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The River's Edge

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Important Dates

October 21

- Lunch—N—Learn "Breast Health" 11:30 - 12:00 RCDC
- ASSET Test Continuing Ed. Bldg.

October 21 - 22

- AHECB Meeting in Jonesboro

October 23

- ACT Test

November 19

- LETA Graduation

Imperial Theatre Now a Reality

There was no yellow brick road pointing the way. There was never a wizard behind the curtain making things happen on a whim, or even pretending to. There were no magic red slippers, no good witch banishing the many obstacles that stood between them and their goals. But still Kelly Grooms and friends have managed to come up with all the necessary ingredients—some would say the heart, the courage, and the brains—right here in this community to lead them exactly where they wanted to go. And so it comes as no surprise that when the lights go up on the first production in the new Imperial Theatre on December 10, the audience will be transported to the magical world of Oz.

The gala opening for Imperial patrons scheduled for October 20

will showcase a first-rate facility that "brings a higher level of the arts" to



Kelly Grooms stands in front of the "Fly System" located backstage. This sophisticated technological design houses the rigging equipment used to raise, lower, or move from side to side the scenery, the lights and the actors.

this region, according to Mike Dunn, Vice President of the Imperial's Board of Directors. "Not only that,"

he adds, "but this facility represents a major economic development opportunity as it brings people here to see the plays. It gives us another shot at tourism." The Imperial Theatre adds to the overall quality of life, according to Dunn, who currently serves also as Chairman of BRTC's Board of Directors. He pointed out also that he believes "the college enhances the theatre, and the theatre enhances the college," noting that Grooms and several Board members, including Dunn himself, are connected to both institutions.

An instructor of Fine Arts Theatre and Oral Communications at BRTC, Grooms has been involved in theatre production since his high school days. His first "production" dates to 1989 when he directed
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BRTC Foundation Celebrates Funds, Welcomes New Member

The BRTC Foundation learned at its October 8 meeting that the recent golf tournament exceeded the organization's fund-raising goal of \$25,000, a level set by the Foundation Board in the spring. The net proceeds, according to Administrative Assistant Vickie French, will be approximately \$26,600. By all accounts, fundraising as well as participation, sponsorships, and volunteer participation, this year's tournament represents the largest tournament in

the event's eleven-year history, said Tournament Coordinator Jim Ulmer of BRTC.

The annual golf tournament is co-sponsored by the BRTC Foundation and First Community Bank, which provides \$10,000 to support the event. The tournament drew 73 teams in a two-person scramble held October 2 at Rolling Hills Country Club.

Proceeds are used by the Foundation in support of the college, with a significant portion funding full tuition scholarships. Currently, eight students are attending BRTC with
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Jim Ulmer & Mike Dunn

Imperial Theatre

Agatha Christie's *The Mouse Trap* for the Pocahontas Fine Arts Council in the Randolph County Development Center on the campus of BRTC. It was in the mid-90s, Grooms recalls, when a joint production of the PFAC, the Studio for the Arts, and BRTC led to the acquisition of the current Imperial Theatre in downtown Pocahontas. That production, interestingly, was also *The Wizard of Oz*. Since that time, the Imperial Theatre, with Grooms and Andee Evers in visionary and leadership roles, has gone on to produce a string of full-scale theatre productions, ranging from serious dramas like *Of Mice and Men*, to full scale musicals such as *Oz* and *The King and I*, to all-time favorites such as *The Foreigner*, *Blood Brothers*, and *The Boys Next Door*. So successful was the venture that a touring ensemble, "The Studio Players," was developed, and has played to audiences in a three-state region. The phenomenal success of the theatre company has both made possible and necessary the construction and eagerly awaited opening of the new, 18,000 sq. ft. Imperial Theatre on Hwy 304, just across from BRTC.

The success is built on a time-tested formula, according to Grooms: "It was trial and error. We stuck with what worked, and we abandoned what did not work." In fact, one of the only "constants" in his dozen or so years in theatre production has been the involvement of college students in various capacities of the show, from cast member to set production to technical assistant.

Grooms could talk endlessly about all he has learned about theatre over the past years, but what really gets him excited these days is the upcoming opening of the new \$1.9 million facility. He related the genesis of the new facility, dating to the time a few years ago while the company was mounting a production at the state-of-the-art Tinnen Fine Arts Center in Poplar Bluff. "I always

think we can do anything," Grooms began. "We were doing a sound check for *Blood Brothers*, and the sound in there was incredible. I said to the others, 'We are going to have one of these facilities in Pocahontas.'" No one took the talk too seriously, he continued, until one night some months later when, during a show in the old downtown Imperial Theater, the rain leaked through the roof and down onto the table of a member of the audience.

"That was so embarrassing," he remembers. "Then afterwards, we went upstairs and found some of our equipment under water, ruined. That was it," he said. "I remember Andee just sitting and bawling, and saying 'I don't know what to do.' I said, 'I do!'" he recalled. "And this time everyone was willing to listen. The Board may have had doubts, but they gave their permission for us to try."

A Kansas cyclone might have moved things more quickly, but certainly not with more enthusiasm.

Within six months of setting the plan into action, the organization had raised approximately one-quarter million dollars in cash in local donations. This was followed by sizeable donations from the city of Pocahontas, Randolph County, and the state and federal governments. "[State] Senator Paul Miller has been our hero," Grooms said. "He, along with Representative Harmon Seawel, secured a \$340,000 appropriation from the state, and then went to bat with [U. S.] Senator Blanche Lincoln and [U. S.] Congressman Marion Berry for another \$450,000." A sizeable in-kind donation in the form of two acres of land by Hank and Mike McNabb and Dickie Ray Trammel made all the difference, according to Grooms. He also had high praise for such in-kind dona-

tions as the dirt work by Dwight and Kay Ellis. "There are just so many people who have given so much, I can't possibly name them all," he added.

The new Imperial Theatre features a full-size production stage with a fifty-foot fly tower; sophisticated lighting and rigging (costing over \$180,000); a "house" to seat an audience of 152 patrons at tables for four; three classrooms; full kitchen/pantry; three serving stations; a scene shop; large dressing room area; four offices; a costume shop; and spacious storage facilities. The shift from the old facility to the new one is nothing short of phenomenal.

But if, on opening night, the audience is tempted to check to see if there's a magician behind the curtain, there's no need to bother. His name is Grooms. Her name is Evers.

Single Parent Scholarships Awarded



Seven students have been awarded scholarships through the Mary Sallee Single Parent Scholarship (MSSPS) program. The scholarships, each in the amount of \$500, have been awarded for the Fall 2004

semester to (seated, from left) Stephanie Cloinger and Karen Farris of Pocahontas, and (standing, from left) Judy Jenkins of Pocahontas and Stacey Peoples of Maynard. Also receiving the award, but not pictured, are Ginger Dildine, Lisa Hayes and Angela Wilson.

MSSPS recipients 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. Funding for

MSSPS is made possible through donations and fundraising efforts, and is administered through the BRTC Foundation. All donations made locally are matched 150% by the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation. Donations may be made by contacting Vickie French, Administrative Assistant, at 870-248-4000, ext. 4070.

For more information on the MSSPS, contact the office of Financial Aid at 248-4000. Applications are currently available for the Spring 2005 semester.



DuPont Representatives Visit Auto Body DuPont representatives Jim Butler (pictured), of Jackson, Tennessee and Dale Foxx, of Nashville, Tennessee, recently visited with Butch Dail's Auto Body class on the BRTC Pocahontas campus. Butler, an area representative, and Foxx, a technician, presented a display and shared information about new products from DuPont as well as discussed proper usage and safety guidelines. DuPont representatives visit the campus each year or two to provide the latest information about their products. Also on hand for the presentation was Benny Baltz of Baltz Auto Supply in Pocahontas.

Going “Global” in NE Arkansas

Globalization is a fact of life—not something that happens “over there,” but something that affects everyone. That is a fact Carol Conway of the Southern Growth Policies Board presents to communities in the south, including those attending recent meetings at BRTC. How best to reap the benefits and minimize the disadvantages frames the efforts of a group who form a steering committee to represent the four counties in BRTC’s service area.

The committee’s most recent meeting focused on planning strategies to ensure Randolph, Clay, Greene and Lawrence Counties are well-positioned to meet the challenges and enjoy the advantages of globalization. A preliminary strategy considers ways the citizens of these counties can “realize full membership in the global community, gaining educational, economic, and quality of life benefits.”

As an outgrowth of the sessions,

BRTC has been selected as a tentative host for a SGPB focus group to discuss rural policy at the state and local level, and also as a host community for the state’s new Mexican Consulate office.

Members of the steering committee include Ted Moskal, Wayne Gearhart, and Audra Malone, who represent the Chambers of Commerce in, respectively, Lawrence, Randolph, and Greene Counties;



Alvin Taylor, Dr. Roger Johnson, & Wayne Gearhart

Summer DeProw of Williams Baptist College; Alvin Taylor of Waterloo Industries, Daryl Blaxton of Pochontas Public Schools; and Dr. Roger Johnson and Dr. Jan Ziegler of BRTC.

Academic All-Star Receives Great News

Meredith Fluke of Pochontas, BRTC’s Academic All-Star, was surprised and thrilled to learn that the award carries with it a full tuition scholarship, plus \$500 book allowance per semester, to complete her four-year degree at University of Central Arkansas, Conway. Announcement of the UCA scholarship came in an awards brunch October 12 at the fall conference of the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges in Springdale.

Fluke was among the students selected from each two-year college as “Academic All-Stars” based on a competitive application process. All of these students had already received a \$500 scholarship from their

respective colleges, and were being recognized by the AATYC for their accomplishments.

Fluke is an active member of BRTC’s honor society, Phi Theta Kappa. She also served as a BRTC Ambassador, and is president of the college’s Dietetics Club. She is completing an AAS degree in Dietetics. Fluke plans to pursue a baccalaureate degree and master’s degree to become a clinical dietitian and to prepare herself to teach nutrition on the college level.

In addition to Fluke, others from BRTC honored at the AATYC fall conference included alumnus Nick Gerard of Jonesboro, a graduate of

the college’s Machine Shop program and currently owner of his own shop for the design and engineering of conveyor belts. Also recognized were BRTC’s Outstanding Staff member, Vickie French of Reyno, Administrative Assistant to the President; and Priscilla Stillwell of Paragould, BRTC instructor and coordinator of Concurrent Enrollment.

A large number of BRTC faculty and staff members also attended the conference for two days of professional development sessions.



AATYC Academic All-Star Meredith Fluke

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Foundation

full tuition support from the Foundation. Foundation Liaison Dr. Jan Ziegler of BRTC said that the increase in the tournament proceeds will make possible a hike in the number of Foundation scholarships for next year. Last year’s event netted just under \$18,000. In the tournament’s fifth year, the net proceeds were just over \$6,000.

BRTC President Richard Gaines joined Ulmer in expressing appreciation to the Foundation Board mem-

bers as well as the BRTC staff for their assistance. He acknowledged the support also of First Community Bank and other sponsors in bringing the event to its present level.

Dr. Ziegler presented a scholarship report to the Foundation, providing photographs, brief biographical information, and notes of acknowledgement from each of the eight students currently receiving Foundation scholarships.

In other business, the Foundation

Board heard an update by Patti Blaxton, Department of Continuing Education, concerning the Serendipity Club. The group scheduled a kickoff luncheon in October, and will begin its year-long series of classes and trips shortly thereafter.

The Board also agreed on a proposal by Dr. Ziegler that the Foundation “move to the next level” and begin preliminary development of a new initiative: an annual series of speakers, exhibits, or other events

designed to enrich, enlighten, and inform the local community in unique ways.

The Foundation Board also acknowledged its newest member, Milton Smith of Walnut Ridge, President and CEO of First National Bank.

“We are very pleased Milton has consented to join us,” said President Gaines. “We know he will be a real asset to the Foundation and to Black River Technical College.”

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Mission Statement

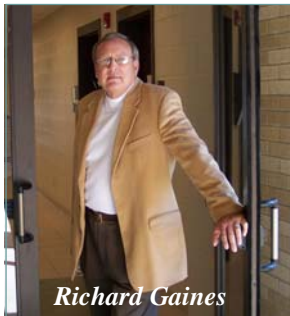
Black River Technical College is an institution of higher learning committed to a partnership with the individual and the global community to provide lifelong learning experiences, seeking always to empower those it serves to achieve their academic, vocational, and personal development goals.

On-line Application address:

<http://connect.blackrivertech.org/nappadm.html>



From the President's Desk



Richard Gaines

The official start-up this week of a new BRTC venture, the Serendipity Club, marks a step BRTC is taking toward the fulfillment of the promise of a community college. This club, jointly sponsored by our Department of Continuing Education/Business Outreach and the BRTC Foundation, features monthly activity classes and trips, and is designed especially for those of or nearing retirement age. The response thus far has been enthusiastic, and the group will make their first trip later this month to visit the Hemingway-Pfeifer Museum in Piggott.

I understand upcoming classes in this very affordable organization include a book reading, photography, landscape gardening, conversational Spanish, walking for health, and computer technology. The Serendipity Club, whose members receive priority placement and price discounts on the classes, plans trips also to Memphis, Little Rock, Murfreesboro, War Eagle, and St. Louis.

All these activities and trips are designed to be both fun and educational. They are also designed for participants to have opportunity to meet new people, to have new experiences, and, most of all, to keep active in mind, body, and spirit. This describes to me the essence of the "community" in the community college concept.

A primary emphasis at BRTC is on lifelong learning; by far the majority of those we serve directly are "students" earning credits in pursuit of degrees and certificates, or those

PTK Blood Drive

The BRTC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society held a blood drive Tuesday, October 12 in the Randolph County Development Center. The American Red Cross collected a total of 50 pints, which exceeded their goal of 30.

Dr. Linda Moss, PTK sponsor, expressed her appreciation to everyone who donated as well as to those who contributed in other ways to the success of the drive. Tammy Burnside, Kathleen Whitlock, and Christine Cato, senior nursing students and members of PTK, assisted with the blood drive throughout the entire event.

"I would also like to extend a special thanks to All-American,

seeking to enhance their job skills, or even building the educational foundation when needed to access the degree programs. But in addition to this emphasis, we are a partner with the *total* community, and that in-



Courtney Vance and Red Cross Nurse Sharon Godwin

Burger King, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, and Wendy's for donating food coupons to give to the blood donors," Dr. Moss added.

PTK will be sponsoring additional blood drives on January 19 and March 16, 2005, from 11:00-4:30 in the Development Center.

cludes those who are joining the Serendipity Club. I'm pleased we can do this. It is clearly an enhancement of the quality of life for those we serve.