Durham**; and **Kathi Turner**. Bottom row: Agency Director **Charisse Childers**, **Hailey Crowder**, former AR FCCLA officer; and **State Senator Jane English**.

Below: Speaker **Jordan Lee**



Career and technical education (CTE), once known to be the curriculum for low-performing students, is transforming the way students of different academic potential learn in Arkansas, positioning them not only to become great employees, but also to earn higher wages to care for their families.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education held a news conference on June 8 to highlight the achievements the state has made in CTE. The Fordham Institute, an education think-tank based in Ohio, has recognized Arkansas for its data in ensuring every student is exposed to CTE classes. In the study ***“Career and Technical Education in High School: Does It Improve Student Outcomes?”***,

researchers examine Arkansas’s focus on CTE courses and its effect on graduation rates and future earnings. The report also looks at the current landscape, including which students are taking CTE courses, how many courses they are taking, and which ones.

“Our state has been working very hard to prepare students for college and career readiness, and our hard work, careful planning and forward thinking have begun to pay off for our great state,” said **Kathi Turner**, Deputy Director for Career and Technical Education.

The news conference served as the grand opportunity to showcase the successes in

CTE continued on page 23



Fletcher accepts plaque from the National FFA. Dr. Steve Brown, the National FFA State Advisor, presented it to Fletcher.

FLETCHER *continued from page 1*

Fletcher started his agricultural education career at a school in Desha County in southeast Arkansas. After four years in the classroom, he joined the state agricultural education office and oversaw agricultural programs at schools in southeast Arkansas. In the mid-1980s, he became Program Director and State FFA Advisor.

“I’ve had opportunities to do other things and probably financial-wise, I would have been better off. I stayed here because I enjoy it. Young people just do something for me. They motivate me,” Fletcher said.

Fletcher is leaving at a high time in his career. The past two National FFA officers have come from Arkansas: Victoria Maloch, the 2014-15 National FFA Secretary, and Taylor McNeal, the current National FFA President. Both served as an Arkansas FFA President.

“It [Fletcher’s retirement] is part sadness because there’s going to be a huge part of Arkansas FFA that’s missing but then I’m proud of the work he’s put in over 53 years. I’m excited that what he laid here will continue for the next generations,” said McNeal.

Much of Fletcher’s career has been spent at Camp Couchdale, the Arkansas FFA campsite that has been a part of the organization since 1929. Located on Lake Catherine, Camp Couchdale has welcomed thousands of Arkansas FFA members – serving as the place to learn leadership skills and the latest trends in agriculture.

Camp Couchdale holds a special place in Fletcher’s heart. It is also his home. In retirement, he will remain there for some time and will make sure it remains a gem in the annals of Arkansas FFA history.

“Somebody’s got to know where everything is. A lot of young men and women come through this place and leadership is developed and it needs to continue on for another 100 years from now after I’m long gone,” Fletcher said.

Another giant in Arkansas FFA and agriculture education is joining Fletcher in retirement.

Troy Buck, who taught at Centerpoint High School, has just completed 55 years in agricultural education! Arkansas FFA members honored Buck by dedicating the convention in his honor.

Buck is credited for launching and managing the school’s meat production program. Members of the community bring in their cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats that are ready for slaughter. The students take part in the butchery process. Proceeds pay all of Centerpoint High School students’ state and local FFA fees and some of their FFA jackets.

Many of the students who participate in the meat production program go on to work at local meat processing facilities.

“My mission is to get everyone out there with a good Christian family, making a living, and paying my social security,” Buck said, with a chuckle, in an interview in 2014.



Buck (in white dress shirt) in the middle of teaching his meat production students about safety and packaging.

YLF continued from page 6

The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities is a program of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education.

"Getting to your destination is going to be tough, but I guarantee you that you can get there. You can do it if you put in the effort and you use the resources that the state has," Wilson said. "There is help, and it is worth it to use it," he added.

Wilson shared personal stories of living with a



"Disability Awareness and Advocacy," conducted by **Susan Pierce**, Disability Rights Arkansas's Director of Policy and Procedure, was among the informative YLF workshops held.

disability. At the age of 17, he dove into a pool and hit his chin on the bottom, causing spinal cord injury and paralysis. That did not stop him. He not only graduated from high school as valedictorian, but he went on to earn his B.S. Degree and his M.S. Degree in Agricultural Sciences from Southern Arkansas University. He is now owner of a successful small business known as Wes Wilson Tutoring. He also owns Cripple Creek Ranch, a small horse breeding facility. He is a member of the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) Advisory Council and an active advocate for individuals with spinal cord injuries, as well as all other disabilities.



During Thursday's visit to the State Capitol, students toured the treasurer's office and were able to see what it felt like to hold on to a great deal of money!

CTE continued from page 21

CTE across the state. Turner recognized **Jordan Lee**, a 2016 graduate of Nettleton High School, for being named a U.S. Presidential Scholar for CTE.

"I just thought this was a great achievement and honor," Lee said. "It has opened tremendous doors for me."

Lee served as the 2015-2016 State FBLA President. An FBLA member since eighth grade, Lee has traveled the country and credits the organization for preparing him for life after high school. He is enrolled at Vanderbilt University.

"CTSOs [Career and Technical Student Organizations] change the lives of students. I am a prime example of that. I attribute a lot of the success and achievements that I have to FBLA and all CTOS," Lee said.

Alex Durham, a recent graduate of Henderson State University, credits CTE for preparing her for a career in television news. A former National FCCLA officer, she interned at KTHV 11 in Little Rock this summer.

"It's through all of those experiences that I gained the ability to speak to people, to communicate, and to understand. I think that's one of the most important skills you can learn in life. I know all of the CTOSs teach you that," Durham said.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CAREER EDUCATION

Career Education and Workforce Development Board

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Office of Skilled and Technical Sciences
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State Approving Agency for Veterans Training and Education
 (501) 324-9473
Career and Technical Student Organizations contacts
FFA (Agricultural Education)
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DECA/FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America/PBL (Phi Beta Lambda)
 (501) 682-1768
FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America)
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