



the Career Counselor 2014

A publication of the Arkansas Department of Career Education
501-682-1500 • <http://ace.arkansas.gov>

First Class Completes from UAMS' Project SEARCH

Eleven interns who participated in the Project SEARCH program received their certificates of completion and have become employed at various businesses.

Project SEARCH – a joint collaboration between the **University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)**, **ACCESS**, and **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS)** – started last fall at the UAMS hospital to train interns living with disabilities in departments like patient transport, nutrition services, central supply, the mailroom, and human resources.

In a year-end ceremony to mark the completion of the program, the interns were recognized for their commitment, and they thanked coordinators and their parents for helping them along the way. The class individually read moving testaments as to how the program helped to build their confidence and has led them toward financial independence.

Ten of the 11 interns have acquired jobs for businesses and corporations like the City of Little Rock, St. Vincent Health System, and UAMS.

"The success of this first year has met and exceeded all of our expectations. We set a goal as business advisory campaign. More importantly, the inaugural class had an indescribable year as it relates to the connections they made with the staff, the support from supervisors, and the ACCESS staff," says **Judy Smith**, director of ARS transition services.



First Lady **Ginger Beebe** served as keynote speaker for the closing ceremony. A group of 12 interns has already been accepted for the 2014-15 cycle.

October

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

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Arkansas FFA Convention Considered One of the Best

CAMP COUCHDALE – A sea of blue corduroy jackets filled Camp Couchdale during the week of June 4-6 to mark the 87th Annual Arkansas FFA



FFA 87th continued on page 18



Director's Update

William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr.

Director

Arkansas Department of Career Education

Preparing individuals for careers in today's technological workplace has become a hot topic, both in Arkansas and across the nation. Recently, Governor Mike Beebe convened a group of general managers of multiple manufacturing facilities across the state to meet with his Workforce Cabinet to discuss how to ensure that Arkansas has a globally competitive workforce, both for today and tomorrow. The discussions proved very fruitful, and I am happy to report that career and technical education, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation as provided through our agency are in the forefront of efforts to prepare the state's workforce.

The agency compiled a report that I provided to the attendees at the session, and I want to take this opportunity to share a few of the highlights with you. You can read the full report online at <http://ace.arkansas.gov/aboutUs/Documents/Publications/WFC%20and%20Employers%205.7.14%20Report.pdf>.

Secondary area career centers located on two-year college campuses can respond quickly to industry needs. Career centers can work with local employers to design curriculum tailored to the needs of an individual employer or a high-demand employment sector in a specific region of the state. An exemplary model exists in Northeast Arkansas. The secondary career center at Arkansas Northeastern College (ANC) offers advanced

manufacturing to students in six school districts. ANC is also piloting a work-based internship program in collaboration with Tenaris Hickman through which high school seniors work afternoons, are paid wages, and complete a 60-hour curriculum incorporating Tenaris Hickman's company-specific new hire protocols.

STEM Works, an initiative of the Workforce Cabinet, is proving extremely successful in preparing the state's future workforce to meet the escalating demand for employees in high-tech fields. We have designated \$500,000 of start-up grant funding for Project Lead The Way (pre-engineering) and medical bioscience programs of study in 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15.

Apprenticeships, Internships, and Work-based Learning provide both adults and high school students industry-specific knowledge and career readiness skills. Adult apprenticeships align training to industry needs and prepare adults to fill high-skill, high-demand jobs in lucrative technology and manufacturing fields. Internships and work-based learning are performed in partnership with local businesses, industries, or other organizations and enable students to apply classroom instruction in a real-world business or service-oriented work environment.

Nationally recognized industry certifications are incorporated into career and technical curriculum, thus giving students the opportunity to offer employers objec-

tive standardized proof that they have the skills to fill job openings. Some of the certifications offered include American Welding Society, Child Development Associate, Certified Nursing Assistant, National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation/Automotive Service Excellence, ServSafe, National Center for Construction Education and Research, Microsoft IT Academy certifications, and the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (CRC).

Adult Education includes a range of instructional programs that help adults get the basic skills they need to be productive workers, family members, and citizens. These programs emphasize basic skills such as reading, writing, math, and English language competency. Adult education classes prepare adults who lack a high school diploma with academic skills instruction so that they can take the GED® test.

Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) is a job-readiness training program designed to meet the needs of unemployed or underemployed adults. WAGE™ instruction includes 112 basic skills competencies based on the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) that have been identified as essential workplace skills by employers in Arkansas and the nation. WAGE™ offers six state issued certificates: Bank Teller, Clerical, Customer Service I & II, Employability, and Industrial. The number of adults earning a WAGE™ certificate has increased by 62 percent since 2008.

Customized Workplace Classes in Academic Basic Skills offer employers the opportunity to help their employees improve their basic skills. These classes are customized to the individual employer,

DIRECTOR *continued on page 22*

Spotlight on Cave City Students

Small School Prepares Students for Big Careers

In a school made up of more than 400 teenagers, it can sometimes be hard to drive home the message the importance of school. Many students see school as a chore, a place to which they dread going. It's a place where the countdown to summer starts for some in August.

Those sentiments about school still linger at Cave City High School, but **Principal Marc Walling** says more and more students, each year, are excited about coming to school. He credits the excitement to the strong and popular career and technical education programs the school offers.

Cave City boasts an impressive slate of programs: several levels of **family and consumer sciences**, enough agriculture programs to require two full-time **agriculture** teachers, six periods of **radio and television**, and four periods of **Environmental and Spatial Technologies** (EAST) lab.

"You can travel a long way from here and try to find a school that offers all of the extracurricular programs. We are the smallest in the state to offer dual programs [radio and television]," says Walling.

In the EAST lab, students are huddled together in groups and working on MACs, using the latest applications to complete assignments incorporating project-based learning. This style

of learning allows students to be creative in their final results while working in a group setting.

"It teaches you on how to rely on each other through problems," **Shanae Snow** says.

One of the most memorable projects students completed this school year involved creating a campaign to urge community members to stop smoking. With this assignment issued by the Sharpe County Health Coalition, the students had to create a marketing strategy, which included a slogan, a billboard, and radio and television ads.

The 20 students were divided into groups and worked on the project for a few weeks. At the end, the groups presented their work to the Sharpe County Health Commission in a business-like setting. The Commission watched all of the presentations and picked the group that had the best strategy. The winning group was recognized with its billboard placed along one of the main corridors in Sharpe County.

"We've had business people come in and present real business

projects that they deal with for our kids to work on them," says Principal Walling,

Walling says offering these comprehensive courses at the school helps keep students interested in school. He says it's hard for them to get bored when they are fully engaged in classes that demand so much participation.

In the television class, students use the latest technology to produce a newscast and edit video that is viewed throughout the school and community. The students learn the fundamentals of incorporating video and audio to create news products, commercials, and specials. Just recently, some students shot video of a graduation. They have been charged to edit the video and put the final product onto DVDs, which will go to the graduates and their families.

Kayla Stephens, a junior, says she realized how fortunate the school is to have the programs when they went up against larger schools in state competitions – and won! Some of the students earned the right to go to National Skills USA Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

"I'm so appreciative of my school that they would put this out there for us. In our world, technology is growing so rapidly that we need classes to keep up with we're going to use in the future," she says.



Students follow through on research for community business projects.

Food Science Lab Challenges Students to Become Industry Leaders

SPRINGDALE – It’s just after 9 a.m. on a beautiful Thursday in late May. The hallways are empty as teachers are giving last-minute reviews for upcoming final exams that mark the official end of the school year.

Outside of the classroom building, though, you end up walking into the annex, where there’s some kind of noise and a pleasing scent that suddenly overtakes you, mainly because it’s a different setting from the one aforementioned.

The activity is taking place inside the food science lab at Springdale High School. Students are finishing up final – and good-smelling – projects to close out the year. One group in the class wanted to join the breakfast war, influenced by the bitter battle we’ve seen play out between Taco Bell and McDonald’s. Over some scrambled eggs, one student was coming up with an early morning

meal he thought could compete against the big name franchises.

“It’s more than just throwing something into the skillet. You have to learn about the food that you are making,” says **Hunter Sargent**, who is taking the second level of this course.

Sargent says this is one of his favorite classes because it allows him and his classmates to be creative. Using a project-based approach, the students are given a food-related assignment and must come up with a solution based on safe practices, sound research, and collaborative effort.

“They give you a product you need to make something out of,” Sargent explains. “It will be a product out of something that’s already made that needs to be put to sale.”

That’s what brings the thrill to Sargent. Earlier this year, he and his team were challenged to make a rice bar. They tried to combine rice and fruit, and after that didn’t work, they decided to put ice cream with rice. Another disappointment! They realized it had to be something with the composition of the rice that derailed their delicious invention.

“Rice is 75-percent starch so there’s really no way to get the starchy taste out of it without using an acid, and if you use an acid then it’s not considered an FDA-approved rice product anymore,” he says.

The group may not have gotten a rice bar, but they won a prize. Their detailed discovery of rice and its composition –and what it prevented them from doing – led to their receiving top honors at a food science competition at the University of Arkansas.

“We want them ready to step into any position, whether it’s Taco Bell or a processing plant or any supply chain that has to deal with food, said **Chad Burkett**, the school’s food science teacher.

Burkett, a Springdale High alumnus, says the class is popular among students – so popular he can’t accommodate everyone who signs up for it. Nearly 200 students signed up for the class the previous school year, but the classroom and the lab –the kitchen, rather—can only accommodate 80 students.

“There are not enough facilities and not enough of us to serve them all. That’s a good problem. We are always looking for ways to expand our program so we can serve more kids,” he says.

The food science class began during the 2012-13 school year. At the urging of Arkansas FFA Director **Marion Fletcher**, Burkett and other agriculture teachers at Springdale High were charged with creating a curriculum to attract students to consider a career in

LAB continued on page 5



A Fond Farewell to a Rehab Pioneer

E. **Russell Baxter**, appointed by the governor in 1965 as commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, a position he held 22 years until his retirement in 1987, passed away January 2 at the age of 88.

A World War II Army Air Forces veteran, Baxter received his master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and enjoyed a long and successful career in the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Division, serving as a rehabilitation counselor, supervisor of services for the blind, supervisor of staff services, supervisor of field services, and assistant commissioner until his appointment as commissioner.

Baxter was a highly respected leader in the field of rehabilitation at the state, regional, and national

level. He was a member of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association, Southwest Region, National Association, and the National Rehabilitation Association in Washington, D.C., and was a very active member of the Board of Directors for 20 years. He was a member of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, serving as president of that organization for two years, **during which time the Rehabilitation ACT Amendment of 1973 was passed by Congress, which was significant legislation for people with disabilities.**

Through the years he received numerous awards and recognition for his work; advocacy; and state, regional, and federal involvement on behalf of people with disabilities. He loved people and life and believed strongly in truth, justice and equality for all. His love and determination



significantly improved the quality of life for persons with disabilities not only in Arkansas but throughout the nation.

Memorials may be made to First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 357, Sheridan, AR 72150, or Children's International.

LAB continued from page 4

learning about food composition, food chemistry, and making and selling new food products. Burkett traveled across the country to food science programs at various universities. He also questioned food processing companies, such as nearby Tyson Foods, about what needs to be taught in the schools to prepare students for productive careers in the industry.

"At the very least, I'd like to think when they leave here or if they work in fast food, they know exactly how to handle food safely – washing their hands and knowing the contamination points. At the very least we have a safer food plan," Burkett says.

Since the 2012-13 school year, a higher level of the class has been added to the curriculum. In Food Science I, students learn about food chemistry, food safety,

culinary arts, and the correct way to cut vegetables. In Food Science II, students design nutrition packaging labels and develop a marketing strategy as they launch a new product. Food Science III, to be taught for the first time this upcoming school year, focuses on business management and supply chain. An internship will also be required.

For the final project in Burkett's class, students in Food Science II had to prepare a scone. Divided into groups, the students draft a recipe, make it, and then conduct taste tests with members from other groups. The students are graded not only on taste, but also presentation, composition, and other culinary skills they've acquired in the class.

"I still go to McDonald's every day but that's just a high school kid," Sargeant says with a laugh. "But it [the class] makes you want stuff

that's healthy for you and look for what's in certain foods. You want to know what's bad and what's good just by having this class."

There's an incentive to continuing the food science track after students graduate from Springdale High. Kansas State University offers six hours of concurrent food science credit to the students, which could serve as an incentive to encouraging a career in the industry.

Burkett, though, says while he would love to see his students become leaders in the food science industry, he's not forcing the career path upon them. He just wants them to pursue something, and give it their all.

"We cover a wide range of practical skills that are also very valuable and sought after, and they translate into work into just about any part of this world," he says.

State Leaders Exposed to 21ST Century Learning at Arkadelphia High

ARKADELPHIA -- Instead of desks, Arkadelphia High School students are accustomed to using tables and chairs as they move about the classroom. Their learning environment is more mobile than the traditional setting. The space allows students to not only interact and collaborate with their peers, but also comfortably use the technology provided to them.

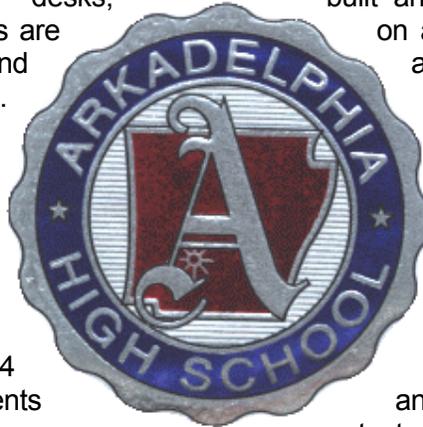
Part of the **New Tech Network**, Arkadelphia High School is one of 14 Arkansas high schools that teach students using a project-based curriculum to prepare students for their respective career fields. Students work in groups and participate in thought-probing projects across multiple disciplines. Their teachers don't necessarily lecture; they serve as guides to help students with the lesson at hand. Students use online tools that connect them with other students from across the country. It's part of the state's push to encourage a more focused concentration in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM.

"I like it a lot. It allows us to think outside of the box and find other resources to see how others think," says **Madison Harris**, a sophomore at Arkadelphia High.

The New Tech Network launched at AHS last year, which was Harris' freshman year. She said it was a big transition from eighth grade – the traditional school setting – but the 21st-century approach, Harris said, is teaching her a lot.

"It helps us with team building skills," Harris said.

State leaders got the opportunity to spend the day with students and interact with them about the New Tech approach. One of the attractions on display consisted of the engineering of bridges. The students looked at a number of bridges in Clark County and looked at the years in which they were



built and how much traffic passes over them on a consistent basis. Students even built a bridge and compiled the ways and the weight it would collapse.

"We had to take a step back and envisioned what we wanted school to look like and worked toward that," said **Donnie Whitten, Ed.D.**, superintendent of Arkadelphia Public Schools.

Whitten credits the New Tech Network for creating better students and improving scores on standardized tests. He said the modern-day learning model allows them to implement the critical Common Core standards into the lesson plans, unbeknownst to the students. He noted all but one of the students who took last year's state-required geometry end-of-course exam scored proficient.

"This program allows us to see beyond the test," Whitten said.

Over the past three years, the Arkansas Department of Career Education has contributed more than \$1.5 million to help create and maintain STEM Works. It is part of a national initiative called "**Project Lead the Way**," designed to provide high school students with hands-on curriculum and practical applications. The goal is to nurture the teens to become problem solvers, inventors, and strong communicators.

The following schools participate in the New Tech Network: Cross County High, Lincoln High, Arkadelphia High, Dumas High, El Dorado High, Highland High, Hope High, Marked Tree High, Riverview High, Van Buren High, Blytheville High, Hillcrest High, Rogers High, and Trumann High. Arkansas High and Trumann Intermediate will join the network in the upcoming school year.



Students answer questions about their classes for visiting state leaders.

ACTI Happenings

ACTI GRADUATES ACCEPT DIPLOMAS, HEAD OUT INTO THE WORLD

HOT SPRINGS – Among cheering family, friends, and supporters, 40 graduates from the **Arkansas Career Technical Institute (ACTI)** walked across the stage to mark the end of their journey at the Hot Springs facility to begin their respective careers.

The ceremony also marked the official end to **Commissioner Randy Laverty's** career as head of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Laverty says he made sure the graduation was his last event to attend as commissioner. For his role at ACTI, he was named as an honorary graduate of the school.

"This is a real treat. This is what it's all about – making sure our clients get the training they need to be successful," he says.

Jonathan Bibb, who serves as ACTI administrator, is now ARS interim commissioner.

"I'm excited. These graduates are ready to go out into the world and make a difference," Bibb said.

This year's keynote speaker was **André Slay**, who lost his right leg below his knee in a motorcycle accident. Despite his becoming an amputee, he ran in the 2014 Boston Marathon and is now a pilot.

He challenged the graduates to look further than their disabilities and achieve whatever they desire.

"Don't let anything stop you from achieving your dreams. Work hard and keep pushing," Slay told them.

Director Bill Walker says Slay's story and message should motivate the graduates that they don't have to let anything stop them from reaching their goals.

"You came to ACTI and you

learned. You have reached a milestone. Now you're ready to take on the world. You can do it! You have so many people who believe in you and are supporting you," Walker says.

The following is a list of the graduates, their area of study, and additional student distinctions.

- ◆ Honor Graduate
- ◆ SkillsUSA Graduate
- ◆ HOSA Graduate
- ◆ JAG Graduate
- ◆ CRC Graduate

Automotive Collision Repair: Instructors: Donald Crossley & David Tunncliff. ◆ Brian Bogle, Cabot

Automotive Service Technology: Instructor: Wayne Thomas. ◆ Rahn Clay, Pine Bluff; ◆ Elixzar Alex Drew, Genoa; ◆ Shawn Cade Lucio, Gurdon; ◆ Colby Overstreet, Greenwood; Landon Reece, Hot Springs; Jesse Stevens, Hot Springs; ◆ Rusty Tuggle, West Fork.

Business & Marketing Technology: Instructor: Jacob Bryant. ◆ James Edmiston, Fort Smith; Megan Gardner, Texarkana; ◆ Natalie Nation, Hot Springs; ◆ Morgan Neal, Bentonville; ◆ Sara Norwood, Bauxite; ◆ Matthew Rogers, Ashdown; ◆ Hailey Strader, Searcy; William Hunter Ware, Arkadelphia; ◆ April Whittington, Percy.

Certified Nursing Assistant: Instructors: Cheryl Miller-Norman & Sharyn Spiva. ◆ Ryan Evans, Booneville; ◆ Cedric Griffin Jr., Hot Springs; ◆ Michael Rice, Siloam Springs.

Construction Technology: Instructors: Nick Avery & David Morrow. ◆ Daniel Dowden, Flippin; ◆ Jacob Stancil, Quitman.



ACTI continued on page 17

Transitions Teacher Closes Chapter, Reflects on Preparing Students for the World

CAVE CITY – As the final days of the school year approached, **Wanda Treat** carefully uncovered treasures found in various parts of her classroom and in her desk. Among the special mementos are poems, notes, plaques, and other keepsakes from former students. Treat's lengthy 27 years in the classroom is visible by the heart-shaped flag made by one of her students. Treat not only got to see that student graduate, but she also taught that student's child and watched him walk across the stage in May. The beloved teacher decided to give the flag back to the student-now-parent as a symbol of the closure of her teaching career.

"Let's just say she cried," Treat says, trying not to choke up herself.

Wanda Treat spent the bulk of her time at Cave City High School teaching special education classes. Although she knew her students came to her with cognitive and developmental disabilities, she pushed them to achieve higher than they or their parents ever thought they could.

"We learn first off about what their struggles are and what their weaknesses are. We talk about what their dreams are, what they would like to do. We do a lot of research about what it takes to be successful at that," Treat says.

Treat teaches a number of classes to increase students' scores in English and math, but her favorite class – hands down – is teaching transitions. To teach the course to seniors, Treat spends the entire year getting the students ready for work.

"The very first day [of school], I ask my students: 'Why are you here?' They look at me like, Crazy

Lady, we're here because the law makes us come here," Treat jokingly says.

After she explains why the students have been assigned to the class, Treat says they delve into each student's disability. From the start, Treat tells her students they can be successful.

"They know this is where they can come and find success. *Self-determination* and *self-advocacy* are two words I teach them day one. If they don't decide I'm going to do this, it's not going to happen," Treat says. The work kicks into high gear. Seniors relay their career goals to Treat and her paraprofessional, **Kim Bradley**, and the journey toward that goal begins.

"We have speakers come in. If they want to be a photographer, we have a photographer come in and talk about how you can be a photographer, what the rewards are, and what the drawbacks are," Treat said.

Treat recalls the time one of her seniors decided to become a veterinarian. A few years ago, Treat invited a local veterinarian to come to the class and talk about the career. That student felt discouraged after learning all of the high-level math and science skills needed to pursue the field.

"You don't shoot their balloon out of the sky. You help them figure out what they can do," Treat said.

That's what took place. Treat and the student realized the student could still work with animals even though the veterinarian route would be impossible. Treat led the student to consider a career in grooming.



After graduation, the animal lover took hands-on and online classes with a tutor and later opened a grooming service. According to Treat, the student has lots of clients and stays busy.

"The whole purpose behind it [transitions class] is let's not put a diploma in their hand if we don't show them what to do with it. You've got to give them the direction," Treat says, highlighting this as one of her favorite stories about the success of the transitions class.

In transitions class, students compile a "Senior Notebook," containing important documents such as birth certificates, a copy of their social security card, résumés, and reference letters. The students spend much of the year tweaking and re-tweaking their resumes to make sure they are the best they can be, and –most importantly – to get seniors a job.

TEACHER continued on page 15

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services UPdate



Commissioner **Randy Laverty** (left) retired May 30 following 35+ years of state service, the last year as commissioner for ARS.

Appointed interim commissioner is **Jonathan Bibb** (right). Bibb is also administrator of the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) in Hot Springs

Best wishes are extended to both in their new journeys.



FFA: Arkansas Hosts National Conference



FFA officers from six states, including Arkansas, spent a week at DeGray Lake to not only network and learn more about their roles in the organization, but to also get a deeper understanding of the issues facing agriculture.

Officers from **Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, and Tennessee** spent hours in training at the National Leadership Conference for State Officers during the week of June 23-27. This is one of a series of workshops the newly elected officers will attend as they begin to serve their roles in their respective states. Arkansas's FFA state officers were elected by their peers during the state FFA convention, which took place during the week of June 4-6 at Camp Couchdale (see article beginning on page 1).

Bryce Rohr, Arkansas's FFA state president, says it's good to get other teams from across the nation to meet in one place so they can network and share visions.

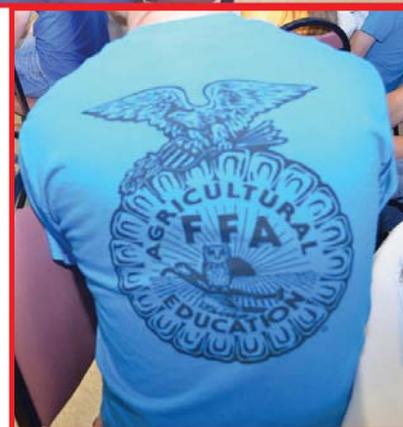
"They just bring ideas that we haven't heard, so it's interesting to see what other states do to accomplish the same goals that we're doing," Rohr says.

The week was jam-packed with leadership training activities that exposed the officers to critical leadership skills like communication and time management. The presenters were former FFA national officers.

"They have a lot of big goals their state expects of them, their teammates, and themselves, and to actually make that happen, they need a lot of tools and they need to hold themselves to a higher standard than what they really are," says **Joenelle Futrell**, a former national FFA officer from Kentucky.

FFA leaders from the Indianapolis headquarters were also represented at the conference. **Todd Greenwood**, director of corporate contribution, said the weeklong gathering is a good way to have officers learn about the challenges in agriculture and accurately communicate them and perhaps find solutions to the pressing issues.

"It's important they understand it now as they make career choices going forward. The industry would like for us to help bring a more informed public into the stores to buy food and to comment and be knowledgeable," Greenwood said.





Scholarship Recipients March on Toward Completing Educational Journeys

With the Governor's Mansion as the backdrop, 26 Arkansas students were serenaded by claps and commendations as they accepted scholarships presented by the **Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities (GCPD)**. For the recipients, it's a crowning moment that outshines the difficulties of living with their disabilities.

"[This is for] all the people who've helped me, like my teachers. They believed in me and my talents. You don't have to worry about your disabilities. Anybody can do it," said Pine Bluff native **Dewayne Goldmon** (pictured below, with his parents), who is studying landscape architecture at Iowa State University.



Like Goldman, the recipients were joined by supportive family members and friends who came to the annual scholarship banquet. Each of the students is awarded \$1,000 to go toward their studies.

"I'm really proud to know the Governor's Commission on Disabilities is providing scholarships to these kids so they're able to make a difference in the lives of others," said **Dyann Key** of Magnet Cove.

For Dyann Key, watching her daughter **Amanda** being recognized is a bit emotional. Amanda was born with Spina Bifida, perhaps one of the most common permanently disabling birth defects in the United States. It occurs in the womb when the baby's spinal cord does not completely close. This causes the child to get around

with crutches, braces, or sometimes wheelchairs.

"It was devastating," said Key, whose daughter used a brace for years but is now walking with no assistance at all. "To know that she is able to overcome a disability and to get this scholarship and make the difference in the lives of others is her goal," Key added.

Key said Amanda's goal is to make a difference in the lives of others born with Spina Bifida.

Billy Altom (pictured right, top), executive director of the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living, encouraged the scholarship recipients to not only continue in their quest to reach their dreams, but to also become advocates for causes relating to people with disabilities. He shared his own experiences about how he's been actively involved in rights for Arkansans with disabilities.

"Vote. Be a part of your community," he said. "We have to be out there, and we have to be seen."

GCPD Executive Director **Leonard Boyle** (above, bottom) said that seeing these students accept the scholarships dispels the myth that people with disabilities are unable to participate in mainstream society.

"This allows people with disabilities to not only complete their education, but it will also provide better opportunities for them as they strive to become productive members of society," Boyle said.

A scholarship committee reviewed nearly 80 applications and decided to award the monies to the 26 recipients.

The money used to fund the scholarships is taken from the fines collected from violators of the state's accessible parking law.



JAG Students Reel in Huge Dough in Scholarships

LITTLE ROCK – Until August rolls around, **Connor Purvis**, a 2014 graduate of Mena High School, decided this would be the summer he would not look for a job. For once, he wanted to just sit around and do nothing.

“I can sit back a moment and then start over and do more work,” Purvis says.



Daryonna Armstrong

Perhaps taking a break is a reward for his years of studiousness. Not only did Purvis graduate from Mena High as the co-valedictorian, but he’s amassed \$242,000 in scholarships, funding his academic career to Harding University to major in biochemistry and molecular biology. He plans to become a trauma surgeon and take part in medical missions work.

“I like the idea of giving back to the world and trying to help people in places where there isn’t enough access to doctors,” says Purvis.

It took a lot of dedication on Purvis’ part to rack up that much in scholarships, but he credits the Mena High School **Jobs for Arkansas’s Graduates (JAG)**

program for not only helping him search for scholarships but also prepare for them. Many of the seniors took advantage of the program and learned skills that aided them in charting their futures.

“It gave me a full period each day where I could just work on scholarship applications,” Purvis says. “I could take care of all of that college stuff. At the beginning of the year, we did résumés and interviews.”

JAG, offered in 103 high schools across the state, began in 2000 to ensure Arkansas high school students were on track to graduate and to prepare them for a career thereafter, whether it’s postsecondary education, the military, or immediately entering the workforce.

“This is a great opportunity for our students in making sure they are successful after they walk across the stage,” says **Marylène Tate**, interim associate director for career and technical education.

Tate says the original goal for JAG was to work with students considered “at risk” or in jeopardy of dropping out of school. While that has remained the mission of the national JAG (Jobs for America’s Graduates) organization, Tate and other leaders have tweaked the program here in Arkansas to expose all students to it.

“JAG fits all students, and all students can benefit from it,” Tate says.

Arkansas JAG students that make up the 2014 graduates collectively garnered more than \$6.9 million dollars in scholarships, making it a record-setting group of students!

Dymond Smith, a recent graduate of Riverview High School (Searcy), is another JAG student who reeled in hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships. Collecting more than \$215,700, Smith is preparing to attend Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.



Connor Purvis

Also among this year’s JAG scholarship recipients is **Darryonna Armstrong**. The McClellan High School (Little Rock) graduate won the coveted Gates Millennium Scholarship, valued at \$140,000. Armstrong had to survive a rigorous application process that rewards students who have strong leadership skills, community service commitments, and scholarly attributes. Armstrong will begin her collegiate career this fall at the University of Arkansas.

JAG coordinators are also required to track their students’ success after they’ve graduated from high school. Tate says Arkansas is always recognized for the high rate of students who are

JAG continued on page 14

Career and Technical Student Organizations Shine in 2014





Arkansas Students Compete in SkillsUSA, Return with Medals and Motivation



KANSAS CITY, MO – Inside Kemper Arena, the 17,000-square-foot facility in the heart of Kansas City, Mo., tens of hundreds of students from across the nation’s high schools and postsecondary institutions made their presence known at the opening ceremony of the **50th Annual National Leadership and SkillsUSA Conference**. Electrifying and lively, the event perhaps could have even overwhelmed a decibel meter had one been there.

Among the celebratory rowdiness, *more than 100 Arkansas participants – donning hog headgear with the Arkansas SkillsUSA banner – paraded the arena as a way to show that Arkansas was not only in the place, but more importantly, the students were ready to compete.* Besides, that’s the reason for their presence: to win medals and bragging rights as one of the best in the country.

“It’s exciting and nerve-racking, but in the end, if you make new friends here you’re going to be friends if you have to compete against one another,” said **Michelle Reynolds**, an Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) student who competed in the graphic communications division.

More than 140 Arkansas students competed in the momentous, record-breaking SkillsUSA Conference, which not only celebrated its golden year but also its largest conference attendance ever. Organizers said more than 6,000 career and technical students

descended onto Kansas City. It’s become so large that the downtown Kansas City venues and amenities can no longer hold the convention. After 21 years in the “Barbecue Capital of the World,” the conference will begin a new chapter in Louisville. The news came as a devastating blow to Kansas City officials, who embraced the conference for a final time during the same week they lost their bid to host the 2016 Republican National Convention.

“Skills is growing. Even on our state level, we are running out of room. National is the same way. It’s a good problem to have, but we need more room, so that’s why we’re going to Louisville,” said **Chip McAfee**, Arkansas SkillsUSA director.

While some competitions begin on Wednesday, the bulk of them are on Thursday. Spanning the length of 16 football fields (scattered across different facilities in downtown KC), the students appear at the contests with their game faces on and up for the challenges. Keep in mind: They arrived at the national conference because they won on the state levels in their respective categories. But the national competition urges the contestants to perform at near perfect in order to win.

Reynolds, who hails from Prairie Grove, said she credits her instructors at ACTI for the competitive skills she’s learned in graphic communications. Shortly after competing, Reynolds admitted the contest was a

JAG continued from page 11

still in college or on a job during the progress check.

Connor Purvis says he knew he needed to take it easy this summer because he is anticipating a full plate when he makes the trek from Mena to Searcy this fall. His classes will rightly take up a lot of his time, but he wants to take on something else: playing the trombone in the University's band! He was awarded a band scholarship, but it was rescinded because of the high amount in scholarships he had already attained.

That didn't discourage him though.

"I have a sheer love for playing. It's a way to relieve stress and attention. It's an outlet," Purvis says.

JAG Graduating Seniors Earn nearly \$7 Million in Scholarships

More than 300 Jobs for Arkansas's Graduates (JAG) graduating seniors are headed to college with less of a financial burden, thanks to the scholarships they earned with the help of their JAG specialists.

A total of 332 students from 33 schools were awarded 629 scholarships totaling \$6,784,008. Schools at the top of the list for scholarships awarded are as follows:

- **Mena High School**—\$1,143,262 in scholarships; JAG Specialist **Karen Purvis**
- **Riverview High School**--\$1,108,714 in scholarships; JAG Specialist **Sandy LaFantasie**
- **Southside High School**--\$595,853 in scholarships; JAG Specialist **Terry Watson**

Other schools with JAG students earning scholarships include Bald Knob, Batesville Booneville, Cabot, Cedarville, Clinton, Dumas, Fordyce, Fouke, Gentry, Hall, Jacksonville, J.A. Fair, Lincoln, Mansfield, Malvern, McClellan, Midland, Newport, North Pulaski, North Little Rock, North Little Rock West, Ozark, Pine Bluff, Sheridan, Springdale, Sylvan Hills, Van Buren.

Students earned a variety of scholarships ranging from the Academic Challenge Scholarship to endowed scholarships to military scholarships and many others.

J.A. Fair Student awarded Two Scholarships

J.A. Fair JAG (Jobs for Arkansas's Graduates) student **Kamara Hawkins-Price** captured two college scholarships. She was the **first-place winner in the Rotary Club's essay contest**, winning for her essay entitled "Nelson Mandela Leads the Long Walk to Freedom." She was awarded a \$1,500 scholarship. Kamara also received **the Beta Pi Omega, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority scholarship** in the amount of \$2,000. She plans to attend Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. **Mary Jacobs** is the JAG specialist at J.A. Fair.



(Pictured above, l-r): Mrs. Pamela Hawkins-Price, Kamara Hawkins-Price, and Jeremy Owoh, J. A. Fair principal.

the *Career* **Counselor** 2014

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ARKANSAS REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION ANNUAL TRAINING CONFERENCE

“What a Difference a Job Makes: Employment Empowers People!”

MAY 19-21, 2014—DOUBLETREE HOTEL, LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS

Submitted by Amanda Connell, 2014-15 ARA President



This year’s conference was a wonderful opportunity for networking, learning, and having fun! There were approximately 170 participants, with 78 attending from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS). The theme of the conference was reflected through the variety of participants (**ARS, Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas Tech University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Arkansas Support Network, Spinal Cord Commission, Harbor House, Inc.** and many more), the variety of training sessions offered, and the multiple opportunities provided for networking.

Highlighted speakers were **Senator Shane Broadway, Marti Wilkerson & Beth Morris**, and **Jimmie Wooding**. All three of these excellent keynote speakers reflected the theme of teamwork and connectedness, and the importance of these constructs in provision of effective services. Luncheon speakers included **Dr. Jennifer**

Wiebold & Commissioner Randy Laverty (ARS). The Commissioner was awarded the honor of being voted **“Legislator of the Year”** (pictured below) and was surprised with a retirement cake from ARA. There were excellent concurrent sessions, with the opportunity to earn up to 11.5 hours of continuing education credits.

The participants enjoyed visiting the vendors who were on display in the Exhibit Hall during the conference. Four of the booths

ARA continued on page 16



TEACHER continued from page 8

“When they walk out of here, they’re equipped. I think it’s the most important class on this campus. I really do,” Treat confidently says.

Talking to Treat about the class brings excitement out of her, but she says it’s time to end her career, which she considers rewarding. She has another job calling her: her three granddaughters in Tennessee.

“My five-year-old granddaughter called and said, ‘Mam-Maw, is it time?’,” Treat says.

Treat will be moving to eastern Tennessee to be near her three granddaughters. She says she didn’t have a relationship with her grandmother, so it’s important that she has a close relationship with hers.

But she’ll be missed at Cave City High.

“She’s one of those teachers that if you’re having problems in class, she will pull you from her main class. That way you can get caught up with your other classes,” says Lynn O’Brien, one of her students.

Treat has given her students her e-mail address and has told them she would be checking on them through Kim Bradley, who has worked with her for five years. They were not only co-workers but became friends during that time.

“I wish every teacher had this kind of passion for their students. You have to be a mom and a dad when you teach. Everyone here is going to miss her because she’s done so much for these students,” Bradley says.

Treat says she can’t forget about her students – evident in the way she carefully tucks away the souvenirs from a satisfying career of teaching, mentoring, and motivating. They will go into a scrapbook so she can reflect at any time.

“I will always remember. I will keep my pictures and mementos that kids have made for me, and Ms. Kim and I are friends out of the classroom so she will keep me up to par,” Treat says.

ARA continued from page 15

were from ARS: Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), the Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities, and Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN). The Spinal Cord Commission, Arkansas Relay, Hanger Orthotics, and Presidential Conversions also participated.

Another highlight was the Silent Auction. **Money raised during the Silent Auction is used to benefit student scholarships, and this year the auction raised approximately \$1,100.** In addition, ad sales in the program were brisk, and it should be noted that **seven districts from ARS placed ads, with the proceeds going to benefit student scholarships as well.** (Each scholarship we award is \$1,500 and we now have eight of them so every penny counts. Please help us support the vocational rehabilitation professionals of the future!)

The 2014 Scholarship Winners

- **R. Lewis Urton Scholarship:** **Carla Lilley**, Arkansas Tech University.➤
- **E. Russell Baxter Scholarship:** **Kimberly Brown**, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- **Vincent H. Bond Scholarship:** **Erika Wise**, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.➤
- **Butch Barnes Scholarship:** **Shane Bronson**, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.➤
- **ARA President's Scholarship:** **Jordan Griffie**, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- **McKissick Scholarship:** **Rakim Cheeks**, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

ARA also created a new \$1,500 scholarship starting in 2015 and beyond named in honor of Rick Fleetwood of Snell Prosthetics. Fleetwood will be working with ARA on the parameters of this scholarship. We look forward to naming our first Fleetwood Scholarship winner at next year's conference!

Many of you know that hosting a conference is an incredible amount of work and that it takes a team to make a successful conference happen. The ARA Board would like to thank all who helped organize and work the conference, with a special thank you to those who took leave or used vacation to attend and help. If you are interested in helping this next year please contact Amanda Connell, 479-739-5646 or ruthspearl@aol.com. We would love to have you working with us! It is YOUR training, so please be involved.

Looking ahead to next year, the ARA Board will be sending out "Save the Date" cards as soon as a date and venue are known for the 2015 conference. Participants are urged to request leave and reserve hotel rooms early. In addition, the ARA Board appreciates those who volunteer to present sessions, and encourage all of you to submit proposals early as well.



African Leaders Learn About Farming Education in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK – On a three-week tour across the country, 12 African agricultural leaders spent time in the Natural State to get a look into farming practices and concepts that can be taken back to their respective countries.

As part of the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program, the leaders are crisscrossing the country to trace the food supply chain from the farm to the table, to learn of the latest



to change the perceptions about farming in their countries.

Three of the state’s FFA officers were also on hand to explain their farming backgrounds and their agricultural career goals. They included **Taylor McNeel**, president; **Mason Strayhorn**, eastern district vice president; and **Lindsey Triplett**, northwestern district vice president.

The agricultural leaders traveled from the following countries: Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Republic of South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. In addition to Little Rock, the group visited Washington, D.C., Eastern Shore, Va., Santa Fe, N.M., and Portland, Ore.

farm technologies and water management and conservation practices, and to witness agricultural methods firsthand that could be implemented in their communities.

Leaders had the opportunity to meet with organizers and officers with the Arkansas FFA, a program for high school students who have developed an interest in agriculture-related careers. **Marion Fletcher** and **Chris Bacchus**, program coordinator and public school program advisor, respectively, led the discussions about the need to encourage young people to gain an interest in and appreciation for the industry. Bacchus showcased all of the programs and events that Arkansas FFA coordinates on the local and state levels.

“We try to expose them to as much agriculture as we can in our state. These are our future leaders and policymakers,” Bacchus said.

Traveling with a translator, the French-speaking leaders praised the Arkansas FFA for getting young people excited about agriculture. Many of them said farming was considered a job for those who did not succeed in school. They asked questions in an effort

ACTI continued from page 7

Cosmetology: Instructors: Susan Gordon & Chrystal Nelson.

◆◆ Megean Grode, *Benton*; Kimberly Harper, *Little Rock*; Anita Hughes, *Hot Springs*; ◆ Corey Penney, *Lake Village*; ◆◆ Nicole Riley, *Little Rock*; Kaylan Vincent, *Monticello*.

Culinary Arts: Instructor: Curtis Faulkner. ◆ Justin Brownlee, *Hot Springs*; ◆ Libby Goens, *Maflower*; ◆◆ Bronson McCarty, *Foreman*; Deanna Misner., *Cabot*; ◆ Elizabeth Ricks, *Emmet*.

Graphic Communications: Instructors: Ralph Forbes, Tom Kennedy, & Larry Ward. ◆ Cortez Beasley, *Waldo*; Jacob Dubois, *Cabot*; Hallie Kozak, *Guy*; ◆◆ Stephanie McElroy, *Smackover*; ◆◆ Dallas Miles, *Desha*; ◆◆ Michelle Reynolds, *Prairie Grove*; ◆ Jessica Robinson, *Hot Springs Village*; ◆ Tyrone Womack, *West Helena*.

Sales & Marketing: Instructor: Jacob Bryant. ◆ Alice Kyle, *Texarkana*.

Welding: Instructors: Philip Dobbs & Dennis Pickering. ◆◆◆ Brandon Burkes, *Pottsville*; ◆◆ Jessie Cogburn, *Glenwood*; ◆◆ Bobby Cunningham, *Clinton*; ◆◆◆ Jeremy Gittings, *Rogers*; ◆◆ Wesley Goulet, *Little Rock*; ◆ Rafiel Hinkle, *Ft. Smith*; ◆◆◆ Johnathon Knouse, *Texarkana*; Justin Mattox, *Rison*.

FFA 87th continued from page 1

Convention. Not only did some of the attendees say this was one of the best conventions, but the actual count showed the campsite welcomed a record number of students.

“There will be more people to take leadership opportunities and will be able to better themselves as FFA members, and that’s just going to help out the chapters,” said **Mason Strayhorn**, the outgoing eastern district vice president.

More than 1,200 registered members trekked across Camp Couchdale grounds, representing every corner of the state. Only a third of the attendees could stay on the campgrounds due to limited space. The remaining students had to stay in nearby hotels and be bused to Camp Couchdale for the various workshops.

The conference provided six sessions, which focused on **leadership trainings, award ceremonies, and lectures** led by experts in the field of agriculture. **Marion Fletcher** (pictured speaking above, center; **Bart Draper**, ACE program advisor, looks on), the state’s FFA director, said the conference exposes students to other fields in agriculture that will make a difference in the future.

“Agriculture is still wide open. It’s more than what people think about it being just about farming. We have people doing agriscience, entrepreneurship things – doing things above and beyond what the old farmer did,” Fletcher said.

Perhaps the highlight of the conference was hearing from each of the state officers as they



at left, bottom picture), the outgoing state president.

McNeel, who just finished her freshman year at Southern Arkansas University, said although the 2013-14 officers passed the torch, Arkansas FFA will remain close to

their hearts. For many of them, Arkansas FFA has been a part of their families’ lives for years.

“I’m not going anywhere even though I’m not in my blue jacket. I’ll definitely be back to help. We’ve already talked about future things we can help with, so I’m pretty excited,” she said.

In addition to McNeel, the following made up the 2013-14 state officer team: **Sunni Wise**, secretary; **Caleigh Moyer**, reporter; **Lindsey Triplett**, northeastern district vice president; **Megan McMahan**, southern district vice president; and **Mason Strayhorn**, eastern district vice president.

Registered members also elected the 2014-15 state FFA officers, and their work has already begun. They are taking part in a round of leadership conferences to learn their roles as they vow to serve as ambassadors for the state.

“It’s definitely an incredible feeling. It’s somewhere I never thought I would have been just a few short years ago. I’m excited to see where this next year takes me and the rest of the state officer team,” said **Bryce Rohr**, the 2014-15 state FFA president.

The 2014-15 officers are as follows: **Bryce Rohr**, state president; **Becca Burrow**, state secretary; **Matthew Smith**, state reporter; **Mark Dement**, northwest district vice president; **Mark McAfee**, southern district vice president; and **Morgan Faulkner**, eastern district vice president.

gave their retiring addresses. These officers are ending their year of crisscrossing the state and nation advocating for policies to strengthen the agricultural industry. The speeches – recited by memory only – brought about emotion from the officers as they recapped the year doing the work of Arkansas FFA.

“I think the thing that makes me most proud is when members come up to me and let our officers know that we’ve inspired them in some way,” said **Taylor McNeel** (shown

Five city police and two sheriff's departments (Benton PD, Benton County Sheriff's Office, Hot Springs PD, Jacksonville PD, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, Little Rock PD, and Texarkana PD) received a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle, valued at nearly \$733,000 each. They were provided through the U.S. Defense Department's military surplus program. ACE's **Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO)** accepted the armored vehicle requests of police and sheriffs' departments from across the state who, among other requirements, had to have a tactical team, such as SWAT, already in place.



On May 21, representatives from the media and some of the receiving agencies, as well as ACE Director Walker, met on the steps of the state capitol as the donated vehicles rolled in and parked on the street in front.

SkillsUSA continued from page 13

challenge, but she enjoyed it.

"I do think they [ACTI] prepared me well. I was ready for it and excited," she said.

Reynolds said the machines at the competition are totally different from the ones she learned on at ACTI. She only had a day to get acquainted with them, and she felt her lack of skills on those machines could affect her ranking.

But she chose to look at that in a positive light.

"I can say if I'm trying to find a career and they have that machine, I can tell them I had little experience with it and hopefully they can help me learn more about it," Reynolds said.

Students aren't the only ones who feel the anxiety on Competition Day. The teachers who helped to coach them to this day are also on edge. SkillsUSA leaders advise the teachers and directors to stay away from seeing their students compete.

"Everything that we've been working for culminates in this competition," said **Carey Byars**, the television news and production advisor at Cave City High School.

Four Cave City High School students made up the television news team at the SkillsUSA. Given a stack of stories for their newscast, the students – **Shelly Branscum**, **Evan Brown**, **Hannah Eckard**, and **Savannah Williams** – had to write scripts, type them into the teleprompter, and then put them on air within a certain time frame.

Shelly Branscum served as the show director. "We see these schools that have more people, but we are here just like they are. I'm still excited we made it this far," she said.

Branscum's group did not win, but they are more grateful for the experience. It also motivates them to get back to school in the fall to try it all again.

"I'm just excited to be here and meet people from other states. That's what Skills is – to meet different people and network and show professionalism. I'm glad I got to come anyway," Branscum said.



Representing Cave City High School (left-right): Shelly Branscum, Savannah Williams, Hannah Eckard, and Evan Brown

Five Arkansas students did manage to rise to the top and return home with medals:

- ★ **Dana Jaeger** and **Christine Larish**, North Arkansas College, Harrison; First Place (Gold): **Robotics and Automation Technology**
- ★ **Brigitte Schwartz**, Arkansas State University at Marked Tree, Marked Tree; First Place (Gold): **Esthetics**
- ★ **Wendy Schay**, Pulaski Technical College, Little Rock; Second Place (Silver): **Commercial Bakery**
- ★ **Natali Carmona-Garcia**, Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, Little Rock; Third Place (Bronze): **Nail Care**

Record Students Attend YLF, Leave Energized

CONWAY – Motivated. Fired up. Focused. Encouraged.

If you were to talk any of the 17 teenagers who participated in the 16th Annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), you would have heard those exact four words from just about every one of them. As a result of their attendance, the delegates left the five-day session empowered – vowing not to allow their disability to stop them from achieving their dreams.

“I’ve learned that you can’t let your disability stop you, no matter what it is. Disabled or not, you can do anything that you set your mind to if you want it bad enough,” said Sean Clay, a recent Searcy High graduate.

Clay said he’s ready to begin his postsecondary journey as a nursing major at Harding University this fall. He chose the medical field because of his own experiences. After surviving a horrific car crash a few years ago, Clay said he admired the passion he saw in his nurses.

“I just saw how much the nurses helped people and how much they helped me,” he said.

Although he still has complications from a broken hip and leg, he said the sessions at YLF gave him the drive to want to pursue his career goals even more.

“[YLF] is a great program, especially for someone who is feeling down on their disability. It really helps with confidence,” he said.

Spending a week at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), the delegates are infused with lots of inspiration from session speakers and coordinators. Most of all, the teens are urged to not just become productive members of society, but leaders in the fields which they choose.

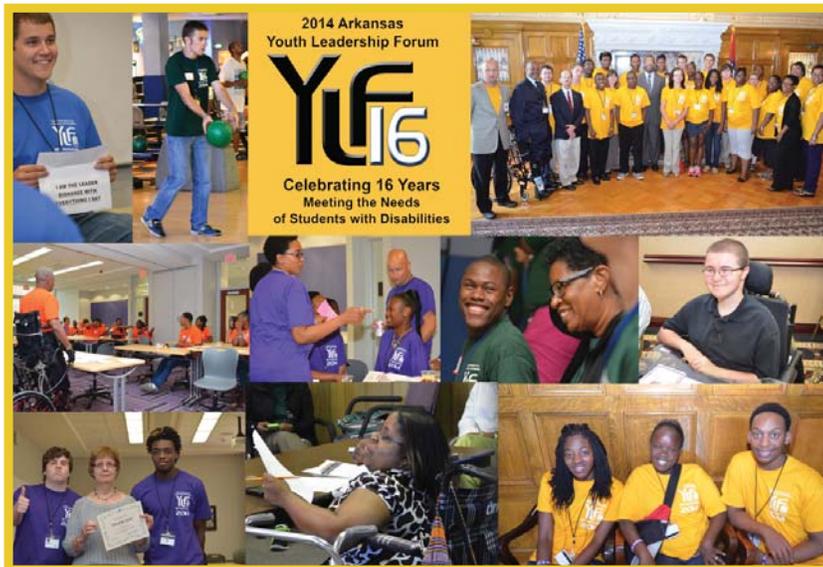
“They will be in positions that I’m in in the future. I like to get the chance to pour into them and motivate them,” said Leonard Boyle, executive director of the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities.

Boyle said the success of YLF is the reason they welcomed a record number of delegates this year. It’s not just the counselors who rave about the program, but past participants also share their first-hand experience of how YLF boosted their morale.

“I hope the students will take away motivation and inspiration in all aspects of their lives that promotes their independence and also pushes them to get their education,” Boyle said.

In addition to living on the UCA campus for a week, the delegates learned independent living skills, such as setting up and operating a bank account, writing a résumé, and dressing for an interview. They also learned about their rights as a person living with a disability.

Perhaps one of the highlights of the week was



taking the bus to Little Rock to tour the State Capitol. The delegates had a tour guide to point out the historic features of the building and to explain the legislative process. Governor Beebe was out of the country, but the students met with one of his representatives and took a picture in the Governor’s press meeting room.

This year’s luncheon speaker proved to be another layer of motivation for the students. Nineteen-year-old Raymond Walter of Fayetteville charged the delegates to pursue something in which they find interest and go after it head-on. It’s what he is doing right now. Using a wheelchair as a result of a neuromuscular disease, Walter is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Arkansas.

Walter hopes his presence and testimony served as enough proof that anything is possible.

“I hope they can see that things a lot of people with disabilities think are impossible are actually within reach,” he said.

The day in Little Rock wrapped up with a tour of the Arkansas Governor’s Mansion. Leonard Boyle served as the docent, giving descriptive information about the special moments and mementos of the state’s most famous house.

The students enjoyed it all, but they couldn’t forget the messages they heard over and over from the various speakers that addressed them over the week. Tasherey Daniels of Pine Bluff said she’s going to recommend others in her community to sign up for YLF.

“I have learned that even though I do have a disability, I can overcome it and be a successful person,” said Daniels.

Mission accomplished.

Senior Management Team

SMT Update



Lee Meadows
Chief Information Officer
Information Systems and Services

The goal of the IT department is to “Make IT Matter.” The mission of the IT department is to maintain, assist, and procure any and all technologies that can improve the existing agency infrastructure, add value to the daily performance of agency staff and departments, and identify any measures that would enable us to be innovative in our approach to serving the people who are in need of attaining career and technical education, adult education, or vocational rehabilitation services.

The IT department has impacted the agency tremendously within the past few years. Through network consolidation and new equipment the department has been able to reduce IT department expenditures by 15 percent and server maintenance by 80 percent.

Field office speeds have been increased by a whopping 200 percent in all agency offices. The network speed in Hot Springs at ACTI has increased connectivity by 333 percent. This allows staff to communicate internally and respond to clients at a much quicker pace.

Our staff and mobile staff have been upgraded to lighter, faster, and more current equipment and software with the introduction of up-to-date smartphones, ultrabooks, and tablets. Almost all agency staff software has been updated, with only about 20 percent left to update. With the increase of additional mi-fi's, field staff can now connect to the internet in places that they were not previously able to. This allows them to meet with individuals who may not be able to travel, gather information quickly, and provide services in a manner that is reflective of today's "instant information" society.

ICAN (Increasing Capabilities Access Network): The IT department has assisted in Telepresence projects throughout the state. Through the VGo and Double Robotics, robots provided by ICAN, students who are unable to attend classes due to illness or other factors can now learn and participate from home through the robots.

The IT department as a whole has grown to provide

more training, support, and information to staff and clients. The help desk system has taken issues that would sometimes take weeks down to hours or even minutes in some cases. This has been made possible through decentralizing support technicians and providing remote help software that allows a technician to provide support without physically leaving his or her designated area. There are now technicians in the northwestern, eastern, and central part of the state. This allows our techs to reach any field office within a two-hour window.

The presence of the agency has been updated and expanded on our agency website through rich media such as video and photos. **Another great addition has been the development of the agency's own mobile application.**

The application is available on all mobile platforms: Ipad, Iphone, Kindle, Android tablets, and Android phones. This allows staff, students, teachers, clients, and the public to quickly obtain information on programs and services, agency events, office locations, and GPS directions.

These are just a few of the big-picture accomplishments of the IT department with many more to come.

You can scan this QR code to download the ACE Mobile App or search “Arkansas Career Education” in the iPhone or Android App store.



DIRECTOR *continued from page 2*

are offered free of charge, can be scheduled at the workplace at a convenient time, and are closed to the general public.

Talent Acquisition Portal® (TAP) is a new online system that includes both a national talent pool of vocational rehabilitation (VR) candidates looking for employment and a job-posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities. TAP offers businesses the opportunity to post jobs, search candidate resumes based on skill sets and geographic availability, capture job metrics, generate compliance reports, interview candidates, have online job fairs, and have their jobs seen by individuals with disabilities across the country.

Retaining a Valued Employee (RAVE) was created to provide support to employers when assisting employees that experience injury or illness that results in disability in remaining at work or returning to work as soon as it is safe and medically feasible. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has recognized RAVE as an emerging practice. RAVE services are available to employers at no cost. RAVE staff assists employers by identifying accommodations that work. These “accommodation specialists” focus on what an employee can do or is capable of doing with the right accommodation.

Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) has made giant strides in preparing individuals with disabilities for family-sustaining employment. A main focus has been to ensure that the training programs meet and exceed the standards required by business and industry in Arkansas and the nation. ACTI has developed a number of partnerships to provide ACTI students with real-



ACTI Earns COE Accreditation

The Commission of the Council on Occupational Education (COE), whose mission is “assuring quality and integrity in career and technical education,” granted accreditation for the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) effective June 7,

2014.

COE status is based on an evaluation to demonstrate that the institution meets not only the standards of quality of the Commission, but also the needs of students, the community and employers. The Commission’s evaluation process includes an extensive self-study by the institution and an intensive review by a visiting team of professional educators representing the Commission’s member institutions from other states.

Current members in COE include postsecondary public technical institutes, specialized military and national defense schools, Job Corps centers, private career schools, non-profit technical education providers, corporate and industry education units, and federal agency institutions.

The Council has scheduled a reaffirmation team visitation in six years. As required, ACTI will substantiate its accreditation each year through an annual report which reflects the current status of the institution.

work experiences through paid and unpaid internships with employers such as the National Parks Services, Oaklawn Park Racing and Gaming, and other local employers.

Project SEARCH® just completed its first year with 10 of 11 graduates placed in jobs by graduation day.

We are a partner in the Pulaski County Project SEARCH® program, which is a one-year, business-led internship program that helps young people with disabilities transition from high school to the workplace. ARS provides financial support, applied directly to vocational education and career development. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) serves as the host business for the program, providing entry-level work experiences that match each intern’s skills. Staff from ACCESS,

the third partner in Project SEARCH, provide vocational instruction, job coaching, and lessons in independent living skills.

ACE Expos began in 2011 with the three divisions of the agency taking the agency’s “show on the road” – literally – by hosting one-day “ACE EXPOs” in cities across the state. Designed to compliment and connect locals with rehabilitation field offices, adult education centers, and related institutions in the targeted communities, the events are set up in tradeshow fashion at an event center with booths staffed by agency personnel. Experts from each service and program engage visitors, answer questions, and assist citizens with agency services, and a job fair provides an opportunity for job-seekers and local employers to connect.



Arkansas Department of CAREER EDUCATION

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