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THE RIVER'S EDGE

Gala Audience Enjoys Festive Fundraiser



New Foundation Board Member Michael Montgomery of Walnut Ridge with his wife Shania

A full house of guests bid for 40 items during the live and silent auction segments of the recent BRTC Foundation Gala, marking the seventh year for the popular event. Auction items alone netted almost \$6,000, though total proceeds from the event will increase when all revenues and expenses have been tabulated.

The upbeat Gala is one of the activities of the Foundation to generate funds for scholarships and other needs of the college. As in the past, guests enjoyed an elegant dinner while continuing to bid on items in the Silent Auction. These items ranged from handmade "Sad Shad" Fishing Lures to a beautiful diamond necklace. Following the gourmet dinner, prepared by the Dietetics students, the Gala featured a light-hearted Live Auction with "Colonel" Jack McCord moving the bidding along, assisted by "Ringmen" Mike Dunn and John Jackson of the BRTC Board of Trustees. Guests generously bid and battled each other for items ranging from a Lab puppy package to a cash-filled designer purse.

Held in the Randolph County Development Center, the Gala was made special with a décor of countless

colorful Japanese lanterns of all sizes suspended from the ceiling, along with orchid branches in water-filled vases on each table, a setting designed and coordinated by Ann Savage of the Office of Development. Travis Rainbolt provided instrumental and vocal dinner music. Members of the Auto Collision Repair and Automotive Service

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Important Dates

March 15

Business Etiquette Luncheon

March 19-23

Spring Break

No Classes; Offices Open

March 27-28

PTK Blood Drive

April 5

Scholarship Luncheon

April 10

Health Fair

April 13

LETA Graduation

Quiz Bowl Finale to Black History Month

BRTC students of all ages showed their knowledge of Black History during a Quiz Bowl at the Eddie Mae Herron Center on February 29. The competition pitted BRTC students Trent Morledge, Joy Callahan, Trey Crump and Joseph Crump, along with "celebrity" team member and BRTC President Dr. Wayne Hatcher, against members of BRTC's Serendipity Club.

Members of the winning Serendipity team were Jon Crabbe, Sharron White, Patti Riffel, Georgia Berry, and "celebrity" team member Pocahontas Mayor Frank Bigger.

The event consisted of two rounds of twelve questions each. The student team easily carried the first round, but



Seated from left are Joseph Crump, Trey Crump, Joy Callahan and Trent Morledge, BRTC students, and BRTC President Dr. Wayne Hatcher. BRTC student Trevor Poe is seated in the background. Standing is Frank Bateman of the Arkansas Black History Quiz Bowl Organization

were edged out when Serendipity members stormed back in Round 2. The combined score placed Serendipity ahead of the student team in the overall match by a slim margin.

Trevor Poe served as scorekeeper for the contest. Pat Johnson of the Eddie Mae Herron Center and Dr. Jan Ziegler, VP for Development at BRTC, read out the questions. Also assisting were Dina Hufstedler, Project Specialist, and Jessica McFadden, Administrative Assistant, in the Office of Development.

All participants indicated the competition was great

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Fast-Track Math Re-design Brings Student Success

Math students in the eight-week "Fast Track" Introductory and Intermediate Algebra classes are giving evidence to a longstanding belief of BRTC



Donna Statler working with a Fast-Track student at Pocahontas

Math Instructor Donna Statler: math students do better when they can complete their work in a shorter duration of time. Statler, along with BRTC-Paragould Math Instructor Sandra Williams and their students in the targeted classes, are a part of a pilot project designed to improve

success rates and ultimately, graduation rates, by lessening the time it takes for a student to complete his or her coursework. "When you stretch out the time [to complete a class]," Statler said, "more things interfere."

Math Instructor Sandra Williams agrees. Her Fast Track Introductory and Intermediate Algebra classes have also proven successful. Williams is pumped up about the pilot, and says she is "pleased with their [the students'] attitudes, their work ethic and the educational choices they are making."

The math re-design had already been planned, based on prior data that developmental math students succeeded at higher rates during the summer sessions than during the traditional fall or spring semesters. When BRTC and the state's other two-year colleges received a PACE (Path to Accelerated Career Education) Grant last fall to assist in lessening time to degree completion, the math Fast-Track option was a natural fit and has been rolled into the

Grant activities in this pilot attempt, according to PACE Grant Coordinator Regina Moore.

It works like this: a cohort of students who test into Introductory Algebra complete this course in only eight weeks (instead of the traditional sixteen weeks) by attending class four days, Monday through Thursday, instead of the traditional two-day schedule. At the end of the eight weeks, successful students in the cohort enroll in the next math level, Intermediate Algebra, thus completing in one semester what typically requires two semesters.

Results of the pilot run are extremely encouraging. Statler's retention rate was 100%, with all passing the eight-week Introductory Algebra class with a grade of "C" or higher. Williams' retention rate was 80%, with 75% of those passing with a grade of "C" or higher. The two who did not pass have been moved into the second half of a traditional Introductory Algebra class and have, in Williams' words, "a second chance to succeed," since they still have opportunity to pass the course by the end of the spring semester, with no loss of time.

The students from both Statler's and Williams' Introductory Algebra classes are now in the next level, Intermediate Algebra, which began last week.

There are other reasons this fast track structure works well, the instructors point out. For one thing, the students remain together as a cohort in both levels, and thus are more likely to form bonds and to help each other. In addition, the fast track structure means that the students are enrolled in fewer different classes at one time, a benefit that has proven effective in other shortened semesters, such as the intersession, a two-week intensive time frame between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the Summer sessions.

"With fewer classes, they have less work to

concentrate on," Statler said. "When I have taught math in intersession, there have been very few who did not pass. To tell the truth," she added, "I'd like to see our entire college move to 'quarters' instead of the semester structure."

Additional re-structuring of classes is already underway, with a pilot now in progress in pairing Writing Fundamentals with Freshman English I, so that students take these classes simultaneously instead of consecutively through a process known as Advanced Learning Program, or ALP. A Fast Track Technical Reading class was also held in the first half of the semester. The results of these classes will be the focus of an upcoming article.

Additional re-design to be implemented in the



Sandra Williams working with a Fast-Track student at Paragould

fall in conjunction with the PACE Grant activities will include the offering of Pre-, Intro- and Intermediate Algebra classes in modular structure,

allowing for self-paced progression through the courses.

The bottom line, according to VP for Academics Dr. Roger Johnson, is that colleges nationwide are actively working to decrease the amount of time required for students to graduate. "Studies abound showing that time is the enemy, and that the longer it takes students to complete developmental courses and move into the college credit classes, the greater the likelihood they won't be successful. We are working to change that and improve our students' retention and graduation rates."

Fears Shares Journey into Awareness

Dr. Lillie Fears' recent presentation at the Eddie Mae Herron Center included details of her literal and emotional journey from an early childhood in Chicago through the family's relocation to eastern Arkansas when she was a second grader. She recounted aspects of a sometimes difficult transition to the Arkansas Delta.

A professor of Journalism and Assistant for Diversity Initiatives at Arkansas State University, she spoke at a community potluck culminating Black History Month activities. The event was co-sponsored by the Eddie Mae Herron Center and by

Black River Technical College's SEAS (Special Event and Activity Support) program.

She traced her growing awareness and acceptance of self in Chicago when the influences of music by artists such as James Brown, and an awareness of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who, in her words, "was someone so important that he had six names!"—helped her to accept herself as being "Black—not colored. Not Negro."

With the family's move to Clarendon, Fears continued to attend an all-Black school with an identical name to her Chicago school, "Carver

Elementary School." Here, she explained, she found the same "constant and consistent positive affirmation of who I was." She said she was still, in the words of the James Brown song, "Proud to be Black."



Dr. Lillie Fears

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MSSPS Awarded to Eleven for Spring 2012 Semester

The Mary Sallee Single Parent Scholarship (MSSPS) fund has awarded \$5,125 for the Spring 2012 semester among eleven recipients. They are Holly Beegle, Shelby Borst, Dallas Carlile, Abbi Edington, Angela Emmett, Stephanie Searcy, Bernice Shelly and Jane Smith of Pocahontas; Madison Rutledge of Biggers; Amanda Hibbard of Ravenden Springs; and Miranda Hand of Imboden. Each individual received an amount between \$250 and \$500 depending on the number of hours enrolled. This brings to date a total of \$143,848 awarded through MSSPS since its inception in 1992.

A sub-grant was provided to MSSPS from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education in the amount of \$1,000. Searcy and Smith have been designated as "ADHE Scholars" through this grant.

Beegle graduated from Doniphan High School in 1993, attended Three River's Community College, and then completed CNA classes at BRTC. She is currently taking Gen Ed classes at BRTC with plans to pursue a degree in the field of nursing. Borst is a 2010 graduate of Mena High School and plans to graduate Spring 2012 from BRTC with her AA in Gen Ed degree. She then plans to transfer to the University of Central Arkansas to work on a degree in the medical field with future plans of becoming a Physician's Assistant. Carlile graduated from Oak Ridge Central in 1999. She plans to graduate Spring 2012 from BRTC then transfer to Arkansas State University to complete a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She wishes to become a Juvenile Probation Officer.

Edington graduated from Biggers-Reyno High School in 1999 and plans to graduate from BRTC in December with her AA in Gen Ed degree. She is applying for BRTC's Respiratory Care program. Emmett received her GED from Ogeechee Technical College in Georgia and is working on her AA from BRTC. She plans to become a social worker. Hand



Holly Beegle

Shelby Borst

Dallas Carlile

Abbi Edington



Angela Emmett

Miranda Hand

Amanda Hibbard

Madison Rutledge

is a 2001 graduate of Sloan-Hendrix High School and is pursuing her AA in Teaching degree at BRTC, with future plans of becoming a teacher. Hibbard graduated from Hoxie High School in 2004 and is working on her AA in Gen Ed degree from BRTC with future plans of becoming a counselor.

Stephanie Searcy

Bernice Shelly

Jane Smith

Rutledge graduated from Corning High School and plans to pursue a Psychology degree. She would like to become a Counselor or Psychiatrist. Searcy received her GED in 2001 and her goal is to become a nurse. Shelly graduated from Mountain Pointe High School in Arizona in 1998, graduated December 2011 from BRTC's Practical Nursing program, and plans to complete the RN program at

BRTC. Smith is a graduate of St. Paul High School and is pursuing an education in an area of business.

To qualify for the single parent scholarship, according to Financial Aid Officer Natasha Rush, individuals must be single parents with custody of minor children, be enrolled in a program of higher education, meet certain income guidelines, and be residents of Randolph County. For more information, contact Rush at 870-248-4000, ext. 4019.

Gala

(Cont'd. from pg. 1)

Tech programs took care of valet parking, while Phi Theta Kappa members provided the coat check service. Members of the President's Leadership Council participated in various ways, including in decorating, venue set-up and take down, and assisting with the serving of the dinner. Felicia Hausman was the event photographer. Also providing invaluable assistance was the BRTC Maintenance Department.

BRTC President Dr. Wayne Hatcher announced the Gala guest whose name had been drawn and was thus awarded a "naming opportunity" for one of the Gala-generated scholarships for next year: Alice McHaney of Walnut Ridge.

Brenda Walls of the BRTC Foundation serves as Gala Chair. Other Gala Committee members are Mike Dunn, Lee Ann Rutter, Vickie French, Sharon Watson, Ann Savage, and Dr. Jan Ziegler.

Quiz Bowl Finale

Cont'd. from pg. 1)

fun as well as educational. All received gift certificates to the BRTC bookstore through the SEAS (Special Event and Activity Support) program. Participants also received tee-shirts from Frank Bateman of the Arkansas Black History Quiz Bowl organization, as well as mugs from the EMHC.

The event was sponsored by the Arkansas Humanities Council, Arkansas Student Loan Authority, and other businesses and organizations.



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BRTC Mission Statement

Blending tradition, technology and innovation to educate today's diverse students for tomorrow's changing world.

From the President's Desk



Dr. Wayne Hatcher

We have been busy lately building something new. The new project contains no bricks and mortar, no plumbing and heating, but we have nevertheless been involved in a major construction effort that has required as many if not more decisions than an actual building would have. The new BRTC website is truly a major construction effort which has been underway for a number of months.

We began with an early phase of construction last fall, focusing on the "look" and the functionali-

ty elements. We liked what we saw when this was completed, and moved into a second phase to include the peripheral sites—those pages managed by individual faculty and staff members—that had developed through the years.

Under the guidance of an ad hoc committee of eight faculty and staff members working with a local website designer, the new site is crisp and clean, and features "sliders," blogs, dynamic announcements, multi-media and a quick access toolbar. This new website is search-engine optimized (the wording is selected to provide the best results). It has three calendars (an academic calendar, a calendar of Corporate and Community classes, and a campus-wide events calendar). There are quick links, automatic menus, customizable side-bars, highlighted boxes, access to social media, RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndications), and breadcrumbs (shows the user's path to the current location within the website). Our new website also includes a site map, and opportunity for feedback.

As in any building project, finding where everything goes takes a little time. The committee continues to fine-tune and adjust the site to make it optimally effective and efficient as we respond to "I can't find...." queries. I know the committee and

Fears

(Cont'd. from pg. 2)

The situation was different, however, when, as a third grader, she began attending the integrated school at Helena. The new school brought to Fears a "growing awareness of white privilege....I don't recall feeling racism from kids," she continued, "but from adults. I learned that being white came with privileges."

Fears concluded with a brief discussion of the pathway through education to her current position where she works with students to help them grow in their understanding and appreciation of diversity. She ended the presentation with an insistence that "the positive experiences have outweighed the negative ones."

the designer have worked hard to include not just the new features listed above, but everything needed by our website users—first and foremost our prospective and current students. We believe the new features and technological updates will serve you—and us—well. The door is open—so come on in! www.blackrivertech.edu