



the Career Counselor 2014

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501-682-1500 ▪ <http://ace.arkansas.gov>

ACE Activities Abound...



FFA competed in events at the State Fair in October and attended the National FFA Convention and Expo October 29 - November 1 in Louisville, Kentucky, where Arkansan Victoria Maloch was named National FFA Secretary. Read more about FFA's busy summer and fall, including the annual "20-Year Club" gathering beginning on page 5.

ARS underwent several changes recently in order to better serve our clients. The Little Rock field office moved to a new "storefront" location downtown. ACTI opened a new building to house, initially, the Cosmetology department. And Fort Smith relocated to new office space. Read more starting on page 3.



FCCLA participated in the first annual joint Arkansas/Louisiana state officer leadership training as well as the FCCLA National Leadership Conference in San Antonio, Texas, in July, where Arkansas students brought home 41 gold medals, 55 silver medals and 11 bronze medals. See page 8 for more.

The ACE mission to provide leadership and contribute resources to serve the diverse and changing career educational needs of Arkansas youth, adults, and persons living with disabilities has been in full force with open houses, professional conferences, Disability Awareness Month activities and more. Start reading about these events on page 15.



Sweeping changes in the GED® testing system took place in 2014. At the Annual GED® Examiners' Conference in October, presenters spoke to testers about the challenges and ways to alleviate the apprehension inherent in any new system. Read more on page 9.

November - December

A public information pamphlet of the Arkansas Department of Career Education and the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Division.

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Also in this issue: A Message from the Director; Disability Awareness Month activities; and what's going on in our high schools: Centerpoint, Strong and Mountain Home? .. plus much more.



Director's Update

William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr.

Director

Arkansas Department of Career Education

Dear ACE Staff and Supporters,

This is my last time addressing you as Director. As I expressed at the ACE joint staff meeting, it has been an honor to serve the people of our great state with you. It has been a remarkable journey that has had its fair share of good and bad days, but with a retrospective look, we are a better people and a better agency for having experienced it. It's one of the highlights of my life thus far.

When Governor Beebe appointed me to this position eight years ago, I didn't know what to expect. As I've expressed before, I had no idea about this agency, and I served in the Legislature for sixteen years! I had no idea what awesome responsibility had been placed before me. It was overwhelming at first, to say the least. I had my work cut out for me, learning what ARS, CTE, and Adult Education did and how to make things better and more efficient for our students and clients. Many a time, I walked into my office and meetings with a nervous feeling, but I prayed to God that He would remove that spirit from me so that I could serve in this role.

One of the first things I did as Director was bring Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education all under one umbrella, not only in name but also in our daily work. Many may still question this move, but I think it has worked wonders and has played a crucial role in guiding us to where we are

today. Because of this merging, we removed silos, and we all worked together for the good of those we serve. Our mission all along has been to make Arkansans marketable for the careers they decide to pursue. We have been able to do that, as each division is able to collaborate with one another to create the employable Arkansan.

It would take a whole tree of pages to list our accomplishments over an eight-year span, but I want to highlight just a few:

- ◇ We have 3,044 closures, each of which represents an Arkansan with a disability who has become gainfully employed within this state. It was a collaborative effort by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to reach this goal. As a result, we have become a model to other states for accomplishing such a feat.
- ◇ Arkansas ranks near the top when it comes to the passing rate on the GED® exam. The format of the test changed at the beginning of the year to match the Common Core State Standards teaching style in our nation's schools. We trained our teachers to prepare our students for the test, and they have continued to do a superb job, maintaining an 80 percent pass rate. We are also thankful to Governor Beebe for allocating money to keep the test price affordable.
- ◇ The number of career coaches in the Arkansas Works counties has increased by nearly 20 percent,

and that has subsequently led to more students attending postsecondary institutions. We believe these coaches are instrumental in guiding our students to their desired careers and arming them with the confidence to get more than just a high school diploma.

- ◇ All of the programs at the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) are fully accredited! We were overjoyed in June to receive word from the Council on Occupational Education (COE) that the executive committee found our instruction, programs, and assessments were worthy to accredit the facility. It was an honor to attend ACTI's December graduation and to see the students receive their COE-stamped diplomas. My mantra throughout my time as Director has been that our students needed more than just a piece of paper to show they are well-qualified. Now, the whole world knows and respects it.

Accomplishing our goals was not easy. It wasn't always pretty getting there either. We had our disagreements and our hang-ups. But what better people – what better agency – we are for our cordial clashes! It has left us a more efficient agency in which all those we serve benefit. We are here for them.

I want to thank each of you for what you did to make this journey worthwhile. You remained steadfast and true to the mission of this agency, and you worked to make sure anyone who called upon us had a positive experience. You endured the good days and bad days, along with the sunshine and the rain to ensure that we reached

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ACTI Happenings

ACTI GROWS IN BUILDINGS, CAPABILITIES

October 28, 2014: the beginning of a new day in the history of the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI).

After years of planning and setbacks, the Arkansas Department of Career Education finally opened the doors of an extension of the facility to continue its mission to train Arkansans with disabilities for careers that lead to independent lives.

“This project has taken a long time, but it’s been worthwhile. It’s been worth the wait. It’s something we can all be proud about,” said state **Senator Bill Sample**, a member of the Hot Springs legislative delegation.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony served as a culmination to a project that began as early as 2008. The annexed building, which served as the former military armory, remained vacant for years. It was federally mandated to only be used for educational or disaster relief purposes. ACE **Director William L. “Bill” Walker Jr.** said he and others realized the building could be used to better prepare students to become leaders in their respective



Governor Beebe poses with ACTI staff and students

career fields.

“I remember the first day that I walked into this facility. I said to myself that I wanted this place to be where I would send my own daughter. I’m happy to say it has become that place. That’s not just because of the commitment and investment of all our partners, but also because of the staff and the students,” Walker said.

The additional building will house the *cosmetology, construction technology, and automobile maintenance and repair* courses – programs that make up the concentrations at the fully accredited school. Students and community members were wowed by the impressive layout of the building, and they appeared to be ready to start learning in it.

“Words are not enough to express our excitement as we mark today as a new chapter for my instructors, fellow students, and me,” said **Sharon Walker**, a cosmetology student at ACTI.

Governor Mike Beebe, in his final days as the state’s top leader, made preparations to attend the ceremony and highlighted the commitment of the agency for improving the lives of all Arkansans.

“The pushing, the fighting, and the arguing got us to where we are today,” Beebe said.



Director Walker and Senator Sample cut the ribbon

After the ribbon-cutting, attendees got a chance to see the building and all that it has to offer. Many of the cosmetology students got the opportunity to see their workstations (see picture, far left). The excitement was shown on all of their faces, as they brace themselves for limitless opportunities.

“We’re giving these students the opportunity to have meaningful lives and to live for themselves. Anything [this delegation] can do to help ACTI is a pleasure for us,” Sample said.



New Home for Little Rock Field Services, Assistive Technology

Seventh Street is one of the city's busiest thoroughfares. It's a highly traveled route because it ends at the Capitol; it features popular restaurants like The Box and Vino's; and it runs to the side of the Little Rock Central Fire Station. Now, there's a new attraction and service on the street. It's the new home for a significant portion of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

On a sunny, cool October afternoon, legislators, leaders, employees, and the community celebrated the ribbon-cutting on the Little Rock field services office, the **Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN)** and the **Telecommunications Access Program (TAP)**. Around forty people relocated into the Seventh Street location.

The big draw to the new office is the "storefront" approach, where commuters will see from the street the assistive technology that is offered through the agency for people with disabilities. Arkansas is the first state in the nation to offer anything such as this.

"This is something we've been planning for a long period of time, and it's finally come to fruition," said **Jonathan Bibb**, interim commissioner for ARS.

People who attended the ribbon-cutting got a chance to tour the new facility and see what services clients will be offered when they walk into the building. **Jeff Jackson**, ICAN director, said he believes the location will serve to the agency's benefit.

"People will catch that traffic in going by and wondering what it is and will take a stop and look at it," said Jackson.

The grand opening took place during October, which has been deemed Disability Employment Awareness Month. Businesses were also recognized for their efforts in hiring people with disabilities.

"We have a lot of support from the community and legislators, so we are reaching out to everyone who might be able to utilize ICAN program, TAP, and also organizations that help people with disabilities," said Bibb.



Above: ICAN staff (l-r): Trooper Tolbert, Program Support; Corey Kimbrough, Rehab Program Manager; Essie Hardin, Administrative Specialist; Jeff Jackson, Program Director; Sean McIntosh, Program Coordinator; Lee Ann Harper, Administrative Analyst; and Rick Anderson, Program Coordinator



Above, l-r: District VII (Little Rock) Manager David McDonald; Associate Director for Special Programs (which include ICAN) Jim Moreland



McIntosh (right) shows some new equipment to Venessa Myers and her son Alexander



TAP staff (l-r): Lynn Franquemont, Program Manager, and LaTonya Rayford, Equipment Specialist. Not pictured: Marianne Hartsfield, Program Coordinator



Right: Anderson and Darlene Owens, Rehab Program Specialist with PPD&E, tour the new storefront.

State Fair, Conferences Keep FFA Members Busy



Arkansas FFA Students Lead Ag Discussion at State Fair

At the 75th Annual Arkansas State Fair, the grounds were filled with people of all ages and from all four corners of the state. They were all there to enjoy the food, the rides, and the games. For many families, it's a tradition to travel to Little Rock, turn down Roosevelt Road, and enjoy the annual spectacle that brings hundreds of thousands of people to the city.

But for about two dozen FFA chapters, they could perhaps skip over the rides and the food and spend their time in the Coliseum and the barns – the site for the various livestock exhibits and competitions.

“Agriculture means a lot. Without it, we wouldn't be here. Our life depends on it. It's important people know about it and what it really is,” said **Foster Thompson**, junior advisor for the Greene County Tech FFA.

FFA chapter members from across the state traveled to the fairgrounds to participate in “Ag in



Action.” This is when the students help to feed and care for the various animals on display, and they answer questions for the guests who stop in to see the animals. These animals included chickens, ducks, goats, and even a camel. Corn and soybean displays were also there to allow children to see how to harvest crops, seeing it up close and not just on their dinner tables.

“They need to know where their food comes from. It doesn't come from a store, but a place that a person has to work to get it. You eat a hamburger – it comes from a cow. It doesn't just come from a store,” Thompson said.

Amie Cole, one of the FFA advisors at Greene County Tech, said the opportunity is also a teaching moment for her students. Many of them have never shown livestock before. Caring for the animals allows her students to apply the lessons they've been taught in their ag

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See more FFA News on page 6

TEP Inaugural Graduates Make Ready for Future Careers

HOT SPRINGS – With the jubilant sound of “Pomp and Circumstance” by Sir Edward Elgar, fifteen rising high school seniors completed the **Transition Employment Program (TEP)**, a five-week program that is designed to give students critical skills to make them marketable for their respective careers. It's also planned to give students a smooth transition from high school to adult life.

“Nobody else in the nation is doing what we're

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Spotlight on “The 20-Year Club”

Brotherhood Formed in the Thread of Agriculture

CAMP COUCHDALE – Once a year, the George F. Sullands Cafeteria turns into a nostalgic place. From the sounds of all the laughs and from the looks of all the smiles, you realize it is more than just a place to eat. It’s the site for a family reunion – a room full of men who have adopted one another and call themselves “brothers.” The familial tie formed years ago when they chose agriculture education as their career goal. **After 20 years, these ag teachers became members of the “20 Year Club,” a prestigious honor in which they all embrace and take pride.**

“I wouldn’t have tried to teach anything else. I enjoyed it. It was right up my alley,” said **Louie Pannell**, who taught agriculture for 28 years.

This annual gathering of the “20-Year Club” members causes Pannell to make the three-hour drive from Yellville to Camp Couchdale. Although well into his eighties, Pannell doesn’t mind leaving in the wee hours of the morning to get to the campsite for the yearly meeting. It’s a time he can reflect on his years in the classroom and be around other former and current teachers with whom he shares a passion.

“I tried to teach [the students] everything they would be associated with during life. I taught them about taxes, shop, livestock, and crops,” he said.

Pannell’s interest in agriculture education is credited to J.B. Ewart. Ewart helped to form the

Lincoln Aggie Club – located in Bruno – which is said to be the first agricultural club west of the Mississippi River. Cleola Martin, the county agent for Marion County, arranged for Pannell to get a scholarship, and the rest is history. Pannell’s teaching career took him across Arkansas schools in Leslie, Bruno, Yellville, and Valley Springs. He even taught in the state of Wyoming.

“I enjoy coming back here,” he said, looking at all of the teachers in the room. “I see a lot of them I spent weeks with here.”

The stories you hear among the past and present “20-Year Club” teachers are phenomenal. To a women’s rights group, it appears to be a macho, chauvinistic environment, but keep in mind that women didn’t join the FFA until 1969. They didn’t start teaching agriculture classes until much later. Because of their late start, there are no women in the “20 Year Club.”

“I remember when girls started taking ag. Some of them were just interested in boys. I tried to teach them things they would need to know, too,” Pannell said.

While Pannell was joined by a number of former teachers, there are some in the “Club” who are still in the classroom. Most notably – **Troy Buck**, who’s in his 54th year!

“It’s nothing like seeing the sparkle in a kid’s eyes when he realizes he can do something he didn’t know he could do. Hope we can make a difference,” Buck said.

The Centerpoint High School teacher went to Camp Couchdale

for more than just to catch up with “Club” members. He attended the annual FFA Leadership Conference, where agriculture teachers from all across the state come and learn about new tactics and lessons that can be taken back to the classroom. Presenters within the industry lay out new and exciting ways to get more students interested in agricultural practices, and it also allows the teachers from all across the state to catch up and share ideas that have been working in their respective schools.

Having gone to these conferences for decades, Buck said the associations made from the meeting are like no other.

“The camaraderie we have here – I can drive all across the state and be within thirty minutes of an ag teacher. I can pick up the phone and call them, and if I need something, they will come for me. How many math teachers you know can do that?” Buck said, still waiting on an answer.

Marion Fletcher, the state FFA advisor who also has more than 50 years in agriculture education, said he looks forward to the conference and catching up with members of the “20 Year Club.”

“We believe when other teachers tell their peers what they’re doing; it makes much better sense when they hear it from them,” he said.

Perhaps the challenge for all the teachers is proving to the younger generation that agriculture is a rewarding field. **Milton Lowe**, in his 38th year of teaching, said

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that's something he emphasizes daily to his classes, which make up around 80 students.

"Agriculture is our number one industry. Many don't look at it that way. Because it covers so much of our daily lives, I try to get students to understand it's more than farming," said Lowe, who teaches at Nevada High School.

Lowe said it can be difficult to encourage black students to consider a career in agriculture. Due to the negative perception, he's had to dispel the connotations that have lingered for years.

"A lot of African Americans don't get into agriculture because of the information they have about it. Some of it comes from parents, some from teachers, and some from counselors. Therefore, it's discouraging for some students whose parents farmed at one time in their lives say they don't want their children to be farmers. It's more than just farming," Lowe said.

State FFA officers got the opportunity to speak with "20-Year Club" teachers and witnessed how they bonded with one another and shared stories. The veteran teachers even explained what Camp Couchdale looked like in the past.

"It makes me think that will be me in however many years because I am going into ag education. To see the excitement in their eyes after so many years makes me want to tear up," said **Mark Dement**, northwestern

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classes.

"These kids will go home with an experience. We want to do this at our county fair," she said.

Greene County Tech boasts an FFA membership of about 450 students. This is perhaps the largest chapter in the state

"Everyone in the community looks to Greene County Tech as leaders in FFA," Cole said.

Visitors were able to feed the animals carrots, which appeared to be a nice snack for them. The children who fed the animals seemed to enjoy the interaction.

The money collected from the feeding was used to provide food feed the various chapter members who helped with the exhibits. State FFA Advisor **Marion Fletcher** said.

district vice president.

Dement said the annual gathering shows him agriculture is alive and well, and he looks forward to making his mark in the industry.

Proof of making his mark is joining the "Club."

"[They've] been meeting seventy or eighty years. Getting them together is motivational. Some are in their eighties and have been retired thirty years, about as long as they worked. It's sort of a brotherhood. A fraternity," Fletcher said.



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doing with this program. We are the first. This is going to be a nationally recognized best practice," said **Judy Smith**, director of transition services (above).

Smith – lauded for having developed the program – said to see the students receive their

certificates of completion is a dream come true. In addition, it ensures that Arkansans with disabilities are being trained for careers, which is the goal of the agency.

Smith said this to the graduates: "We will be expecting that you're fully ready to work next summer because we're going to provide you with a paid work experience."

The teenagers spent the entire five weeks at the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) at Hot Springs. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Interim Commissioner **Jonathan Bibb**, who oversees the facility, said he noticed growth in each of the students as time progressed.

"Each of them has been coming up to me saying 'Hi, Mr. Bibb,'

sticking their hand out shaking it. When I first walked up to them [when they first arrived], they were covering in their seats wondering "What have I gotten myself into," Bibb said.

The highlight of the ceremony featured all fifteen graduates giving a firsthand account of their experience in the summer program. They prepared notes and read them aloud.

"I learned how to work with other people, meet new friends, maintenance, and student living. I had a great time here," said **Divine Hines** of Forrest City.

"I want to thank [you] for changing my life," said **Darius Jamar** of Marion.

Even parents thanked the TEP staff for not only developing the program but also instilling confidence in their children.

"I've seen [my daughter's] potential, but the problem was she couldn't see it. There was always a doubt and lack of self-confidence. I'm happy to say this program has changed her outlook on herself and her future," said **Karen Henry**, the mother of **Lanie Henry**.

ACE **Director William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr.** thanked the students and the parents for participating in the program. He also motivated the graduates to aim high and to never give up.

"What I hope is the son or daughter that you sent here will never be the same and will forever make you proud. They are now ready for the journey to become one of our next leaders, whether it's governor, president – whatever!"

Joint Arkansas/Louisiana FCCLA Training a First

June 10-13: The Arkansas Family Career Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) State Officer team attended the first joint Arkansas/Louisiana FCCLA State Officer Leadership Training. Sessions were conducted by national trainers from TRI Leadership Resources.

Planning for the year as an officer team included preparation for the FCCLA National Leadership Conference in San Antonio in July, as well as organizing their officer responsibilities and assignments and planning presentations for the 2014-15 school year. When asked about their favorite activity, the officers all agreed that the highlight of the training may have been the Ropes Challenge Course at the OWL (Outdoor Wilderness Learning Center) near Rustin. There, officers used cooperation and group participation to achieve a goal (see below). While having made friends as a group prior to the session, everyone agreed the activities showed them the true meaning of team building.

Both states hope to make this the first of many annual Leadership Retreats.

Turn to page 13 for more FCCLA news



New GED Format Renews Push to See Test-Takers Succeed

LITTLE ROCK – In 2013, GED® testing centers across the country saw record crowds coming to take the high school equivalency exam. Administrators nationwide took to airwaves, social media, and television to stress the need for people to take the test. The reason: *National testing officials would be releasing the new format in January 2014, and it would be a test that was much different and much more difficult than the current one.*

The same was true in Arkansas, one of the states that rank near the top when it comes to passing rate among test-takers. In 2013, 8,688 Arkansans answered the clarion call to take the exam before the new format went into effect. More than eighty-six percent of the test takers passed the exam.

“We did an end-of-the-year marketing effort that urged people to come out and take the test,” said **Janice Hanlon**, Arkansas’s GED® administrator.

But 2014 has seen a significantly lower amount of Arkansans taking the high-stakes test. As of November, only 1,612 have taken the test. Only 872 have passed.

“It’s really better to have a test that may be more rigorous,” said **Martin Kehe**, vice president of assessment for GED®.

Kehe served as one of the speakers at the Annual GED® Examiners’ Conference. His presence, leaders hoped, would settle fears and confusion as examiners are still trying to adjust to the new test format.

“It takes some fortitude to [create a new test]. Whenever you’re doing something new – especially when it’s perceived to be harder or more challenging –there will be a lot of worry and outcry,” Kehe said.

The old format, released in 2002, was based on 1990s-era content standards for high school students. Kehe said schools have changed since then because of an overhaul in education policy such as No Child Left Behind and the implementation of Common Core State Standards, which places great emphasis on instruction and testing. The



previous test was divided into five parts and taken on paper. The new test is computer-based, testing on four components with two extended short-answer responses.

“When something is new, it just takes people a while to get used to it,” Kehe said.

Even with the new test, Arkansas still comes near the top when it comes to states with the highest passing rates. Kehe credited the examiners for their hard work in determining who should test and who should continue to study.

“What it really says about Arkansas is you have a good process for qualifying people to take the test. Some states don’t have barriers for people to take the test. *Arkansas, the system that you have, really works with people to determine what it is they’re going to need to be good at to be successful on the test,*” Kehe said.

Lloyd Huskey, who oversees the GED® testing centers at Shorter College and Arkansas Baptist College, said he is constantly encouraging people to overlook the new format and to focus on getting the credential.

“I tell them they need to do better for their children, and their children need to see them doing something positive. It’s important for the home and family,” Huskey said.

There is now a fee for the test. Before, the state incurred all costs of the test.

“It’s still a good deal. Folks are realizing that they need this high school credential, and we’re starting to pick up. I think we will be good after all,” Huskey said.

Centerpoint High Students Lead the Way in Meat Processing



AMITY – The meat processing class at Centerpoint High School (CHS) is not for the faint of heart.

By no means.

“It freaked me out a little bit,” said **Tyler Travis**, a senior at CHS.

Tyler, now taking the class for the third year, explained his reaction after he walked in the classroom, saw the bloody processing lab, and realized what all the students did to make the grade.

Members of the community bring in their cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats that are ready for slaughter. With their teacher, **Troy Buck**, in close range, the students participate in the butchery process, which leads to cleaning, skinning, hanging, and then preparing the meat for sale.

“On the first day, he [Buck] gives us everything we need to do. The second day, you’re doing it. That’s how this class works. You’re going and going every day,” said **Fayth Yates**, a sophomore.

Students learn more than just about meat in this class. The first priority is learning about sanitation, and that is usually mastered within the first few days of class. Students wear goggles, lab coats, and gloves. Hand washing is a must to prevent the spread of germs onto food that people will eat. But character and good manners are also emphasized in the lab.

“Do right. Act right. Mr. Buck teaches us life lessons. Before this class, I guess I used to lie a lot. I’ve learned it’s better to tell the truth, and if you do right, the outcome is better,” said Travis.

Just as you can expect to

see a knife in a meat processing facility, it’s almost impossible to hear the students in this class talk and they not mention their beloved teacher, **Troy Buck** (pictured below). Buck – who parades the lab with his meager attire that includes a blue vest, a white shirt, and blue jeans – is somewhat of a superhero to his students, and just about anything he says can be taken as gospel. When he walks into the lab, the students’ eyes are glued on him, as his instant presence demands all of their attention.

He said there is no formula for his teaching style.

“We just say ‘Yes sir, No Sir, Yes Ma’am, and No Ma’am.’ We say ‘Please’ and ‘Thank You.’ Gentility. Common sense. Be nice,” Buck said.

Buck is no stranger to the Amity community or to agricultural



education. Not only did he grow up in the small, close-knit town, but he is also in his 54th year of teaching (That’s not a typo!). After spending twenty years teaching agricultural classes in Hope, he decided to return home to teach in Amity, where he’s been since 1981.

“I just love kids. I tell them if they show up on time, be drug free, do what the boss says, they will make it,” Buck said.

The meat processing class has been an attraction to the Amity area for decades. Back in the early 1980s, Amity was considered one of the poorest school districts in the country. While traveling to pick up a used school bus with the school superintendent at the time, Buck was asked how the district could encourage voters to support a millage increase.

“Build a meat processing plant. Do some custom processing for the community and charge them by the head,” Buck said, without thinking.

“How much will that cost?” the superintendent asked.

“I don’t know,” Buck replied.

“Well, find out,” the superintendent said.

Buck said the millage – which passed by one vote – included the building of a meat processing facility on the campus. It has

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continued as a result of community support. In 2000, when the Amity and Glenview school districts merged, the new district – now called Centerpoint – built a state-of-the-art lab that rivals any major meat processing establishment.

Patrons come as far as Oklahoma and Louisiana to have their meat processed. Buck said the class also teaches students customer service skills.

“One month, we took in \$600 from people who paid us more than our bill. Part of it was because they said ‘I called up here three times, and I got three different kids, and they said ‘Centerpoint FFA, how may I help you?’ It wasn’t ‘Hello’ or ‘What do you want?’” Buck said.

Centerpoint has one of the largest enrollments of students in Arkansas FFA, formerly referred to as Future Farmers of America. With a membership of about three hundred students, the money collected in sales from meat processing pays all of CHS students’ state and local fees, and some of it is used buy some of the students FFA jackets.

“That helps reinforce what I’m telling them. They’re going to be



Mountain Home High Teaches Along with the Brain

MOUNTAIN HOME – Known for its picturesque scenery, Mountain Home welcomes visitors all year long to view its natural landscape. It’s a haven, particularly for outdoor lovers, who want to float along the Buffalo River, to fish at Norfolk or Bull Shoals lakes, or to hike the Ozarks. The city is fortunate when it comes to geography, and that is a benefit when it comes to serving as a tourist attraction.

But educators from all over the country are in awe of the city’s high school. The school is living up to its mascot’s name – **“The Bombers”** – by shaking up education at its core and serving as a model for teaching the nation’s next generation.

“[The school] makes me feel like I’m at the highest level. I’m getting the best education



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living several years after they get out of all of their years of education. They need to have some values besides knowledge,” Buck said.

Because of the exposure to the industry, many of the students from this program apply at one of the local meat processing facilities, and they are usually hired. Travis is considering a career in the field, in addition to picking up an HVAC certification.

“I applied for a job in Arkadelphia at a meat processing company. One [of the employees who graduated from CHS] is working on getting a butcher license,” he said.

While Buck said “The Good Lord will tell me when to retire,” he admitted that he isn’t

getting younger. His steps may be getting short, but Buck’s impact is far-reaching.

“We’ve learned everything in this class. You learn more in this class than you will anywhere in your life,” Yates said.

Yates is attending CHS after years of being homeschooled. She chose the school environment, solely because of Buck and what the class can do for her.

“If it weren’t for him, we wouldn’t be the way we are,” she said.

The humble Buck said he is in no competition to be the students’ favorite teacher. His goal in his classroom has been the same since 1961, when his teaching career began.

“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.

ACE Expos Held

Both the El Dorado and Little Rock field offices hosted fall Expos, declared “complete successes!” by the participating staff. The Expos, held approximately twice a year by various offices across the state, introduces the communities to the services available through CTE, ARS and Adult Education, as well as job opportunities presented by attending vendors.





Arkansans Come Away Winners at National Conference

Almost 250 students, teachers, and parents from Arkansas joined the over 7,500 FCCLA members in San Antonio, Texas for the National FCCLA Leadership Conference, **“SOAR with FCCLA”**, challenging participants to confront the issues youth are facing today by gaining the necessary skills through leadership development and competitive events. Over 3,600 of the students took part in FCCLA’s Competitive Events and more than 20 students ran for national FCCLA officer positions.

Arkansas’ own **Andrew Hinds Stanley** from Arkadelphia High School represented Arkansas well as the **National Officer Candidate**. Arkansas could not be more proud of Andrew and his adviser, and mother, Lisa Stanley for their hard work and dedication to FCCLA.

STAR Events (Students Taking Action with Recognition) are competitive events in which members are recognized for proficiency and achievement in chapter and individual projects, leadership skills, and career preparation. *Arkansas received top honors in many areas bringing home 41 gold medals, 55 silver medals and 11 bronze medals.* Congratulations to all Arkansas participants for their hard work and dedication to FCCLA in Arkansas!

State FACS Coordinator, FCCLA Advisor Ward Retires



Friends, teachers, administrators, business representatives, co-workers and family attended a “farewell” retirement party for **Suellen Ward** on July 31 at the Arkansas 4H Center in Ferndale. Ward had been state program coordinator for the Office of Family and Consumer Sciences since 2000. Prior to that, she taught Family and Consumer Sciences at Guy-Perkins High School for twenty-five years. During her decades-long career, she served on numerous state and national boards and advisory committees, including ARACTE, NATFACS, NASAFACS, FCCLA, and AR Early Childhood Commission.

Suellen was instrumental in many changes and improvements in the FACS programs in Arkansas: Leadership and Service Learning, Orientation to Teaching, and Food Safety are all classes currently taught in schools across the state because of her vision and leadership. She also served as the State Adviser for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). State officers and their advisers presented Suellen with a special honorarium for her service and commitment to the organization. *The University of Central Arkansas also presented a scholarship in her name for her years of dedication to the education of future Family and Consumer Sciences teachers.*

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the goals we set out to achieve eight years ago. For time’s sake, I am unable to personally thank you for what you did. Please allow this note to do just that.

Governor-Elect Asa Hutchinson and I had a very candid conversation following his victory to become the state’s next leader. He expressed his desire for a different person to lead this agency; however, he knows all about the strides we have made in the Arkansas Department of Career Education. He is well aware that the state of this agency is very good, and I am confident that he will appoint someone with a high level of competency and drive to ensure that ACE continues to move onward and

upward. I am committed to ensuring that the changing of the guard is as seamless as possible.

Thank you for a great ride! It’s an opportunity that I cannot forget, for it has made me a more grateful individual to work with people who share a common goal. We made a great team, and it is my hope and prayer that the rallying behind of a common effort continues as the days and years progress. There are so many depending on this agency; therefore, it is a must that everyone works together for the good of the people.

May God continue to bless this agency and the state of Arkansas is my constant prayer.

Humbly submitted,

A Personal Note



Eight years ago, I was given the privilege and honor to be appointed as the Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education. During this time, I developed a passion, respect and love for the work, and the team that we have assembled to serve Arkansans many of whom had been underserved and vulnerable.

The work that we have done during those eight years, has been both a calling and nothing short of incredible. As I have said on many occasions, people must be better off because we served. For that, I will always be grateful for this incredible journey.

As we approach the close of the Beebe administration, I have had a conversation with our Governor-elect Asa Hutchinson and he has informed me that he intends to make a change in the leadership of the Arkansas Department of Career Education.

During the transition, I have pledged my absolute support and cooperation with this new administration and the future Director and I respectfully ask for yours as well.

Additionally, I ask for your prayers for our Agency as we transition into a new administration.

The scripture says "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven".

Accordingly, I am proud of the many accomplishments that we have achieved together. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with each and every one of you in this season and for that I will never forget you.

May God continue to bless each and every one of you and may God bless our new Governor and his new administration as they undertake the awesome task of serving the people of Arkansas.

Thank you,

William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr., Director
Arkansas Department of Career Education

Leadership ♦ Resources ♦ Service

Teachers, Education Professionals Attend ACTE Convention in July

More than 700 career and technical educators packed the Spa City for the **84th Annual Arkansas Career and Technical Educators' Conference** July 27-29. ACTE President **Dave Fisher** said he was pleased with the attendance and the conference. "Our response has been good. We're having a post-conference survey, but a preliminary survey has been pretty positive. We're excited about the turnout," Fisher said.

Educators from nearly every school district in the state attended the various sessions – sessions that organizers hope will motivate the teachers and ultimately their students. Some of this year's ses-

sions were **"Project Lead the Way: Programming for Middle Grades," "Tech Tools In and Out of the Classroom,"** and **"Digital Online Learning."** Attendees also got updates on career and technical education programs in the state.

"The conference was very empowering. I learned a lot about things that I can incorporate into my classroom. I networked with a lot of other teachers that I email throughout the year," said **DeAndre Smith**, who teaches computerized business applications at Hall High School.

While the convention had its highlights, everyone paid tribute to ACTE President **Angela Scott**,

who died on July 7 in a car crash. She spearheaded the conference and was looking forward to welcoming all of the educators and presenters to Hot Springs.

Organizers posthumously honored Scott with the **Lifetime Achievement Award** for her outstanding service and commitment to career and technical education in Arkansas.



Colleagues and friends praised Scott (above) for her years committed to the association as well as to her students.

Past President Linda Bean hands over the 2014-2015 gavel to Dave Fisher



Events Held to Celebrate Disability Awareness Month

Disability Day at the Zoo

Little Rock Zoo officials and the Arkansas Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities coordinated **"Disability Day at the Zoo"** over the Labor Day weekend to not only encour-



age Arkansans with disabilities to enjoy one of the state's special amenities, but it also allowed community leaders to see what steps need to be made to make the zoo more accessible for everyone.

Leonard Boyle, executive director of AGCP, said "We've been working with the zoo for some time to help bring them up to compliance... we're not where we want to be, but we're thanking God we're not where we used to be."

One example: the new train that travels throughout the zoo has a ramp attached for better accessibility.

State Capitol Packed for Annual Celebration

Hundreds packed the rotunda October 15 to celebrate "Disability Employment Awareness Month." Along with the Arkansas Independent Living Council, the Arkansas Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities hosts the event yearly to "allow people with disabilities to experience at our state's Capitol," said AGCP executive director Leonard Boyle.

It is also a chance for the audience to hear from speakers on points of interest, and to visit attending vendors and learn of their services.

More Events Held to Celebrate Disability Awareness Month

Field Offices Hold *Open Houses*, Get the Word Out

Expect! Employ! Empower! October 17

The District VI/Benton office opened its doors to the general public to raise awareness about the importance of including individuals with disabilities in the workforce.



Pictured l-r: from the Hot Springs office: LaTasha Mays, Rita Ross, and Kathy Mansker; from the Benton office: Carrie Woodall and Joanna Cockman

National Night Out October 7

The Jonesboro Field Office participated in the Annual Community Event held to promote and educate citizens about various agencies and their services, where professionals within the agencies (including ARS Counselor **Kecheta Jacobs-McCoy**, below) could network and build relationships with individuals and businesses in the area.



Arkadelphia Rotary Club Visited

From District VI/Hot Springs, Business Relations Rep **Stephanie Bennett** (below left) and Counselor **Abigail Fryar** met with local business people and shared information about RS services



District II Networks, Helps Feed Community

The staff of Jonesboro's ARS office and the city's Spinal Cord Commission volunteered at the NE Arkansas Food Bank Oct. 8, "bridging the gaps and building relationships with other agencies and organizations so we can help change lives and make it possible for individuals to live independently," said District Manager Kimberly Clayborn.



Participating staff included (front row): Jason Moore, Sharon Rowe; (back row): Sharon McKinney, Jamie Barrett, Russell Henry, Kecheta Jacobs-McCoy, Kimberly Clayborn

Sidewalk Disability Awareness Day

District V (Conway & Russellville Field Offices) hosted its first **Sidewalk Disability Awareness Day** on Friday, October 24th. Along with ARS counselors sharing information on services provided by the agency and participation of other community vendors, visitors spoke to ICAN staff about assistive technology and financial assistance from the Alternative Finance staff.



Manning the outdoor ARS booth are (l-r) LaTasha Mays, Deanna Davis, and Valencia Butler.

Unveiling the Mask... Just Boo...cause!

The West Memphis field office subtitled their Halloween-themed open house October 30 "Dispelling myths and increasing awareness of **DISABILITIES**."

Eleven vendors were present to provide information concerning disability awareness, health screenings, tax advice, mobility issues and educational opportunities.



District III Manager Everett Adamson (center) answers visitors' questions



STRONG HIGH PAVES THE WAY FOR FUTURE LEADERS IN CONSTRUCTION

STRONG – In one part of Strong High School, students are forced to ignore the “indoor voices only” policy to which most schools subscribe. For the first-time observer, **Mrs. Tamara Smith’s** classroom is nothing but a haven for noise, and perhaps you may even spot some sawdust on your nicely tailored shirt or your brand-new shoes once you make it inside. You never know what particles may spring into the air, which is the reason everyone is required to wear safety goggles. But this laboratory – of sorts – is not a place where students want silence. The constant clamor is an indication that these students are on a path to a rewarding career which allows them to take care of themselves and eventually their families.

You just got a glimpse into the carpentry class at Strong High School. The students enrolled in the class work for Bulldog Construction – as their teacher puts it – and they are required to make products that you’d see cropping up in the industry.

“I see students that in other classes don’t do well at all, but in my class, they excel. They soar. I think it is because I appeal to the other side of their brain, which helps open up their mathematical and literacy pieces that are not touched,” said Tamara Smith, who is in her second year of teaching.

Around the annexed warehouse, students can be seen doing just about everything – from smoothing out hardwood to their next project to cutting out patterns made from used two-by-fours. Students just built a doghouse, and one student will be using it for his four-legged friend. It’s so big that the new owner crawled inside of it and posed for a picture (right).

“You get to touch what you’re doing.

You’re not just sitting and writing,” said Mason Thompson, a senior at Strong High.

The class appealed to Thompson because of its connection to the work he has done outside of the classroom. Enrolled in the school’s carpentry class, Thompson said he is sprucing up his skills. He has already re-floored his home. He’s been doing carpentry all of his life.

Patrick Thomas, a sophomore, is not only in the carpentry class, but he is also in the electrical apprenticeship class. He, too, has grown up around this line of work, as much of the work he does with his grandfather coincides with the work he does in class.

Thomas also looks at this class as a means of opening doors for a future career in this industry if he decides later that he does not want to go to college.

“College isn’t for everybody. With this, you move up faster. Some people come out of college and can’t even get a job in the field they studied. We already got it,” Thomas said.

Mrs. Smith makes sure they have it. The students are learning the skills to acquire national certifications, namely that which is awarded by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA.

“This allows my students the same credentials that grown men and women use every day in the construction industry. My students are way ahead of the pack when it comes to getting a job,” she said.

Smith teaches construction technology, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical apprenticeship at Strong High. Going to the classroom was never on her radar, as she enjoyed crisscrossing the country working in the industry. It is an industry she said can be quite lucrative.

But her purpose to leave her high-salaried job for a much lower one is a result of divine intervention.

“A lady a church said, ‘The school needs a shop teacher and I told them you would be

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in for an interview tomorrow.' I was like 'What?'" she said, reflecting on that August 2013 morning.

Still, with no intentions of teaching, Smith decided to go to the interview with leaders of the school district.

"I feel it was a calling from God. She told me at church, so God must want me to do this, and I actually found out I really enjoy it," she said.

It's the relationships formed with students that Smith said confirms she was called to teach. Since she has started, plans are underway to get the students trained using a forklift to add with their arsenal of certifications. Smith is also working South Arkansas Community College (SACC) to accept the hours already accrued at Strong High, so that after one year at SACC, the students will have three years of credits in their respective majors.

"It's really good to see they are able to take what I have taught them and told them and they use it," Smith said.

The work that Smith's students do is being recognized throughout the school and community. They built the backdrop for homecoming dance and prom, and they even constructed the float on which the homecoming queen rode.

"This gives them even more school pride," Smith said.

Former students have shared with Smith how they appreciate her knowledge, as they are already leaders at their jobs. Many of them are working as electricians and at the local hardwood mill, using the skills they learned in Smith's class.

One of the students, whom Smith described as "obnoxious," thanked her.

"He said, 'Mrs. T, all the stuff you were telling us,



I found out you weren't lying. I've been sent as far as Florida for work," she recounted.

While surveying the various stations within the warehouse, you might be surprised to see that the class is not intimidating to girls. Perhaps Mrs. T has made females comfortable about taking the class.

"I enjoy doing something that doesn't make me sleepy or bored," said Savannah Hamilton, a senior.

Hamilton said the electrical apprenticeship and carpentry classes appealed to her because, like many of her classmates, this type of work is familiar. Her father refuses to allow her gender keep her from learning the ropes.

"My dad and my cousins have always been in carpentry. All I have is brothers. My dad raised me like a boy," Hamilton said, while chuckling.

In her second year, Hamilton chose the class because she wants a career in agriculture. She felt that it would be of great benefit to sign up.

"With farming, you have to do all kinds of things with tools. You have to build things if you're in agriculture," she said.

Because of their location in a rural, blue-collar community like Strong, Smith said it is important that she prepares her students for technical careers should her students decide to continue their family legacies. She emphasizes college but knows that not everyone will go. Her goal, she said, is to make sure her students are able to support themselves, no matter what they decide to do.

"You always need a backup plan. We're in a society where you can get that job that you really want. But along the way, you might find out you enjoy doing something with your hands," Smith said.

MOUNTAIN HOME *continued from page 11*

possible,” said **Sunny Rhoades**, a junior at the school.

Mountain Home High School Career Academies prides itself on being the school of the future, educating tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders on their individual learning styles, instead of the traditional, “one-fits-all” approach that many critics say are leaving students behind and subsequently putting the country at a disadvantage when compared to their peers in other nations.

“This school is also innovative. I feel this is the best,” said Rhoades.

Mountain Home High School Career Academies changed its name and approach to education in 2003, after years of researching and visiting other schools that had career academies. The career academy concept focuses on separating students into clusters and grouping them according to the way they interpret and conceptualize the topics being taught.

“It’s becoming more and more difficult to articulate everything that we do here in a few minutes because there are so many pieces to the puzzle and they overlap,” said **Brigitte Shipman**, the school’s academy coordinator.

The school is divided into three sections, or wings: **Communication, Arts, and Business (CAB)**; **Agriculture, Construction, Manufacturing, and Engineering (ACME)**; and **Health and Human Services (HHS)**. In ninth grade, while still in junior high, students take a class called Keystone that allows them to explore careers and their learning styles. They take assessments as well to determine which discipline will be best for them in high school.

“I’m definitely a visual person. I have to see things. I’m not much of a note taker, and HHS is more of a ‘Let’s look at it and take it down.’ I’m not like that at all,” said **Claire Schmuecker**, a senior at the school.

If students choose to switch academies, they can do so after an entire year. That does happen at times, but for the most part, the assessments taken in ninth grade really match the students’ learning styles.

With the immense focus on testing in K-12 education, **Principal Dana Brown** said that the academies have improved her school’s scores. She attributes the achievement to the structure of the school and its ability



to reach students on their levels.

“It’s increased our graduation rate, too, because what we try to do is get our data, divide the data by department, and identify weak student learning points and deliver that material to the academies. Then the teacher, let’s say in agriculture, can see how he or she can incorporate a geometry lesson,” Brown said.

Just recently, Mountain Home was recognized with the National Career Academies Coalition’s coveted Jeffery Stein Award. This award recognizes a career academy school for adopting the model and maintaining it over time. Stein, who passed away in 2012, was a beloved mathematics and economics teacher and a staunch supporter of career academies.

“The reason this model has sustained in a rural setting is because of the community. The community piece is one of the largest successes of sustainability,” Shipman said.

Shipman said the community is fully involved and supportive of career academies and has been the reason that it has remained in place. It’s not just the parents who are on board, but business leaders also are invested in the school and have helped with the grooming of students for their desired careers. This is possible through the mentorship and internship program that connects students to the working world.

“[I] realized that architecture wasn’t for me,” said **Loren Bohannon**, a student enrolled in the ACME career academy. “It’s so much better than not being offered these things and moving on and wasting time and money later on,” she said.

Things change over time, especially in education, but Principal Brown said the career academies have done more than average to improve Mountain Home High.

Perhaps there is some good in it when students praise the structure.

“I think our high school stands out because of how much they put into it for us, and they’re always willing to go above and beyond to help us,” Bohannon said.



ACTI Graduates Receive Diplomas

Excited graduates and their parents packed the Hot Springs Convention Center for the 186th Commencement Exercises. Outgoing ACE Director **William L. "Bill" Walker Jr.** served as the keynote speaker. He encouraged the graduates to keep pushing and to never give up. This graduation also marked the first time a class graduated from a fully-accredited institution. Each diploma had a Council on Education (COE) seal placed on it to signify this achievement.



Graduates

Automotive Collision Repair: Angelo Newburn, Larry Pearson.

Auto Collision Technology: Jesse Rawls.

Automotive Service Technology: Cedric Gray, Dillon McGee, Shaquille Samuels, Paul Turner.

Business & Marketing Technology: Courtney Carroll, Lisa Grinstead, Kimberly Hillard, Sebastian Kirk, Albert Mitchell, Michael Moya, Kourtney Parker, Michael Scussel, Brandon Searcy, Tammy Ward, Karla Warnick, William Wilkins, Bryce Yarbrough.

Certified Nursing Assistant: Destiny Bennett, Tia Marie Cooley, Keyosha Dale, Candace Piggee.

Construction Technology: Justin Arbuckle, Demarius Bibbs, Justin Faulkner, Wesley Goldsborough, Blake Moore, Logan Petruzzi, Joseph Wren.

Cosmetology: Courtney Myers.

Culinary Arts: Brandon Baker, Robert Bond, Steven Clayton, Michael Douglas, Cory Hawkins, Marlie Her, Marquise Jackson, Austin Lee, Alisha Maxie, Tessa Payne, Robert West.

Graphic Communications: Meagan Adams, Taivion Ailsworth, Adam Bolander, Alexandra Bottoms, Diante Brown, Coderis Davis, Elijah Garrett, Quintavious Hayes, Kayla Jefferson, Joshua Robbins, Joshua Stevens, Crystal Tapia, Alison Ward, Haylie Wells, Lucy Young.

Power Equipment Technology: Cedric Brooks, Travis Cross, Rodney Edens, Dewey Farmer, Cody Godwin, Verlester Sims.

Sales & Marketing: Benjamin King.

Welding: Eddrick Fullwood, Decarius Jackson, Jared Kemp, Vanterious Martin, Arthur Mullins, Jagger Winberry.

Internships

Laura Pauga
Malcolm Trice



Arkansas Department of CAREER EDUCATION

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